Excerpt from PEDRO by Pedro Martinez and Michael Silverman 2015

Right beside my induction— along with Roger, Nomar, and my good friend, Red Sox radio announcer Joe Castiglione— into the Red Sox Hall of Fame in 2014, the highlight from my first five years after being retired came in the spring of 2011, when my portrait was unveiled at the Smithsonian Institution’s National Portrait Gallery in Washington, DC.

My friend Susan Miller-Havens was an artist from Cambridge, Massachusetts, who in 2000 painted three portraits of me, one of which Gloria Gammons, Peter Gammons’s wife, bought as a present for Peter. Depicting me with a blue Red Sox cap and a Dominican Republic flag patched to my sleeve, it stands nearly five feet high. I’m wearing my whites and standing on the back of the mound, my right leg raised slightly, the resin bag at my feet, my stare fixed on an unseen batter. My glove is tucked under my right arm, and I’m using both hands to rub the ball. Most of the light in the painting is focused on my hands and fingers, the feature of my body that Susan and I had discussed in detail.

I would spend time in her studio in Cambridge and listen to her explain her craft. **The more we discussed painting, the more we felt an affinity and mutual appreciation for how much our respective talents flowed from our fingers**. I loved the painting, which is entitled El Orgullo y la Determinación (“Pride and Determination”).

Susan had another painting in the National Portrait Gallery, of Red Sox catcher Carlton Fisk, and when she went back for a visit in 2009 she noticed how few Hispanics were in the collection. She learned that one reason for the paucity of Hispanics was that some of the deserving were not American citizens, a gallery prerequisite. I had become a naturalized citizen in 2006. The Gallery decided that my story and Susan’s painting were a fit, and the Gammonses donated their painting to the gallery.

Nearly everyone in my family came for the ceremony: Carolina, my mother, Ramon and Jesus, Luz Maria and Anadelia, a couple of cousins, Angel and Franklin, and two of my sons, Pedro and Jerito. Nayla, my daughter, wasn’t allowed out of school for the day. Also there were Juan Marichal, Dave Wallace, Ralph Avila, and Fernando Cuza. When I got up on the stage to say a few words, I got much more emotional than I had planned. Looking out at my family, I felt keenly the absence of my father. I started to get weepy, but I held it together for the most part.

I leaned hard into the podium as I spoke.

“I cannot really express with words how much joy I feel right now,” I said. “I’ve been in tough games— really, really tough games— but never felt this much emotion in any of the games as I’m feeling right now. I’m not a person that gets nervous or anything, but I’m a little shaky, and it’s all because of what I think I’m representing.”

**Susan’s painting holds a secret, one that by now I don’t think will surprise anyone who has read this deeply into the book.**

Before Susan gave the mound its final layer of deep dioxide purple paint, she painted a cluster of bougainvillea flowers, known as trinitaria in the Dominican Republic, on the ground. Each bougainvillea has a small white flower in the center, and it is surrounded by paperthin petals, which Susan painted orange, magenta, and purple, with sap green for the leaves.

Nobody ever associated me with flowers while I was standing on a baseball mound with a ball in my hands. Staring down the batter with the cold eyes of an assassin and the unseen heart of a lion, I was ready to wreak the baseball equivalent of murder against the batter.

**The softer side of me stayed hidden, like Susan’s flowers.**

**Behind every big-league pitcher stands the real person, each with his own story to tell of resilience and an offering of hope.**

Mine is the story of a young boy and then a man who overcame his demons, fought his battles, overcame the doubters, and ignored the taunts and jeers of the fans who acted as if they knew the man in front of them, the man who lived, loved, cried, and laughed his way from the humblest beginning to this blessed present.

From the mango tree to the top of the world.

A ball in my hand, flowers at my feet.

End of book