

Rest In Peace, Goody Petronelli...WOODS

Written by Michael Woods
Monday, 30 January 2012 15:34



Goody, far right, exulting on April 15, 1985, after Marvin Hagler beat Thomas Hearns at Caesars. Ref Richard Steele, far left, raises Hagler's hand and Pat Petronelli raises a fist in delight.

It was after Robbie Sims' last fight. Goody Petronelli was in the dressing room of Marvin

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Hagler's half brother, taking off his gloves following his eight round unanimous decision victory over Burt Burgos at the Bayside Expo Center in Boston. I tiptoed into the locker room, looking to get a quote from Robbie's trainer, the man who also crafted Marvin Hagler into an all-time middleweight great, with an assist from good genes.

I entered and Goody appraised my husky build. "You ever fight? You a heavyweight?"

That was on Sept. 20, 1996. My chest swelled with pride. Imagine Marvin Hagler's trainer looking at me, and seeing a promising pugilist, a hunk of marble ready to be sculpted into another Brockton Bomber. Or maybe a hunk of meat to be sacrificed to one of the big boys at Goody's gym. Regardless, I always enjoyed the memory of that moment, and even more so now that Goody has passed away.

The Brockton native, born Guerino Petronelli in Brockton, died early Sunday morning, according to a story in the Patriot Ledger, forwarded by my friend Jay Miller, which cited information coming from Goody's son David.

Goody had a gentle manner, and an ability as the best trainers do to quietly inject confidence into their fighter. He was a mellow man, not prone to raising his voice in public, and never let the fame he enjoyed which came from his association with Hagler go to his head.

Goody was 88, and the cause of death is not yet known. One wouldn't be surprised if a broken heart emerges as the culprit. His wife Marian died in October, and brother and co-manager of Hagler Pat died in September, at age 89.

Goody was a Navy man who fought 40 bouts in the service. A pro career was cut short when he broke his right hand in his 27th scrap. He hit the jackpot when a teenager named Marvin, not a fellow who had much experience with white role models, walked into his gym, over Brockton Hardware and Supply Co., and Goody offered to "show him a few things."

Kids from the Boston area weren't supposed to be able to fight, but Marvin could, and did. His rise was slow-ish, as he had to convince fightgame insiders in person that he had the goods, so

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he worked for Goody and Pat doing construction in the early years to augment meager purses. They all stuck together, incredibly, though Hagler was often tempted to pack it in, or move to the West Coast to juice his career. But he hung with Goody and Pat, and they with him. They didn't take a dime from his cruddy purses early on, because Marvin needed the dough more than they. It was a story of dedication, devotion, loyalty, the Hagler-Petronelli tale.

After Marvin quit the game in 1987, he'd send Pat and Goody postcards from Italy, letting them know he was happy doing movies and staying away from the ring. Pat and Goody respected his decision, and didn't press him to engage Sugar Ray Leonard in a megamillion dollar revenge match.

Goody stayed busy training boxers; he was a lifer, and you could see him, before a dispute with the landlord made him close up the Petronelli's Boxing Club in Brockton around a year ago, active in the ring, getting guys like big Kevin McBride ready for fights. He'd wear boxing gloves, not the pads favored by today's tutors. And he moved better than any man in his 80s had a right to, bless him.

Goody wasn't a loquacious sort but his words had impact in the way a Hagler punch did; there was no unnecessary excess in a Goody quote. "If it wasn't for boxing, people would be out in the street killing each other," he once said.

His easy style was to be admired, as was his patience and commitment, as shown after many a man would've quit the grunt work.

"You never know who'll come through that door," Goody Petronelli would say. "Could be a champion."

The man knew champions and will be remembered as one himself.

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Radam G says:

My deepest condolences. Holla!

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