**The Kitchen**

His Grandmother’s kitchen always smelled of fresh picked basil, Jergens aloe hand cream and extra virgin olive oil co-mingling with meatballs and crushed roma tomatoes. Gramps always took enough time on his turn of Rummy for her to stir the stockpot of gravy and play a couple rounds of War with her grandson on the side. They dunked chunks of crusty bread in the pot every hour for a “taste test” but it was perfect every time. That room taught a child to love. In that linoleum fortress he learned to cherish food, family and those precious few days in life when you can make it all about both.

**The Beach**

The last breath of an ocean wave rolled over the boy’s toes for the first time. He had already instinctively ditched his flip-flops and his parents not two steps onto the sand. The boy ran to that magical line where the shore becomes slush and just waited for the sea to meet him there. When she did, the boy was hooked. The ocean retreated and teased his toes to follow. The boy couldn’t swim yet so instead he sunk, splashed and snorted. They bonded for life that warm summer morning. Salt, sun and olive skin were all together. Meant to be.

**The Fan**

There was no AC just open windows and distractions. The carpet smelled of smoke and spilled Rolling Rock. The couch was tattered but ideal for hiding behind past bedtime. The wood paneled TV had no remote and no HD. But it did have one unforgettable player at the old Boston Garden. A boy was mesmerized by the shot-fakes, put-backs and of course the up-and-unders. He wore Celtic green and in 1986 he became a boy’s first sports hero in a room full of Knick fans. The boy had learned to like basketball but he loved Kevin McHale at first sight.

Pasquale DeMatteo

6-30-14