

Marty Bordato

Oct 28, 1956 † Mar 9, 2008

Good Morning. My name is Mitch Gariador and I am honored to

have been asked by the family to speak to you today about my good friend Marty Bordato. We are all struggling to understand why we are gathered today to say goodbye to an exceptional man. He has been taken from us far too prematurely, without warning and at a moment in life when he seemed to have found true happiness. How do we reconcile this, how do we get rid of the anger, the disbelief, the unfairness that comes with something that seems so cruel and unjust. I won't tell you how to do this as I am still dealing with all those emotions myself and it will take all of us a great deal of time to heal. However, I would like to spend this time to share some memories of Marty, what he meant to me and what I think we should all learn from his life.

Last night, we listened to five individuals who shared with us specific details of the various worlds of Marty's life. We heard about UPS, the 23rd St gang, the Southern California Basque Club, racquetball and from Janet's family. I thoroughly enjoyed listening to each one of the speakers because they all gave a different perspective to Marty's life and four of those worlds were totally unfamiliar to me. What I noticed though that in each of Marty's worlds there were some overarching themes that ran loud and clear. You will hear many of the same conclusions about Marty from me which means that Marty was a very multidimensional person but his core values were simple and solid.

It is obvious by the number of people here today that he touched many lives. Marty was a person who truly loved being around people. He had the biggest smile and wanted to make others smile and laugh. He loved sharing stories and finding out how others were doing in their lives. He was devoted to his family; he was always surrounded by friends and made friends out of strangers on a daily basis. He had multiple groups of friends that he was close to his entire life. Marty was everyone's best friend and we are all going to miss that smile and everlasting humor.

I know some may think that it is disrespectful to laugh at a sorrowful time like this but I know Marty would want us to laugh. Marty's gift in life was his ability to make people laugh and to laugh at this time is to honor Marty's legacy. Today we will laugh with tears in our eyes but we are laughing at the extraordinary humor that

fulfilled Marty's life. He had a repertoire of stories that was amazing and he

had an uncanny ability to tell them. He also had a number of impersonations that he would share with anyone who was willing to listen. His laugh was infectious and you couldn't help being happy when you were around him.

Martin Dominique Bordato was born on October 28, 1956 in Long Beach, CA. His father, Michel Bordato was an immigrant from the village of Lasse in the Basque country of France. He was sponsored by his uncle who lived in Montecito and he came to America to work as a butler and driver. At one time during the 1930's he worked in the home of George Burns and Gracie Allen. Marty's mother, Anna Uhalde was born in Artesia to Basque immigrants. Marty has a sister Marianna who usually got the blame for anything Marty did wrong while they were growing up. The family lived in Artesia in a house that their parents built next to the dairy that originally belonged to Anna's parents. Their family vacations usually consisted of visiting their cousins, the Bicyar's and Barbaste's, in Patterson. Marty loved his parents dearly but unfortunately, they were taken from him and Marianna at a young age. Marty's first best friend was his mother as he told me many times he could talk to her about anything.

Living isolated on dairy land was not conducive to Marty's attraction to people. In 1966, the family sold the Artesia property and built a new house on 23rd St in Upland which was surrounded by lemon groves and was at the base of Mt. Baldy. Their father loved looking at the mountains as it reminded him of the Basque country. This new neighborhood was perfect for Marty as it was filled with a group of kids around the same age who used to play together day and night. Parents didn't worry then about the kids hanging out in the neighborhood as the streets were safe. His friendship with the 23rd St gang continues today as they continue to gather and enjoy each other's company as often as possible.

I was also born into the Basque community and don't even remember meeting Marty. It seems as if we have always been friends since we were little boys. We went to the Basque picnics, the Centro Basco Hotel or any other celebration the Basques were having. One of my earliest distinct memories of Marty was at a wedding in which I was the ring bearer. We were about 10 years old. I panicked that evening when I was told that each of the wedding party had to kiss their partner. While we were

downstairs playing in the kitchen at the DES hall, we saw my father looking for me. Marty told me to hide in one of the empty trash cans. Of course, I listened to Marty and jumped in wearing a tuxedo with a white jacket. Marty tried to convince my father that he didn't know where I was but he wasn't real convincing. We certainly got in trouble but it was an early example of Marty helping out a friend in need.

Marty would come and spend weekends in Chino especially if there was a Basque function. He would stay at the Cihigoyenetches with our friend Jean and the two of them, my brother Randy and I would meet and play all day until we fell asleep exhausted across a couple of chairs. We participated in the Basque dance group and extended our group of friends to other Basque children. As we got into our high school years we began to venture out and make friends with the Basque kids from La Puente. We went to all the Basque picnics and loved to head to Bakersfield and Los Banos picnics. One year Marty was suppose to drive five of us to Bakersfield in his mother's Cadillac. He didn't show up so we were forced to head north in Rich Bockstahler's Datsun B210. We must have been quite a site going up the grapevine with our heads hanging out the window while Rich ran the heater at full blast to avoid overheating. A few hours later, Marty rolled into Bakersfield alone in the Cadillac with the biggest smile on his face and simply said he had overslept. He thought it was just hilarious. This Basque community has created relationships for us that remain more like family than friends.

Marty was a natural athlete. His favorite sport was baseball which he played in Little League, high school and later in various softball leagues. One year, he pitched a no hitter but the strong effort resulted in an injured elbow, so thereafter he played shortstop. As an adult he has enjoyed racquetball and golf where he wasn't just playing a game, as much as he was meeting new friends. He loved to go to tournaments and play someone new. He enjoyed playing the Basque game of pala at the Bidart court. At one time we both enjoyed skiing. I remember that a group of us went to Mammoth one year and I was going to teach Marty to ski. We went up the ski lifts and I stopped at the crest expecting Marty to stop with me but before I knew it he had gone straight past me and was swooshing down the hill as if he had been skiing for years. He loved playing many other sports including ping

pong, basketball and darts. He even ran in a few LA marathons. He was very competitive and not pleased with himself unless he won, however, he was never one to boast, he was a very humble man even in triumph.

In 1978, Marty, Marianna, our friend Kathie Bachoc-Goyeneche and I all participated in the Basque Studies Program. We spent two months in France and Spain and experienced first hand the culture of our parents. This would be Marty's only trip there but he would never forget the welcome and hospitality of our families and friends. However, there was some culture shock as we stayed in one centuries old monastery where the hot water would regularly shut off in the middle of a shower, we had to wash our clothes with a wash board and bucket and coffee milk in the mornings included floating chunks of milk fat. Marty often told the story of how he would wash his hair outside in a water trough at the Bordato family farm. He would push aside the algae then dunk his head quickly in the cold water. The most adventurous moment of the trip was running with the bulls at Pamplona. This trip had many wonderful memories but it truly made us appreciate all that we have here in America.

Marty was a hard working individual. He worked a variety of jobs as a teenager including a couple of seasons as a batboy at Dodger Stadium. He treasured an autographed baseball that he had the biggest stars of the day sign. After high school he worked at Chicks Sporting Goods and Youngs Market Company in Los Angeles. For a couple of years, Marty and Marianna owned and operated a restaurant in Claremont called the Café Basque. His career though would be with UPS where he spent over 25 years. He recently received the UPS Circle of Honor for 25 years of safe driving. UPS was the source of another group of good friends that he did many things with including softball and golf tournaments. He truly loved the camaraderie of that group of friends as they shared pranks with each other on a daily basis. He loved to go to work and he was always willing to help out a friend at any time.

In 1982, Marty married Jill Asper and their family began with the births of Marc, Brendan and Jenae. He loved his family dearly and enjoyed watching his kids grow up. He loved to spend time with his children so he could ensure that each of them felt special. They have many fond memories of their father. Jenae shared that he would take her out on her birthdays alone and he was so good at remembering the little things. They like to laugh about Marty's old

suburban. One year, Marty and Marc wanted to watch motocross in Las Vegas but instead of putting too many miles on his beloved truck, he rented a cheap car for the trip. On one trip home from Santa Maria the suburban broke down and instead of getting upset, Marty and Brendan hit golf balls against the mountain until the tow truck arrived. One year for Marty's birthday he decided to take the kids to Disneyland and at the end of the day when they were all exhausted, Marty started doing impersonations of an Asian tourist taking pictures. They laughed together for over an hour. Marc felt like he was talking to a friend rather than a father. Marty loved every moment he spent with his kids and he loved to talk about them. He was always proud of their accomplishments but was especially proud to see each of them grow into young adults. It is clear to me that he has passed along some of his characteristics to each of his kids.

Marc, he was so proud of you graduating as an underwater welder and finding your first job in that field. I have noticed recently that you have your father's ability to tell jokes with that same little grin when you get to the punch line. It amazes me how you and your father could remember so many stories. Don't ever stop telling stories and making the people around you laugh. I have already mentioned that this was your father's gift and you will honor him every time you tell a story and make someone laugh.

Brendan, you are the image of your father and have your father's adventurous spirit. I know he has been tough on you the past couple of years for spending your time working the ski lifts in Mammoth instead of going to college. He was being a good father by asking you to take the sensible path to adulthood. However, I knew your dad at that age and I am sure deep down he was envious and proud of you for enjoying life to its fullest. Having said that and being the father of an overly energetic teenage boy myself; please be careful, know your limits and return to school soon. He will always be proud of you.

Jenae, you have become such a beautiful young woman. Your father used to say that you were his little princess. You could do no wrong and he was so proud of everything that you do, especially your going to Cal State San Bernardino. On the way to a wedding reception recently, we stopped to have a drink where you work. His eyes lit up when you came by to say hi. I have known three generations of women in the Bordato family,

actually four with Ashley, and there are some characteristics that I think are common. They have dignity, inner strength and enduring friendships. I know your father saw those same traits in you.

Aside from spending time with his children, Marty spent the last few years catching up with his family and old friends. He lived with his sister Marianna for a few years and became even closer to her. She marveled at his ability to stop and talk to everyone in the neighborhood. Once again he spoke with her as a best friend rather than her brother. He always loved being with his niece Anna Marie and their similar competitive spirits showed up often in their activities and discussions. He thought of her husband Mickey as a son and their daughter, Ashley was another princess for him in the Bordato family.

A few years ago, he was happy to join the Southern California Basque Club as his father had been a member in the past. He loved working at the annual picnic and participating in the Basque community. Marty was one of the few people our age that carries on the Basque tradition of visiting. Our parents and grandparents used to go visit family and friends on a regular basis. We get so busy and tied up with our daily lives that we don't do enough of that but Marty always made it a point to visit. He even visited friends of his parents who were still living. I will never forget his visits to our house. The kids would call me excitedly when Marty would arrive. We would go in the backyard with a couple of beers, turn on the radio to classic oldies and talk about everything. Marty loved music and his favorite group was the Eagles. Talking with Marty was so easy. He made us all feel so comfortable that we could talk to him for hours. I will truly miss my conversations with Marty.

Janet came into Marty's life two years ago. She also worked at UPS and he admired her from afar for years but the policies of UPS preventing dating between drivers and management stopped him from getting too close. However, her attraction was too strong and eventually he took a chance and with a line about some work question, he got her out into a hallway and asked her out. Apparently, she also thought he was "hot" but was worried that he might be too young. Marty always looked younger than he was and obviously this time he found the right woman. It was evident from the first time we all met Janet that Marty was in love. Marty was always happy but according to Marianna and Anna Marie he had become "disgustingly happy".

Ten months ago Marty and Janet were married surrounded by their families and friends from 23rd St, UPS, raquetball and the Basque community. It was a small group representing all parts of his life with his only regret not being able to invite more friends. It was a wonderful evening and the smile on Marty's face was never brighter. In marrying Janet, he also inherited a big family which you know he loved. Janet has six siblings and four children of her own. Marty was an instant hit with his new family, especially her children because he made her happy again. Janet and Marty won a trip recently and they were planning to go to Boston next month. Marty was so looking forward to seeing a baseball game at Fenway Park. They were even talking about one day retiring to the Santa Maria area. I have heard Janet say so many times over the last week how happy he made her but Janet never forget how happy you made Marty. Your time together has been short but the happiness you have given each other is more than many people get in an entire lifetime.

Four weeks ago, Delora and I along with five other families organized a gathering of our Chino/La Puente friends to say goodbye to the Opie family who are moving to Texas. There were about 75 of us, some friends we haven't seen in years and we certainly haven't gathered as a group for over 20 years. It was a perfectly beautiful February day and I have no doubt Marty thoroughly enjoyed catching up with his old friends, introducing his wife and sharing many stories. While we thought we were organizing this event for the Opies, we had no idea that God had a much bigger plan in mind and now I believe the gathering was really our farewell to Marty. What special memories we all have of that day.

I am truly grateful that I got to spend last Saturday night having dinner with Marty and Janet. They had just completed a remodel of their kitchen and wanted to share it. Delora and I were invited along with Jean and Susan Cihigoyenette and Ken and Suzie Opie. Marty was so proud to show off the work that they did on the house as well as the other parts that he always took meticulous care of: his garage, his vehicles and the backyard. Marty was the consummate perfectionist and everything had to have its exact place. There is no doubt that he spent the entire day ensuring that everything was perfect and I can assure you that everything went perfectly that evening. Marty was in his element; he was entertaining with jokes and old stories, he did

impersonations, his steaks and the whole dinner were wonderful and he enjoyed sharing the evening with his wife. After dinner, we played darts. He played casually until the very end, when the rest of us were tiring, he focused and he threw two perfect bull eyes to end the game. It was just like him not to let the game just end, he had to win it. We all said our goodbyes but two hours later Janet called us with a terrified voice that Marty had collapsed, she needed help. Memories of the rest of that horrible morning are stuck in my brain but I hope one day that my first thoughts of the day will return to the wonderful evening we had and the privilege I had sitting down with Marty for his last dinner.

I have no doubts that Marty has arrived in heaven and is making it an even happier place. He has been reunited with his parents, his godfather Martin, cousins Yvette and John as well as many other family members. He is sharing time again with his good friends Ray Herrera and Steve Dotta along with two friends who shared his ability to make people laugh: Noel Mendivil and Remy Goyeneche. I can only imagine the stories and impersonations that Noel, Remy and Marty are doing in heaven. I would love to be there when Marty does his impersonation of John Wayne for John Wayne.

How do we sum up this wonderful life? It was short by most standards as he was only 51 years old, however, Marty lived every moment to the fullest. He was fulfilled in life by his wife, children, sister, niece, family and friends from every facet of his life. But he was never satisfied with this as he was constantly making new friends and sharing his jokes and impersonations with them. We are all better in our lives because we knew and loved Marty. To say goodbye to him this quickly is among the hardest things that we have ever had to do but we can't be selfish as God must have a better plan in place for Marty. I have to believe that Marty made enough people laugh, he had found true happiness and thus his work on earth was finished. So what have we learned from Marty? We can all honor the legacy of Marty by being happy, laughing, helping others, visiting family and friends and enjoying life to its fullest.

Marty, we will miss you dearly. Thank you for every laugh and kind act you did for us. Your memory will be in our hearts forever. Your friendship was a treasure that none of us will ever forget. You will always be "our best friend"!