

My 86-Year-Old Mother Meets...

Written by Thomas Hauser
Thursday, 27 September 2012 21:56



A tradition continues.

In the 1980s and 1990s, my mother met Muhammad Ali several times. In 2007, I brought her to a press conference to meet Don King. Now, once a year, Anthony Catanzaro hosts a pizza party at Portobello's (83 Murray Street in Manhattan) in her honor.

Anthony is a popular figure in the Hauser family. My great-nephew (who turns four in October) thinks that Anthony is Thomas the Tank Engine in disguise. That's because, when we visited

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Portobello's late last year, Anthony sang, "He's a really useful engine, you know" a half dozen times.

This year, again, Anthony was a gracious host at the annual "My Mother Meets" pizza party. The idea behind these gatherings is to introduce her to an interesting mix of boxing people.

"Sitting between Seth Abraham and Lou DiBella is an interesting experience," my mother acknowledged after last year's lunch.

And I have to think that eating pizza with Paulie Malignaggi and Vinny Maddalone on either side (2010) is a life-affirming experience.

This year's gathering was on September 24th. Teddy Atlas couldn't make it because of a previous commitment to speak at a local high school. But he sent chocolate and flowers.

Tom Gerbasi was also waylaid by a school commitment. He had to meet with his daughter's college-application counselor. But Tom telephoned to share a recollection about his mother.

"She got pissed off at me when I dedicated my first book to my father," Tom recalled. "She asked, 'Where's my dedication.' I told her, 'Hey; when you die, I'll dedicate a book to you too.'"

The official guest list (in addition to my mother, Anthony, and yours truly) was:

Brian Kenny - The former studio host for *ESPN2 Friday Night Fights*, Brian is currently a studio host for the Major League Baseball Network. He also does play-by-play for MLB Network and was recently hired as the desk host for *Showtime Championship Boxing*

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David Diamante - The ring announcer with the stentorian voice and dreadlocks. David's career has blossomed in recent years. In addition to ring announcing, he's now the in-arena voice of the NBA Brooklyn Nets and narrator of the new NBC Sports offering, *The Lights*.

Harold Lederman – HBO's "unofficial ringside judge," boxing's greatest fan, and possibly the nicest man in boxing.

That's heavy on people who make their living behind a microphone. So we added Michael Woods, esteemed editor of *The Sweet Science* (who's also a contributing writer for *ESPN: The Magazine* and crafts a boxing blog for the ESPN NY website).

Michael (inquisitive reporter that he is) began the conversation by asking my mother, "Can you tell us some embarrassing stories about Tom?"

I shut down that line of inquiry in a hurry and countered with, "Do you have a story you can tell us about your mother?"

"That would be a therapy session," Michael responded.

Brian asked my mother the same question she's always asked at these gatherings: "Have you ever been to a fight?"

"No; and I don't want to go. I don't want to be there when people are hitting each other."

"I can understand," Brian told her. "My wife watches fights on TV all the time. But the first time I took her to a fight, she was aghast. It's different when it's happening right in front of you."

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For a while, we talked about the craft of television commentating.

“I was impressed with Paulie Malignaggi last week on Showtime,” Brian noted. “Before the fight, I told him, ‘You don’t have to talk all the time. If you say one insightful thing each round, you’re doing your job.’ And he did.”

Then the conversation segued to Don King.

“I enjoyed meeting him,” my mother said.

“Don will make you feel like a million dollars,” Brian explained. “But you’re not getting a million dollars.”

We ate pizza for two hours. In between bites, David Diamante talked about finding it hard to believe that he’s where he is professionally. “I love my life,” he told us. “I went through some dark times when I was younger. And to be where I am today; I wouldn’t say I’m lucky, but I’m fortunate.”

Harold and my mother referenced their various aches and pains.

“At a certain age, if you’re not feeling bad, that’s good,” Harold said philosophically.

Eventually, the conversation turned to baseball.

“Yankee Stadium was hallowed ground,” David proclaimed. “Once they tore down the old Yankee Stadium, nothing was sacred anymore.”

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“The best ballpark right now is AT&T Park in San Francisco,” Brian posited. “It’s intimate. They pack the place for every game. I love being at the ballpark; there’s a feel to being there that’s special to me. But my heart races a little more when I’m at ringside. I remember being in Memphis when Mike Tyson fought Lennox Lewis. Tyson was coming down the aisle. I turned to Al Bernstein and said, “Let’s remember what we’re feeling now. After the fight, we’ll sit around and say, ‘Oh, we knew all along what would happen’. But right now, it’s ‘Here comes Mike.’”

Then I learned something about my mother that I hadn’t known before. Brian asked if she’d ever been to a baseball game.

“I went to a few games at Shea Stadium in the early 1990s.”

I’d known that.

“And when I was seventeen, I went to a World Series game at Yankee Stadium. My boyfriend and I got up at four-thirty in the morning and stood on line for hours to sit in the bleachers.”

That I hadn’t known.

“I don’t remember much about the game,” my mother continued. “I went because my boyfriend – his name was Buddy - wanted to go. But it was exciting to be there. You knew the names of the players back then because they didn’t change teams every year.”

For the record; the Yankees played the Cardinals in the 1942 World Series. Stan Musial had just finished his first full season in leftfield for St. Louis. Joe DiMaggio patrolled centerfield for New York. The Cardinals won all three games at Yankee Stadium and emerged triumphant in the series four games to one.

As a remembrance of this year’s “My Mother Meets” luncheon, Brian gave her a gift bag with a “Gertrude Stein” notepad and several other goodies. Harold drove her home afterward.

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As for next year --

“Bring your mother to my restaurant in Easton,” Larry Holmes told me recently. “I’ll give her a champburger.”

Thomas Hauser can be reached by email at thouser@rcn.com. His most recent book (*And the New: An Inside Look at Another Year in Boxing*) was published by the University of Arkansas Press.

[Comment on this article](#)

Radam G says:

Nice copy! Holla!

Buzz Murdock says:

I'm glad Mr. Hauser has a nice relationship with his mother. I want to see a story that begins with "the king has no clothes on", about Chavez the second's theatre of the absurd treatment, and how Nevada State Athletic commission can justify taking a million dollars from Chavez. Nevada gives us gringos a bad name.

tlig says:

Holmes' tight-fist might actually charge you for that Champ Burger. Be careful...

dino da vinci says:

I think every East Coast Italian on earth was mentioned but for Paulie Malignaggi and me. On second glance...

If you tripped in the upper tier of old Yankee Stadium, you'd of landed in the infield.

Lastly, there's a small part of me that thinks that someday we're going to discover that it's actually Mama Hauser that has penned all these gems over the years.