

Passing the Ball On

Ralph Rivera

BEFORE YOU READ: What games have you passed on to your children?

LEARN AN IDIOM: What does it mean to “egg someone on”? Try using it in a sentence.

As a child, I played many games — baseball, basketball, tag, and handball. My favorite game was handball. From morning to night, I played. It would make my mind go to a peaceful place.

I mostly played against a wall in a playground in my neighborhood in Brooklyn. I also played in many different tournaments, all over the five boroughs of New York City. I played one-on-one and sometimes two-on-two; it all depended on who was there in the court.

Handball is a game of strategy. We played for money. We played for fun. We played all over. We played against people of all ages. We played to learn. There was a 90-year old man in our neighborhood. He used to beat me every time!

I would always look forward to the morning, just so I could play my handball. Even in the snow and even in the rain, I kept playing. I practiced all the time to get better and to sharpen my skills. It’s easy to practice. All you need is a wall.

As time went by, I couldn’t play as much. I missed playing handball. But I am happy that I was able to pass my love down to my daughter. She started to play handball. She would egg me on, saying, “The old man can’t play!” I became the teacher, and she was the student of the game that I loved. Her friends started to play too. They came to find out that I wasn’t the “old man” they thought I was!

Handball was the greatest thing in the world for me: the thrill of a lifetime!

AFTER YOU READ: What are the examples of intergenerational play in this article? Based on the article and your experience, what are the advantages of continuing to play as we get older? Write about it.



Ralph Rivera is a student at East Village Access, and he also studies at the NYC Education Department in midtown Manhattan. He is a member of Fountain House where he participates in the Culinary Unit. He loves it!

