

## Johnny Bos Is Laid To Rest

Written by Rick Folstad  
Monday, 20 May 2013 12:10

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He didn't belong down here.

He tried to make it work, took an occasional matchmaking job that came around maybe five or six times a year, but his heart was stuck in Brooklyn and Sunset Park where he grew up and

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spent most of his life. He still loved the Mets and the Knicks, still liked reading the New York Post.

He talked about being able to walk to Madison Square Garden to see a fight, or strolling over to Jimmy's Corner Bar in Manhattan to have a cocktail or a Pepsi in the days before and after he quit drinking. Those few times he needed a ride, he could catch a cab or take a train or a bus. But mostly he walked. Everything in New York City was close. Which is a good thing because legendary boxing matchmaker John Bosdal, alias Johnny Bos, never drove a car and never boarded a plane. He was afraid to fly.

But nothing was within walking distance of his condo in Clearwater, Florida where he lived the last five years. And as he got older, Bos found it harder and harder to get around, to get to the post office to mail out boxing memorabilia, to get to the grocery store to buy hamburger, Pepsi or Mountain Dew, to get to the Dollar Store to buy snacks or whatever caught his eye.

Florida wasn't a good fit for Bos (pictured above, in 2008 photo by Susan Bowlus, provided kindly by Yuri Foreman, ex junior middleweight champion and friend of Bos).

"Being here is like being in prison," he'd say, standing outside on his balcony with a warm breeze blowing through the palm trees in the middle of winter. "This is hell to me. I feel like I'm in exile."

It would be 80 degrees in Clearwater and 20 degrees and snowing in New York City and Bos would tell me how much he missed the cold.

He was never happy down here and I think that contributed to his death. He died of congestive heart failure at his condo on May 11 at age 61.

We said our final good-byes to him on Saturday (May 18) at a funeral home in Hudson, FL, where Bos' brother Jeff lives.

It was a simple ceremony with maybe 40 of Bos' closest friends attending. Of course, they were mostly boxing people, including former heavyweight champion of the world, Pinklon Thomas, and boxing manager/promoter Harry Barnett, who flew down from his home in Atlanta for the funeral. Barnett had known Bos since Bos was 16.

After the service, we all stood outside in the hot Florida sun and told Johnny Bos stories. Most of them had happy endings. Bos prided himself in never intentionally hurting anyone in his life, and believing that a handshake was the only thing needed to close a deal. There are not many guys like that around anymore. He also knew more about boxers and boxing than anyone I've ever known.

We all stood out there a long time. There were a lot of good stories and good fights to talk about.

Still, the one fight that haunted John to the end was the Joey Gamache – Arturo Gatti fight in

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February 2000 in the Garden in New York City. That's when some questionable maneuvering at the pre-fight weigh-in by the New York State Athletic Commission allowed an over-weight Gatti to put on more than 20 pounds before the fight. Gamache, who suffered a career-ending second-round knockout in the fight, sued the NYSAC and won. But no money changed hands and Bos, who was managing Gamache, was unofficially blackballed by several state athletic commissions in the Northeast. He couldn't find work.

"It was all because of that one fight," Johnny would say. "That one fight ruined me."

It also drove him south to Florida, where he owned a condo.

"I love New York," Johnny would say. "New York just doesn't love me."

It was one of the few times he was wrong.

Shortly after the Gamache-Gatti fiasco, Johnny was diagnosed with congestive heart disease. He blamed the blackballing for his condition and said the doctors gave him five years. He made it to 13 years, the disease finally catching up to him last week.

Before we left the funeral home, I asked Jeff Bosdal where his brother was going to be buried. He told me Bos would be cremated and his ashes sent up to New York City where they belong.

I'd like to think they'll send him up by train.

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### **dino da vinci says:**

They will do a movie about him at some point, I'd imagine. It's a natural really. Great sport, interesting story, interesting man. Born at the wrong time, had Johnny been born thirty years before he'd be a household name and already enshrined in the Boxing Hall of Fame. Yes, he'll make it anyway (If he doesn't, break out the plywood) he's one of the last of a breed. I'm not one to preach all that much, but when you make a deal (about anything) you know the spirit of intent. If, a person is operating without a contract, because there was a level of trust, and that trust is violated because no written contract is in place, well, the abusive individual is a full-fledged weasel. The day of the handshake agreement is, as of today, with Johnny being laid to rest, officially over.

RIP, Big Fella.

### **Schteeve says:**

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RIP Johnny Bos.

### **deepwater says:**

This article is accurate. Boz hated Fla and if he could have,he would of lived out of a car in ny. a man like Boz is always needed in nyc.

### **SpringsT says:**

Thank you for this article, Rick. Well done. Johnny Bos was one of those connectors between the present and the past. He had a long reach. The last time we spoke, he told me things he had heard and looked into about old-time fighters with names like Walcott and Sheppard and Norfolk. I took notes.

### **Carmine Cas says:**

R.I.P. Johnny