

Artis W.Pruitt      June 12<sup>th</sup>, 1932 - May 13th 2016



### **My Friend Art**

I first met Art in the halls of the YMCA in 1962. We were both looking for a game of handball. I was 18 and he was 29. Soon we began meeting there after work 3-5 days a week. After about 2 months, his wife Vi told him he could just move his bed down to court #2, since she saw him less than I did. In the middle 60's we started playing doubles tournaments in numerous cities across the mid America region. In 1973 Art was transferred to Lansing to work. He played during the week with the guys there but played with our group on Saturdays. We were building a friendship that went far beyond the handball court. Art was a guy who read a lot and could talk on a lot of things. He would start talking about religion or politics and "kibitzing" in general. He sure knew how to stir things up. We would laugh when the sparks started to fly.

I remember the time we entered our first YMCA National Tournament held in Minneapolis in 1974. Art had asked Vi if she wanted to go too. She said no, saying it was too cold, and too much snow in March. She was shocked and a little upset when he asked her to take him to the airport that morning. She would have gone if she had known we were flying. She did fly with us to Tucson Arizona in 1986 for the USHA Nationals, and we all had a great time. Some of the best times were spent at Belle Isle in Detroit and at the Lucas County Park in the Toledo area where various tournaments were held including the 3-Wall Nationals every Labor Day weekend. And there were many 4wall tournaments all over the country and Canada that we played in over the years.

Now on to the other side of Art. You could always rely on Art to help you with almost anything. He would help with questions about taxes and even did them for someone I know who couldn't afford to get them done and didn't understand how to do it. Then, there was the time he set up schedule for the handball guys to paint the house of one of our players who had had a stroke. That's the kind of guy he was. He helped one of the guys build an addition onto their house. He even got many of us to donate time at the soup kitchen where he often volunteered. And he told Sue after the last time he helped us move, that we better stay put, as he wasn't going to help us move again. I know he was committed to his family. He spent time with the ill or elderly seeing the needs and then filling that need. He was a good son, grandson, father, grandfather, son-in-law, grandfather, and great-grandfather. He would tell us with pride of their accomplishments but always asked about my family to give me a chance to brag a little.

Even though it's been a while since he has been able to play regularly, I still get asked about him when I go to Detroit or different places to play in tournaments around our region. When he stopped playing, he still would come to the Y and workout. He took time to join us for a brewski at the White Horse where we all meet after our matches. That's where a lot of that those "stirring things up" got done. We would have picnics each summer, at a different player's home. At our house, one year, the guys were all looking for their favorite brew, only to find Milwaukee's Best in every cooler. That was Art's favorite beer. I always kept a beer in the refrigerator for Art, when he came over. I still have a few cold ones in there. Art had a massive stroke on March 29th, while doing one of his weekly 2-4 mile walks. On May 13th 2016 Art passed on. He is now playing doubles handball with John Parks, Bill Ruth, and Ray Dzywira or singles with Bob Colles. Our friendship and comradery lasted over 54 years.

I'm writing this on my way to the Canadian Nationals in Burlington, Ont. I believe this may have been the last National 4wall tournament that Art played in in 2005. I'm hoping one of our hometown players will win one for him this year. I know the halls and the handball courts at the Flint YMCA will never be the same without him.

PS: A few lighter moments included—Art and I were in the hot tub at 3 a.m. at the Tucson Nationals, drinking brewski's, and Norm Young was in his room sleeping. Vi told Art the next day that if we trained like Norm we would also win. We had already lost, so we were just enjoying life. Another time, I had just had another knee surgery and could not play in the Saginaw Mi. tournament, so I coached Art and Don Clemmer in their Doubles Matches. Vi told Art if he listened to me, they could win the tournament. On the Monday after the tournament I hand delivered the 1st place trophy to Vi. Those were just 2 of the many memories that I have of our friendship.

Art was the best friend that a person could have.

Charlie Doyle