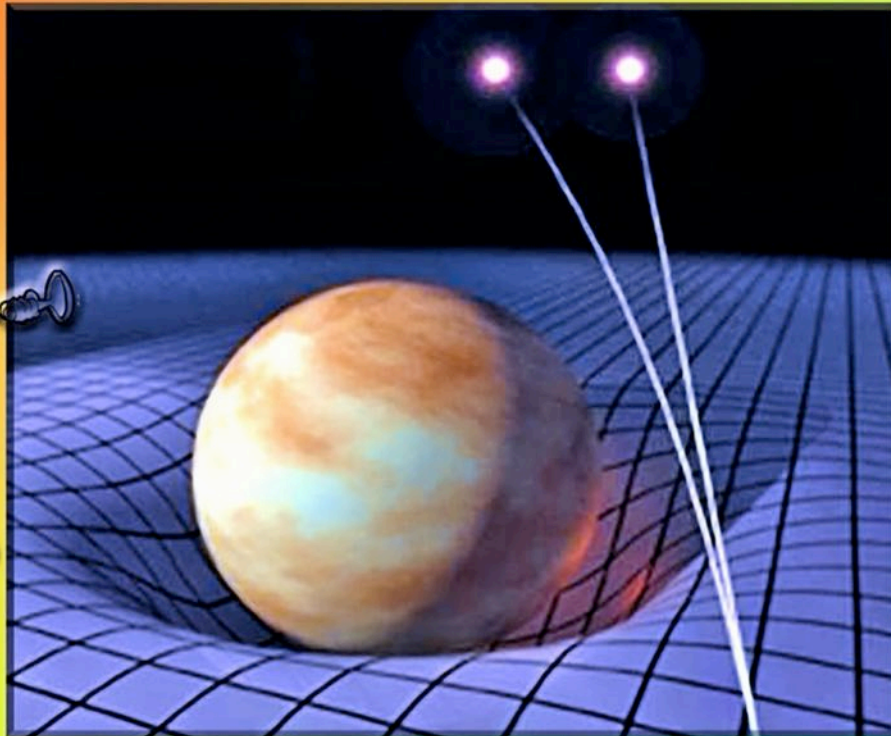




# Austin's Tennis Tips



Copyright 2016 Austin P. Torney



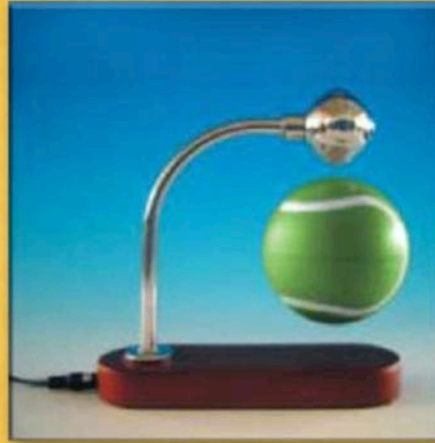
## Chapter 1: The Tennis Ball



The bright yellow ball (the easiest color to see) with fuzz may often rotate as it travels, in a forward 'topspin' direction, if brushed upwards with the racquet, for will pushe the ball down during flight, and so it can but rarely go out. When it hits the ground, it 'bites', and bounces extra high. Some might need a ladder to reach it. Bjorn Borg and Nadal employ extreme versions of topspin. Austin does, too, sometimes, if he has the time.



If, on other hand, which is really the same hand, the ball is undercut as a 'slice', it floats with this under-spin as a thing of beauty, and dies when it lands, skidding, and staying extra low. On grass it is devastating—one would like to dig underground for a place to stand to get a swing at it. Ken Rosewall was a master of the slice.



floater

I once witnessed the holy grail of tennis, the severe slice, performed by a friend who had escaped from Vietnam. This severe slice landed, and never came back up, but just squiggled sideways on the ground.

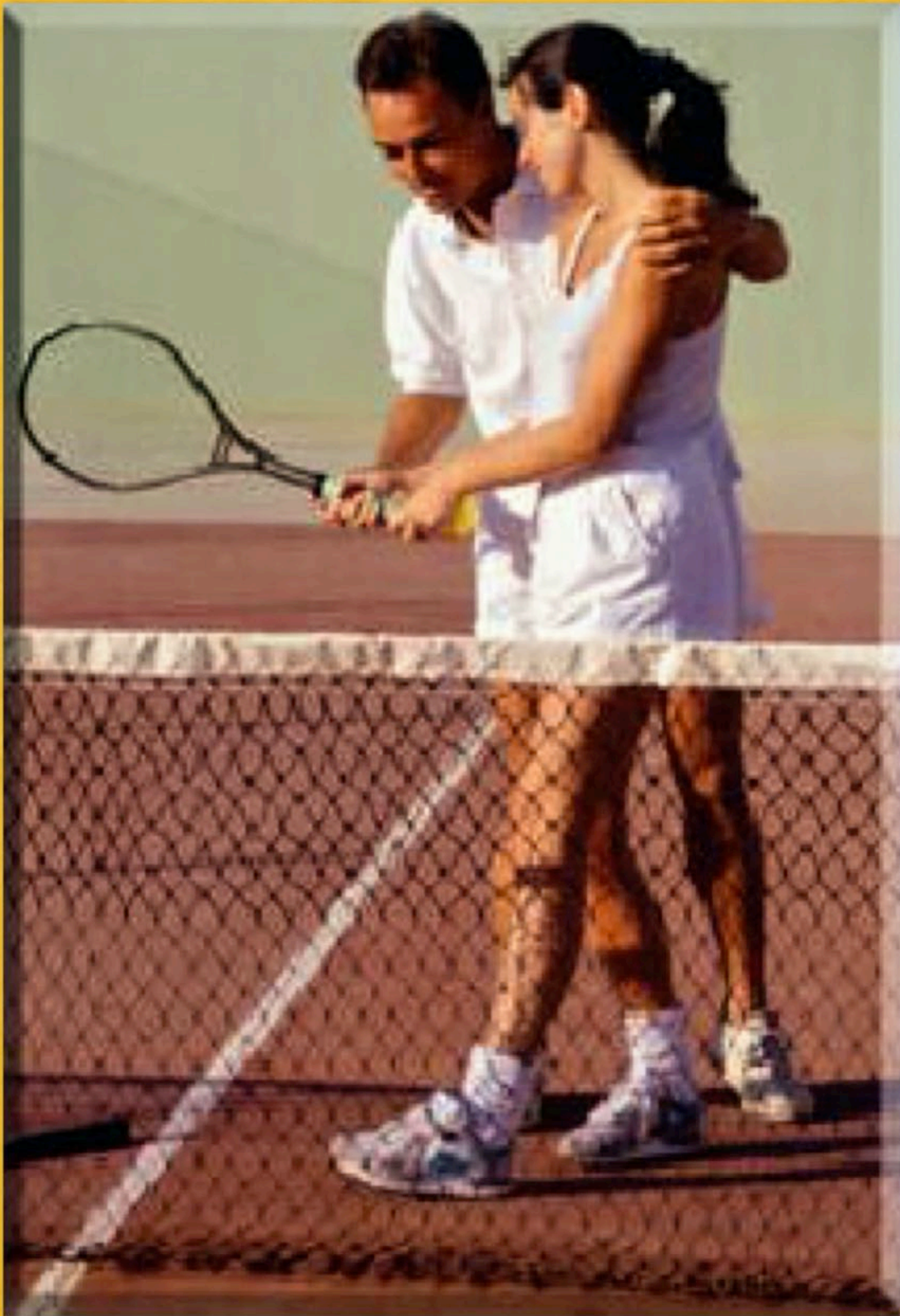
The top pro at our club, at one time, Carol, who once played Chris Evert, and was first on the men's team at college, said such a slice was nearly nigh impossible, but, I saw it performed against me many times, although I've never seen it again by anyone else.

Flat shots with no spin are risky, since they barely clear the net, but Jimmy Connors was a master at this, and this shot is the fastest of them all.

In serving or volleying, many of the same effects can be accomplished, via spin or hitting flat. When volleying, which is hitting the ball before it bounces, one sometimes has to counter its spin with an opposite spin.



In doubles, when your partner asks you which side you want, always say “inside”, explaining that it could be raining or snowing outside.



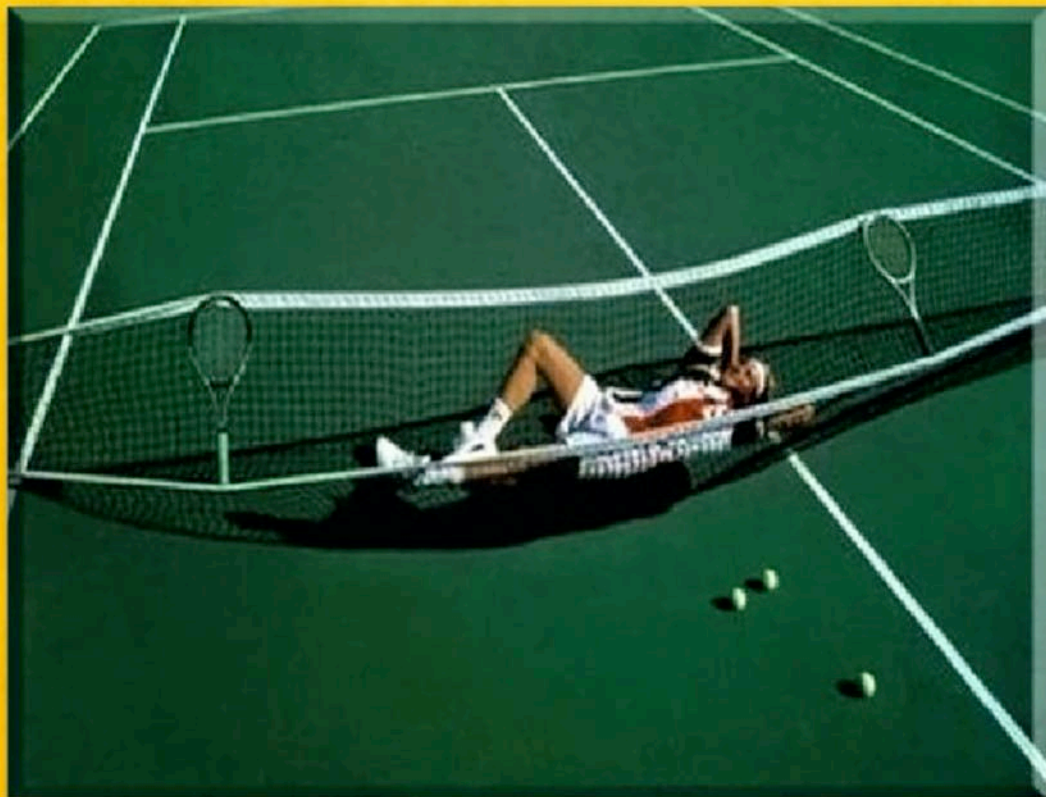
Swingers



## Chapter 2: General Tips



The bigger racquet, the better, but there is a limit.



Be sure to take plenty of breaks; don't overwork yourself.



*'Tis Better to Serve  
Than to Receive.*



It is to your advantage to serve first.  
You can take out no-fault insurance  
to avoid the penalties of double faults or foot faults.





Always watch the ball hit your racquet.  
Often we think we are looking at the ball but are really not.



Watch how the opponent hits the ball.  
What else is there to do, really, while you are waiting?



*Inner/Outer Tennis—  
the mental game...*



*Note the arc of the ball's path;  
ride the ball; become the ball!*

Zen Tennis

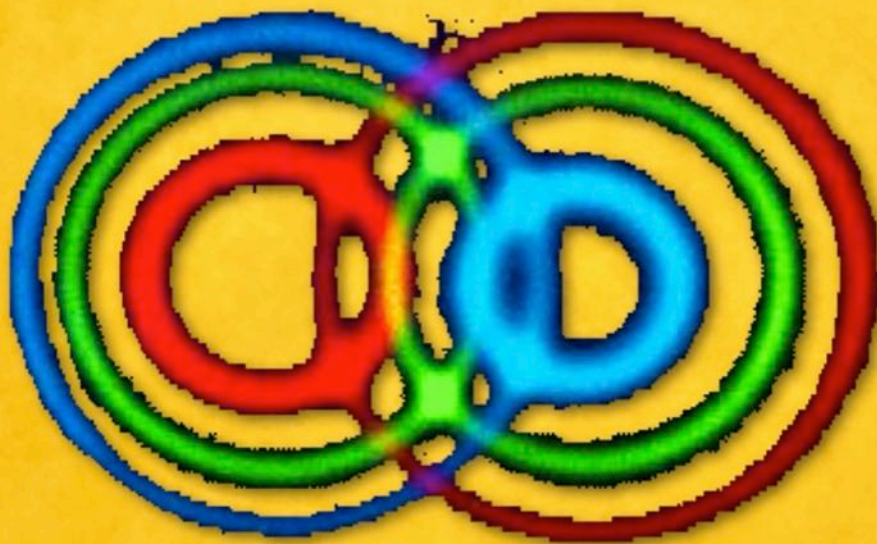
See the ball in flight as an arc and become the ball.







If the ball hits the top of the net and wavers there, try to blow it across, or cause an earthquake by stomping your feet.



Push a volley with a locked wrist.





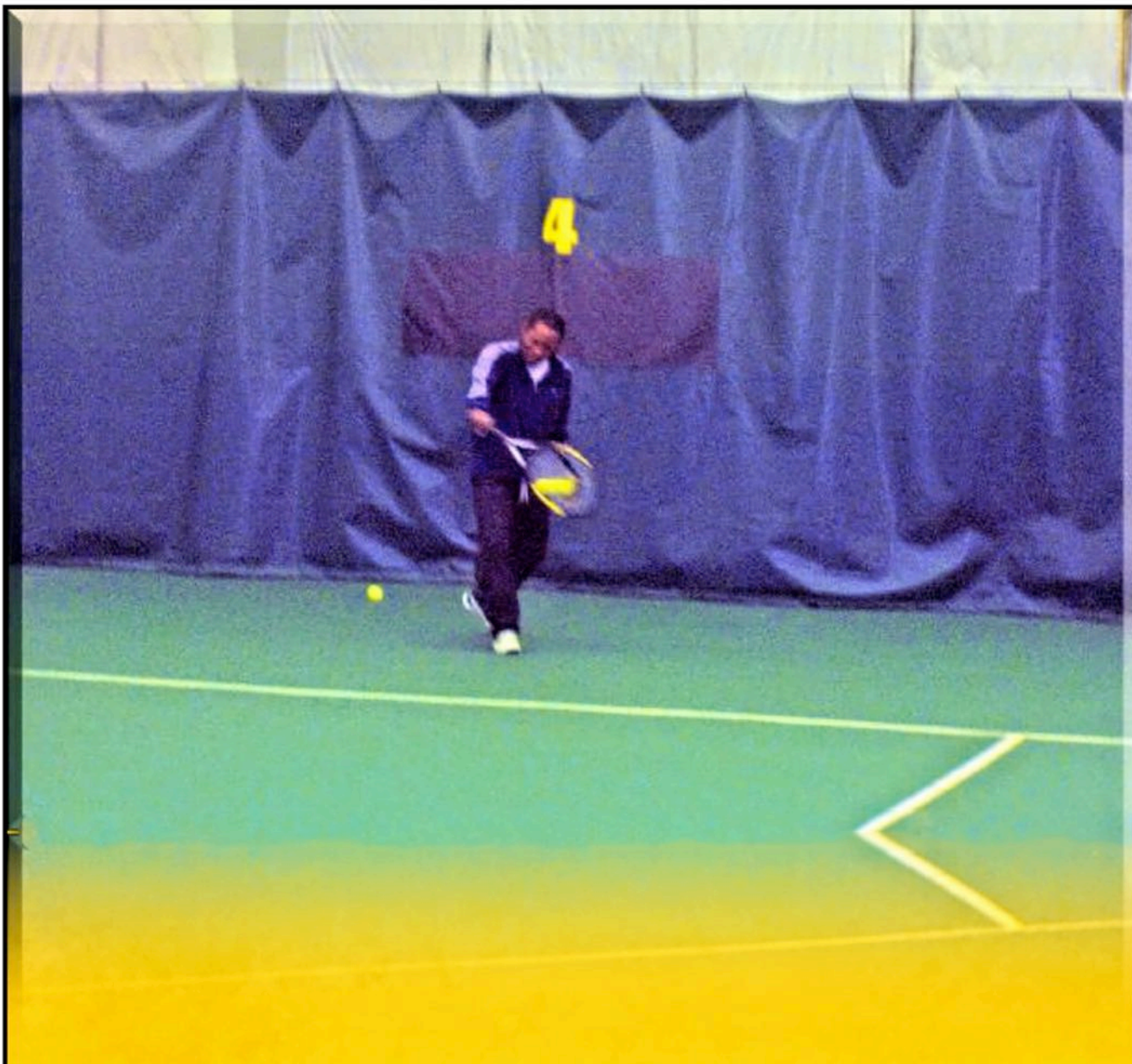
Always remain sideways when hitting the ball.  
Take the racquet back early, like Father Anthony, here.  
On a forehand, at first, keep the part of your arm,  
above the elbow, against your body.

Always catch a bad toss when serving.  
This is the only play in tennis that you can take back.



The best state in which to learn tennis is Tennessee.





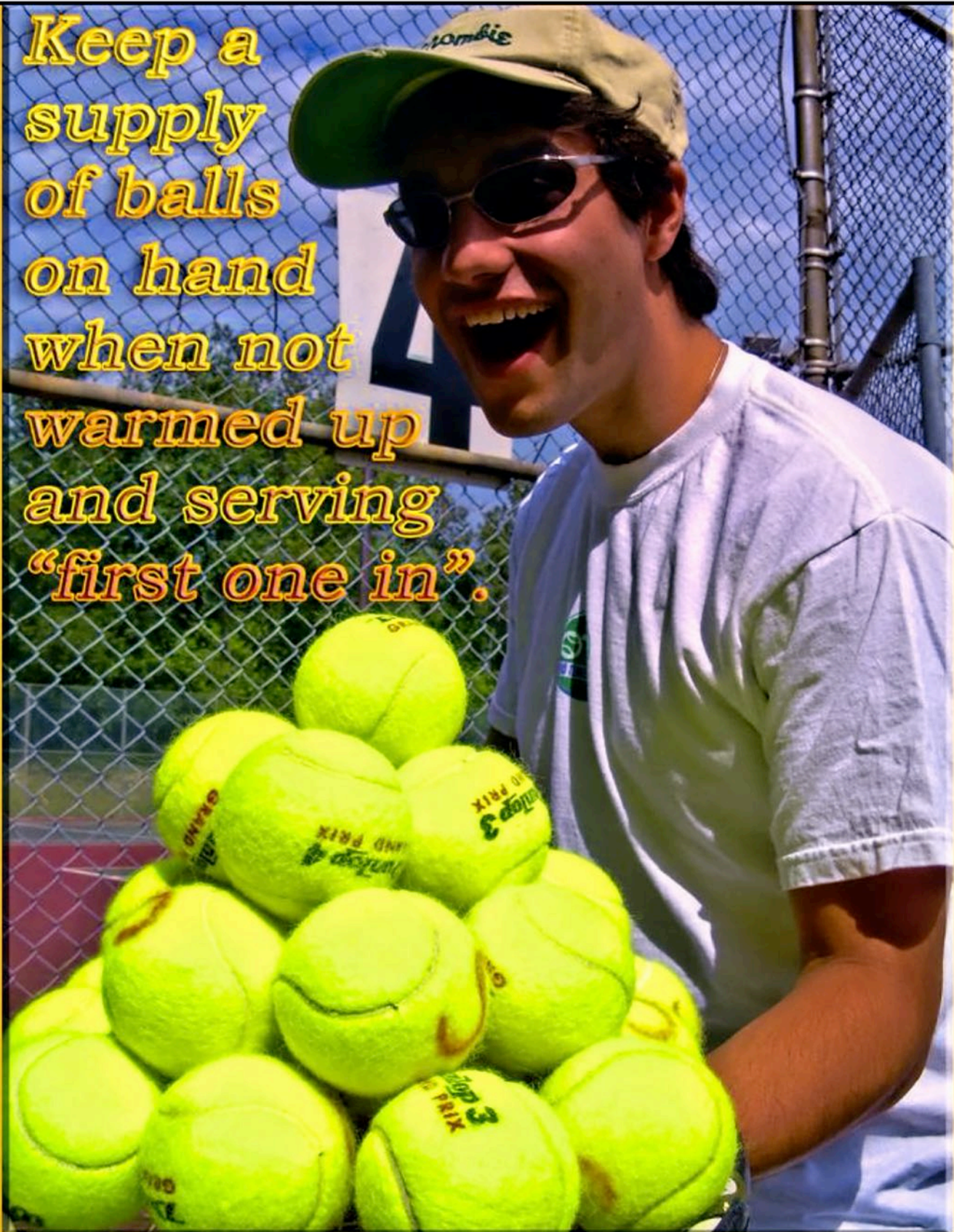
On a backhand, rotate your shoulder,  
and then uncoil it, adding in some prayers, perhaps.

Here's a joke to tell:

Tell someone about the great play you made,  
pointing way up above your head, and over,  
to where you had to reach a ball,  
the tell them you saved the day—  
by catching the bad toss.



Keep a supply of balls on hand when not warmed up and serving "first one in".



In friendly games, instead of warming up serves, one may wish to play "first one in".

Of course, then, you could try for an ace, but that could take a while, netting most of them.





*Use  
all  
the  
parts  
of  
your  
racquet*

---

*you  
paid  
for  
the  
whole  
thing!*



Play all night long  
with these



glow-in-the-dark  
radioactive balls.

Try to get some practice in at night  
when the courts are not so busy.  
Perhaps invite Madam Curie to play.





Don't take any "bull" from the opponents!



Test out some different courts for their atmosphere.





Beware of tennis elbow; use good technique.  
If you do get tennis elbow,  
learn to play two-handed from both sides.  
Fix your injury with elbow grease.



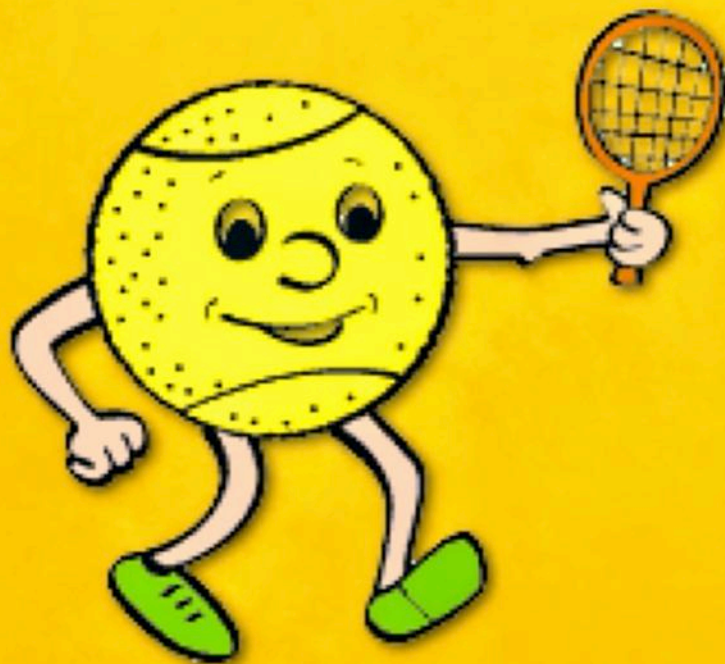
Keeping your eye on the ball will cause it to appear as large as a watermelon.







Enjoy playing year round in all kinds of weather.  
Remember, it is always sunny on the inside.







Use Bounty, the quicker picker-upper,  
to dry the court. or use a "Sham-Wow",  
but don't throw it in the pool,  
for it will suck up all the water.



Watch the  
ball hit  
the racquet...



Really now, always look at the ball.

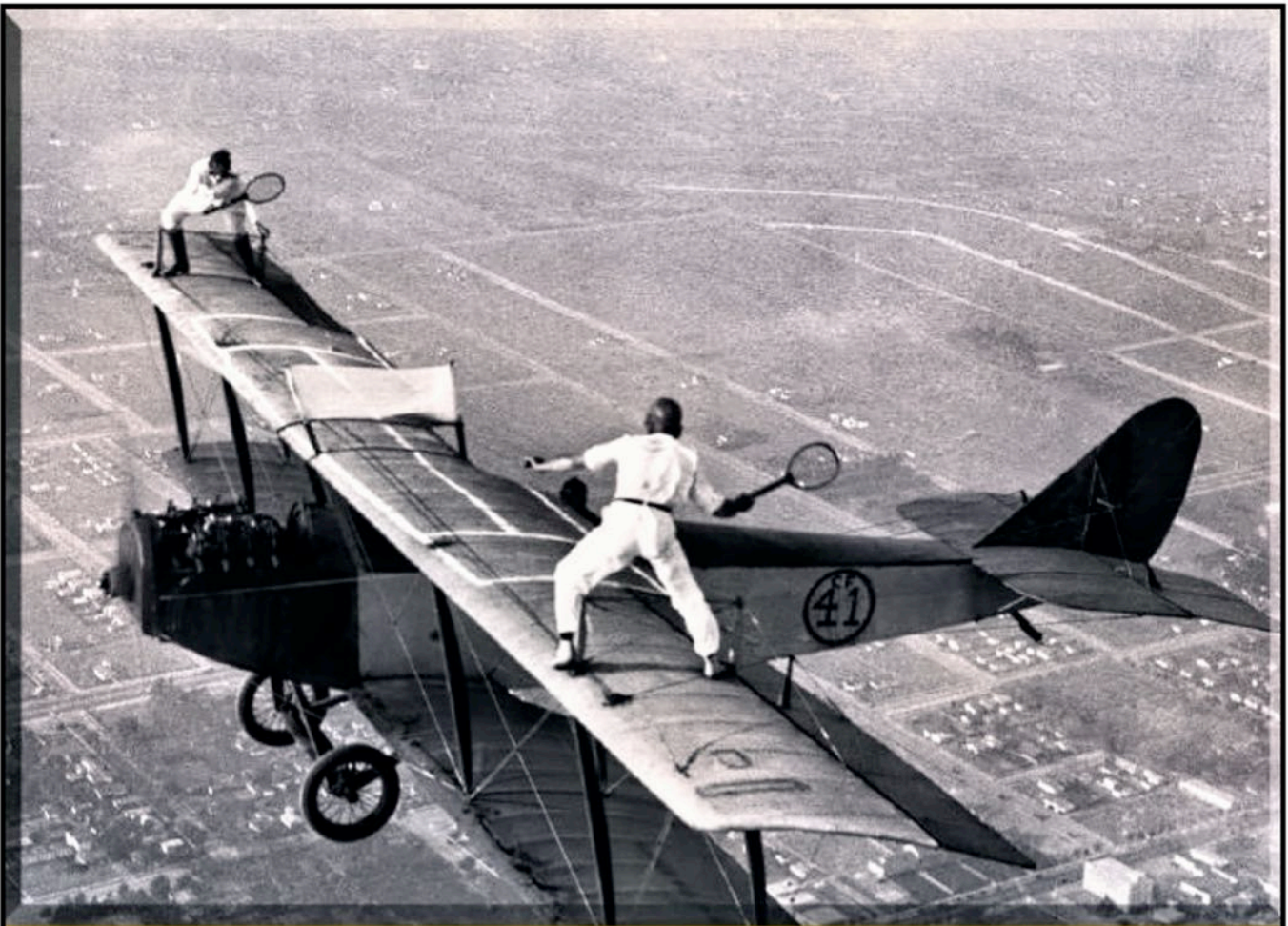




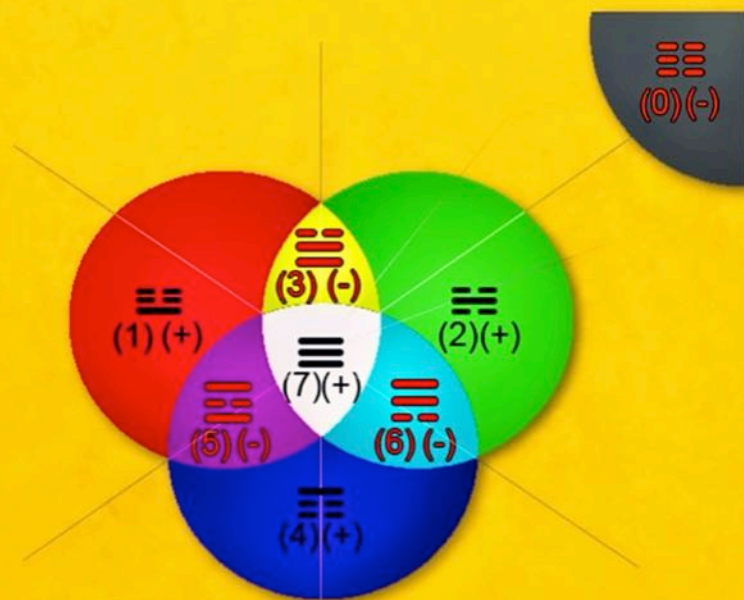
Always have drinks on hand.



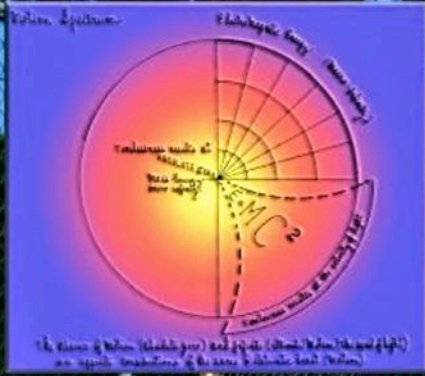




Tennis can be played just about anywhere.







Do not think



except for where you want the ball to go—then everything else follows.

Think not; therefore you are a tennis player.  
 Too much thinking will ruin your game;  
 Rather, become thoughtless.





*Avoid turning into  
a frozen statue—  
follow the ball  
to and from  
your opponent's  
racquet.*

They only make statues for the greatest players.



Always be sure to fully bend your knees.

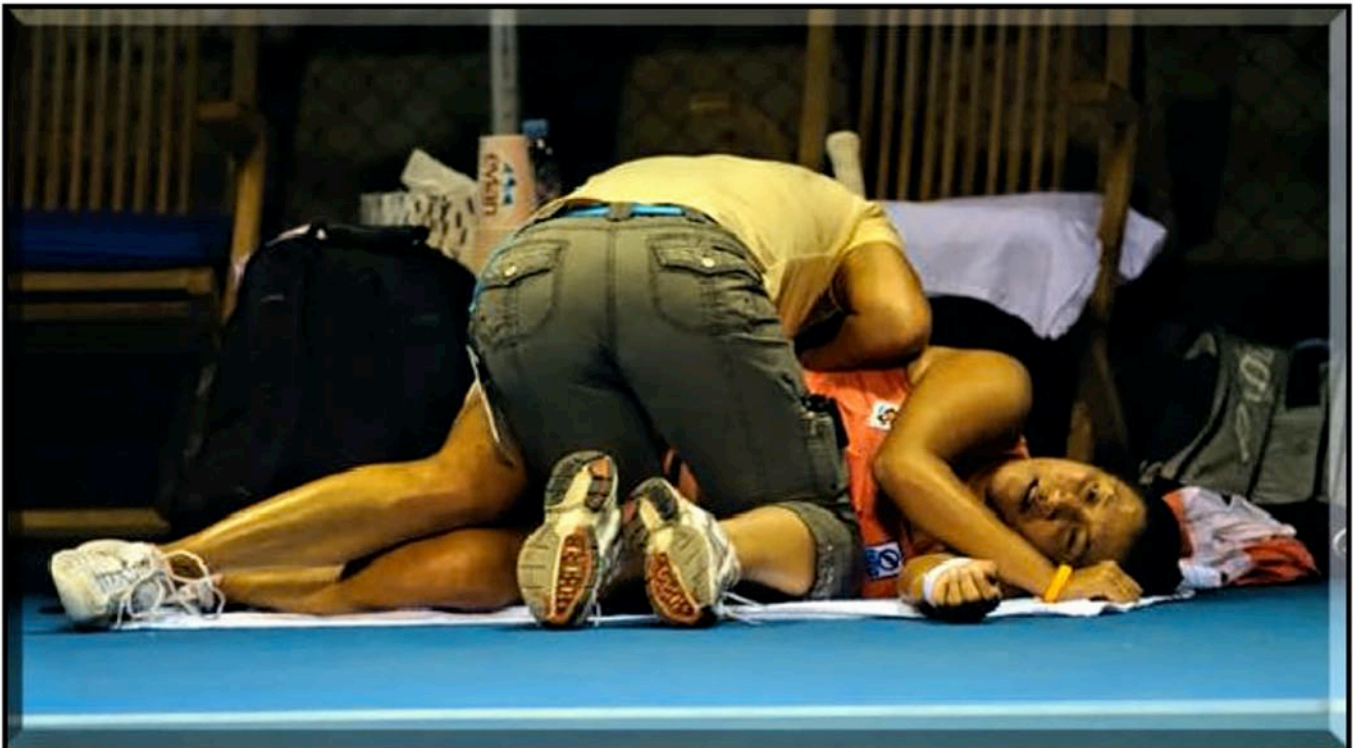


"To the moon, Alice."



One may discover other planets while playing tennis.



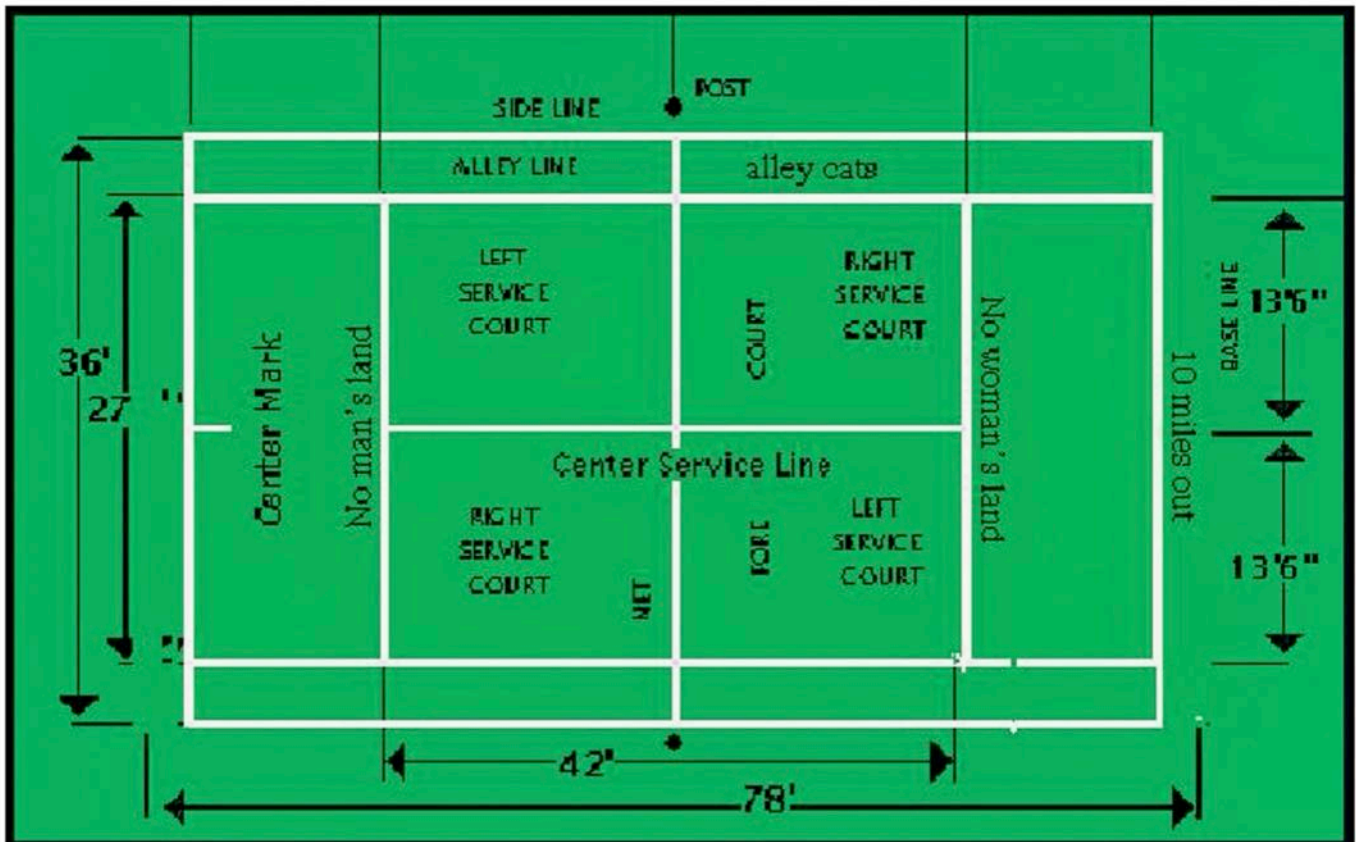



Back rubs are a necessary evil.



Be friendly after the game, if not during.  
However, the score was only at 4-3,  
so perhaps they were having a tug-of-war.







## The Supreme Court

Always void the net of evil,  
 and stay within the white lines.  
 Do the same in life.

When going to court, don't curse the judges,  
 And don't let your lawyer or your coach do it for you.





Typical tennis attire.



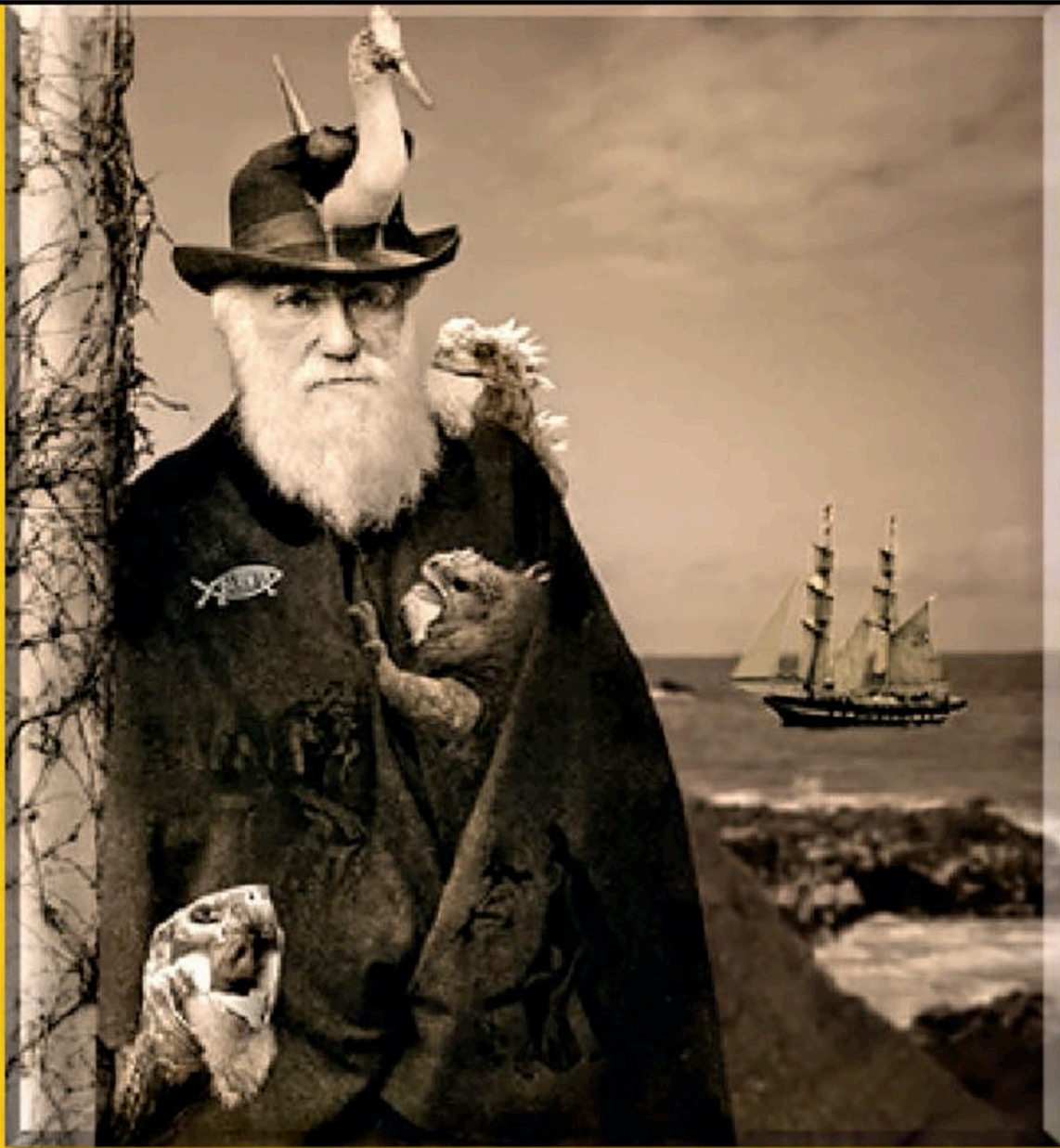
Beware of tennis ball poachers.





Wearing the finest clothes may help your fame,  
but it will not improve your game.





Charles Darwin,  
considering playing with the lady below...

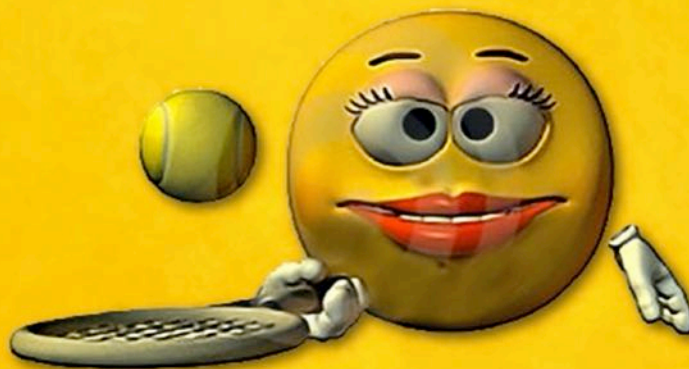


...However, he decided to invent natural selection instead.





Have a ball! (Always keep some handy.)  
Write your name on the ball, if you wish, like Maria did.



Don't think that much about mechanics during play,  
just about the ball placement options,  
except when learning something for the first time.



### **Chapter 3: The Universe of Sports (And Movie Stars and Ball Machine Sentience)**

Within the universe, there are some lessor realms to rule, and, once, for a short time, I became the ruler of the tennis world, due to a series of fortunate events that gradually but miraculously unfolded as will eventually follow.

I happened to be at the U.S Tennis Open, having been given some not-so-free tickets from Carol, the Queen of the Tennis Palace. She can still beat just about anyone anytime she chooses to. Some years ago, just after getting out of college, where she actually played third on the men's team, she played a big match against the legendary Chris Evert. Carol was yet on the rise toward greatness, while Chrissy was well into her prime, but still number 1.

Carol was really in the zone during the first of the three-set match, playing out of her skull, and so she easily won the first set, maybe 6-4 or so, which is not really as close as it looks. During the break, Carol thought, "Wait a minute, I can't be beating Chris Evert..." She then lost twelve games in a row. Of course, Carol still won many big tournaments.

So, anyway, I was now entering the grand arena of the Tennis Open in NYC, Carol having stayed behind to watch the fort. I saw Jaime, another one of our best teaching pros, sitting in a front row box, with John McEnroe, of complaining fame, and Charlize Theron, of movie fame. Jaime is from England, but now lives here, and was nationally ranked, and is still in his prime at about 30 something, and is quite a fun guy. Our jokes on and off the court often played off each other in feedback loops that ever escalated to hilarity.

So, Jaime waves me over and I gladly take the seat of someone who couldn't come, and so now I am sort of a tennis prince, seeing as everyone around probably thinks



that I am someone important, yet, I am very far from the throne.

Back at home, I drove out to the Millbrook Tennis Club, which is close by, and is where I play sometimes, like never, and where Jaime works part time. Entering the village, I stopped at the old time Millbrook Diner for breakfast. Here is a picture of it, to which I added some cars that could have been there:



I was having sausage, bacon, and eggs over easy when Mary Tyler Moore came in and sat with me, for the place is small and she knew me from some fund raiser thing. This was not unusual, for Millbrook is a quaint retreat for many TV and movie stars for some odd reason. They are just regular people when not doing their acting thing. I went to the club, Mary Tyler coming too. She mentioned that she may be selling her house to Sandra Bullock.



McEnroe was visiting the Millbrook Club with his rock star wife, Patty, and playing with a lady, who was not exactly a great player, in a mixed doubles match, doing so as a favor, against Jaime and someone good. I watched and noted that they surely didn't hit the ball to McEnroe if they could avoid it, although, of course, John won all his service games, but it wasn't enough, and so Jaime's team won easily. Thus it kind of was that Jaime would rise in the standings more than McEnroe.

Quite recently, Judy and I were playing mixed doubles against tiny Kari and Jaime at our Hopewell club. I knew we had a good chance when, before the match, I noted Judy taking off her sneakers and putting on a special pair that had never touched anything but a tennis court. For a moment it looked like she had four shoes for four legs, and so I had to count them. My sneakers were grass-stained, and so I explained that it was from playing on the grass courts of Wimbledon, although it was really from cutting the lawn at home.

Now, Kari is full of ninja strokes and voodoo, and of course Jaime could do anything with the ball. He was a minute late, and came running in all the way through the basketball court and on into our indoor court, as if the rain outside was still chasing him, but we had already won the first game. The match for control of the universe continued, Ming the Merciless not even in the running.

Well, we tried not to hit the ball to Jaime, and that was working well enough, although he is so speedy that he reached some of them anyway. We were barely ahead, needing just one more game to win the match. Judy's game had been at her best, and 'serving' was now her middle name, since she had none.



High noon arrived, somewhere outside, and then there was only one more point that we needed to win the match. The air was tense, even with the humour laying all about the court from the match, especially when Jaime put some side spin on a ball earlier on, calling it 'English', as in billiards. We requested that he should rather put 'United States' on the call since we don't really get that English stuff.

My left arm was temporarily shaky from a stinging shot. I tossed the ball up for the serve; it went up over and behind my head and rolled back toward the curtain. The tension began dissipating. No problem about the toss, though, for this is the only time in tennis when you get a do-over.

I took another ball out of my pocket and tossed it a bit too high; I would have caught it to try again, as per usual, but it hit the hanging light, and made a big bong and bounced away. Now everyone was falling over with laughter.

Meanwhile, my tossing arm steadied and return to normal. This was the moment.

Composure soon returned to all, and I took the third ball out of my pocket, tossed it up perfectly and made a really great hard serve right at Jaime's feet. Well, although unable to swing at it, he was unfazed, and so he blocked it, sending a perfect lob up and over my partner's head, even though she was at mid court.

I went running over behind her to see the ball landing just inside the baseline and then taking a healthy bounce. I ran it down, getting a good cross court lob back, but I was moving so fast that I then exited the court by going right through the curtain at the back corner of the court, where it overlaps at the entrance.



I peeked back through to see Jaime running down the lob, just getting to it, and putting the dreaded sideswipe on the ball as he went on into the flimsy netting that was between the courts.

There were now only the two ladies left on the court. Judy eyed the corkscrewing ball suspiciously, and, sure enough, it went sideways after its weird bounce, but she got the edge of her racket on it, and, as it kind of ran around the rim of her racquet, dumped and/or heaved it over the net where it just squiggled away, and so we won the point and the match!

So, thus it was that we had beaten the team had beaten McEnroe's team, and so you could say that we had beaten McEnroe. Anything wrong with my logic in this? This is how rankings work; you could be ahead of someone who you had never even played directly. So, I see no problem with this reasoning. I was now the Vice-President of the universe.

Now, Mac was number 1 in the world about 15 years back, but since I am old, this cancels out those intervening years, plus he still has 90% plus of his ability, and so it was that I alone had become the near King of tennis, since Judy had to go home, but I was not yet the absolute tennis ruler of the universe, the power behind its throne, for there was still an actual machine that played tennis that I would have to beat in order to get close to ruling the tennis universe.





## Chapter 4: The Ball Machine



I was alone in the tennis palace as I noted the spaciousness of its four courts and the high vaulted roof; it was more of a cathedral. People worship there on Sunday. I walked down to court four, went behind the curtain, and woke up the Playmate from slumber—not a centerfold, but the ball machine that was named as such. I plugged it in and it came to life with a beep-beep, much like R2D2.

Surprisingly, it rolled out on its own. Apparently it had evolved some amount of sentience. There were about 200 balls in it, of various wear and tear—the dustbin of those that were once new and fuzzy. If I could miss no more than 20 balls, I would dominate the Cosmos. Why? Because I am the human and so I makka da rules.



I was going to set the machine on moderate, but I noted that it was already turning its dials somehow toward impossible. I would be playing against a canon that would send the balls very deep, forcing me to hit them back while they were still on the rise from the bounce. Furthermore, it had set the spread to random, giving me no pattern to surmise. To boot, the balls, not being consistent since they were of various not new ages, would add even more uncertainty principles.

I tried to cheat and change the settings back, but the big green machine gave me an electric shock. Well, then, before I knew it, it tried to quick-serve me, and fired off three balls before I could even get over to the other side and into position, so I discounted these, allowing myself three more misses.

I missed a few until I fully warmed up, and so I discounted these as well, for warming up is always allowed.

Now, the darn machine did not exactly come completely ready to play, for it had no arms and so it couldn't return any of my shots at all. I didn't take a lot off for this, out of compassion for the handicapped, but I did let myself to be able to use the doubles alleys to count for me as a shot not being out.

The balls were coming at a frequency quicker than in any real life game, but this only allowed me to better refine my stroke via the instant feedback. Ha, nice try, machine!

Of course, if I hit the net or hit out of bounds, I lost a point. Any close calls near the line went to me, of course, as I couldn't really tell from that far away, plus the machine was mute and blind and couldn't make calls.

The machine occasionally shot some balls out of bounds, and some close calls that had to go to me, balls that must



have had thin fuzz, so I had to add these mistakes to my number of allowed misses. Rules are rules, you know.

The battle was on, no one even around to distract me, although this would not be the best way for me to back my claim later. Lovely breezes wafted through the back door as I became one with the universe, my chirality changing as necessary for backhand or forehand shots.

Some canon balls came so fast and deep that all I could do was block them back as lobs. If I hit the ceiling, that still counted for me, as the sky should really be the limit.

Twenty-five minutes went by, and the available balls seemed endless; I had only one allowed miss left. A time gap occurred between firings, for probably all six ball slots were not filled up anymore. That would throw me off.

The machine caught me off guard, and I missed one, being now at my limit. There was a longer pause, and then a screamer out of the blue. My return hit the net cord and fell back. I was one over the limit, so I made a new rule: if I could hit the machine itself, then I would get 3 points, a risk since the machine was just out of bounds. OK, another miss, then a long pause; there was probably just one ball left that was taking time to rotate into the firing position.

All was so silent. Then it came and it was an easy ball; I hit the machine with my return and so I went back under the limit. The machine stopped and whined, then rolled itself off, crying, back behind the curtain, and instantly powered off without even shaking hands. My, my, some take tennis much too seriously.

The lights flickered, but I, as the King, sent energy into them—and they saw, and became the light again, but, really, it was closing time, and they soon all again went out, leaving me to use my cat-like powers to maneuver in the dark.



“Let there be light,” Queen Carol said, as she flicked the override switch behind the curtain, coming on through an opening like an enchantress.

“We’ll play a set for the realm of the multiverse,” she said. “I won’t even warm up, while you are advantaged and in the zone from playing the machine and from virtually beating McEnroe.”

She looked tired, having worked all day. This was my one chance, though, coming on of the best of my days.

I won the first 5 games, the waves of fatigue pressing her back. I was playing above my skill level, somehow, making superman shots. She had been at work 11 hours, ever dedicated, even endlessly teaching all the tiny little kids.

The 5th game had been close, and I could detect a kind of heavenly reserve showing forth in her, of a life both beyond and long before, as a sort of glow seemed to come about her. During the odd game break, I felt a sense of joyful doom, along with the wondering of, “Wait a minute; how can I be beating Carol?”

Well, I lost the next 7 games, coming back down to Earth from Krypton, but she knew, she knew I had been there, in the zone, on a rare September day.



Having been dethroned, I must now eat at this dump:

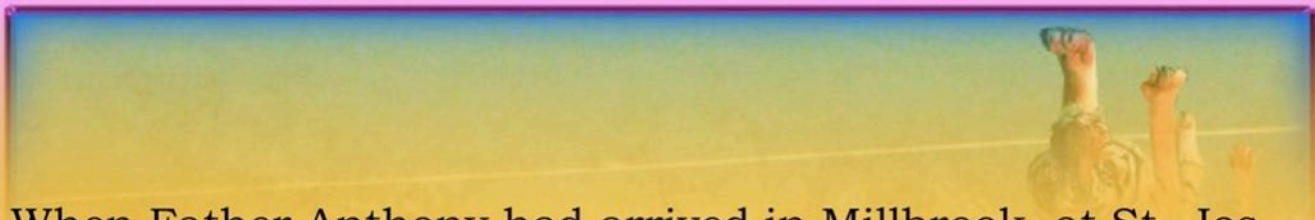




Over grits, I wondered if the universe was an accident... or what.



## Chapter 5: The Phenom



When Father Anthony had arrived in Millbrook, at St. Joseph's Catholic Church, at the beginning of the 3rd millennium, seven years ago from Ghana, at age 40 or so, his superiors noted that he still played soccer quite a lot, he having been a star athlete in his youth, in Africa, and, so, not wishing him to become incapacitated from such play and not be able to serve mass and such due to possibly breaking his foot or leg, gave him a tennis racquet and asked him to please stop playing soccer. So, he excelled in tennis, but eventually wore out his knee, and had to have it operated on.



My near holy friend Karen, already well known on the courts as Wicked Slicer Sister Karen, and I, discovered The Most Holy Reverend Anthony on the courts one day. He was returning everything that the ball machine could throw at him. Now, Karen was not actually a nun, but was indeed the last of the Jesus/Magdelane blood line.

Whenever either of them hit the ball to me, it came in low, hard, and deep, this being the toughest kind of shot anyone ever had to handle, but it was then the same back to them, for I could return it, by scooping, as in golf, even using its speed to advantage, as they then did mine, and so it went mostly that we did this as much or more than playing actual games on long Friday afternoons.

'Twas but them that ever knew that I was studying the Theory of Everything, for the Sister had a natural interest in Everything, while the good Father really needed to know All, for his courses in ethics, psychology, and such so that he could counsel parishioners on matters from children to work to marriage, none of which he had ever done or was allowed to do himself, of course, due to celibacy and his priestly duties. All were such things that we would discuss on the riverside later on in the afternoon. As for the others, like Cindy Ann, the two Robins, Ninja Kara, Judy, Steve, Amy, Kaz, Pavel, Bob, Lauren, Luiza, Jack, Joe, and the rest, they just thought that I had some good jokes and that I somehow knew more than a few things.

It was Friday, and so the Holy Father was off and out of the 11 A.M. mass and headed toward the tennis courts like a bat out of Hell... while Sister Karen quickly transformed from a glorious blonde model and mother of five into a ponytailed 50's girl.



Sometimes my shots would hit the net cord and totter there for a second, then fall back to my side and I would have to say things like “Where’s the Pope when you need him!”, for he had just visited New York. Of course, then I’d hear a smiling Father Anthony playfully scolding, “Austin!”.





## Chapter 6: On the Road of Love



As much fun and story as this all was and would be, this is an interlude of tale of love-love now, and so we must jump aside to some other concurrent happenings of which none yet knew the karma of then...



One's character usually becomes one's fate, so, as such, evil often rides the road to ruin, and so the drunk driver's car slammed into a tree one night on the Taconic Parkway, a driving way, actually, and certainly nowhere to be parking.

Death arrived that night, and therefore Passionia became free of that Devil, her Husband Drinker. Her wine of life was aging gracefully, and she was yet glorious, at 44 or so, her children almost grown, but, most of all, and more importantly, she was overflowing with a life that could never play squash. Tennis now called her back, onto our club's courts, where-whence one day she gave light and light to the "holy" trinity already assembled there, the Father, me, the nonbeliever, and the Sister.

During an odd-game break one Friday, Sister Karen said to me, "I think that you likest her and I believest that she likes you, too."

I answered, "Yes. So to her the same idea propose and get thou backest to me with haste."

Cameth back the answer true.

We soon found ourselves together behind the curtain, looking for the third new tennis ball. She whispered a phrase from a song that we came to know from cardio-tennis drills: "How right can you be for me!"...

...and so we kissed a few times... Father and Sister smiling and waiting after we came out, at last, but without the ball. We found ourselves alone at dinner late that afternoon into the evening...

A few days later, I was drinking coffee and watching the large HD TV out in the lobby conference room, since a ladies doubles tournament was going on, and someone ran



up to me saying, “She said that she’s in pain and that you could make her smile...”

I ran forth through the fitness center and the basketball areas, and out onto the tennis courts to see that she was lying on the ground, having twisted her ankle. I lifted her and carried her out, she leaning her cheek unnecessarily snug and close against my own...

...then x-rays; nothing broken; I brought her to her home; she took four Advil PMs to reduce the swelling, then my first stay over as night fell and she slept it off.

Upon awakening in the middle of the night, she said, “No one’s going to love you more than I do.”

“So, too, to you, Miss Karma, as I have found.”  
In the morning I wrapped her ankle.

...A week later I was falling and heading for the concrete, which is the hardest thing about tennis, all 200 pounds of me, as I do every few years when running too hard on the court. Or else maybe I was doing a study of gravity. I knew it was coming, so I was happy to note that I would land on my left side and did, sliding a foot or so forward, but somehow the racquet in my right hand affected my right wrist and so I received a bad sprain. The x-ray technician thought that it was broken, but I moved it all around for her, hiding the pain, and she said, “Well, maybe not.”

I went to church for a blessing. After the Gospel, Father Anthony identified me as his tennis coach, and so I held up my racquet in church, drawing a laugh from everyone. He went on to say that I gave him the greatest tennis tip ever—of “don’t hit the net with the ball” and “that in life we should stay between the white lines and must ever be aware of becoming ensnared by the net of evil that can halt progress in life”.



I mentioned that I had been running somewhere, hitting the road of the pavement, so to speak. It had a white line in the middle and an alley on either side. Unfortunately, the road rose up to meet me near the net and I sprained my wrist. Then I decided to really hit the road.

“How about a road trip to Chicago, Passionia?” I asked. “To the depths of the heart, where all things seem and are, to live life, and help soothe the dying into death, the last look that love remembers, the final farewell, us also driving amidst the autumn colors on the country roads, seeing the burning bushes and colors galore, staying in the warm inns sometimes, ever westward, noting All Hallows Eve, then Obama’s victory party in Grant Park, Chicago, and then Route 66, all the while our limbs healing, on through the balmy days of Indian summer, listening to great music, then noting youth and old-age, the first snowfall, Thanksgiving in a new land, of father and mother and brothers, us gone until December, or even beyond, the first step toward forever?”

“Take Me.”

We were soon driving along Rte. 66, America’s Main street of the olden days, the road that once went from Illinois to California. Only sections of it remain.

The crumbling ghosts of yesteryear yet called out and waved to us from another era. I stopped as the pavement turned to overgrown grass and weeds. I heard a voice, one of an angel speaking perhaps...

Passionia was reading a Newsweek article aloud on “Why We Believe” for me in her beautiful strong voice, as we considered these many beliefs only important as windows into the workings of the human mind.



How was it that people claim past lives? Of what mental condition was reincarnation claimed? If only all would believe it, then Iraq's Sunnis and Shiites might stop fighting, since they might be killing someone who was once one of them. Oh why does not everyone believe what is so obvious? And so it went.

The emerging consensus, we heard, underneath a willow tree, was that belief in the supernatural seems to arise from the same mental processes that underlie everyday reasoning and perception. But while belief in ghosts, past lives, the ability of the mind to move matter and the like originate in normal mental processes, those processes can get hijacked and exaggerated.

Much like what we saw along the fading and disappearing Rte. 66, the ancient notions of beliefs were much dilapidated, threadbare, decrepit, outworn, misty, nearly unmoving, and should have been mostly abandoned and forgotten, but, the believers still stood for them somehow, propping them up in every imaginable way. Why?

They were, all of them, once sure things if some there ever were, or so back then they thought and wished and swore and thus adored—as the Truth—and still do.

*She loves road trips. The autumn colors called,  
So we were off on the ups and downs,  
She with taped ankle and myself with wrist,  
The warriors running away from home.*

*The scene was of the turning leaves falling,  
Unspoken poems reciting the paths flown,  
Only now the scene painted with the words,  
As music played poems sung to melodies.*



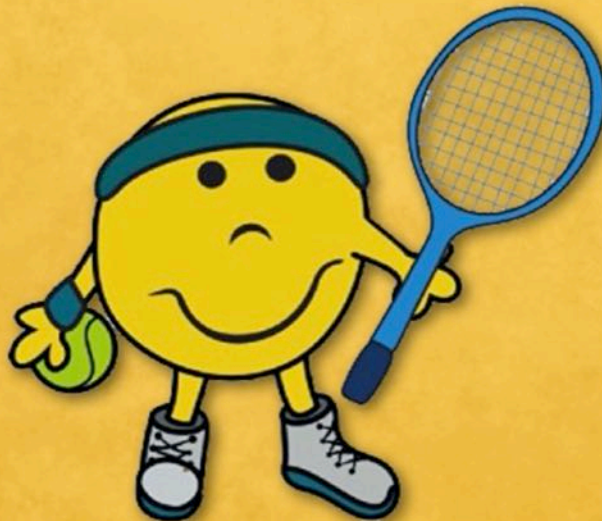
*Country roads, quaint inns, dilapidated barns;  
What's this? A dance hall lighting the dark path.  
We dance the song of evening bells rung  
In a twilight zone in nowhere's middle.*

*The music played past but not yet past,  
For it was in recent memory recalled.  
Newly savored sensations continued on—  
Those which could be presently known.*

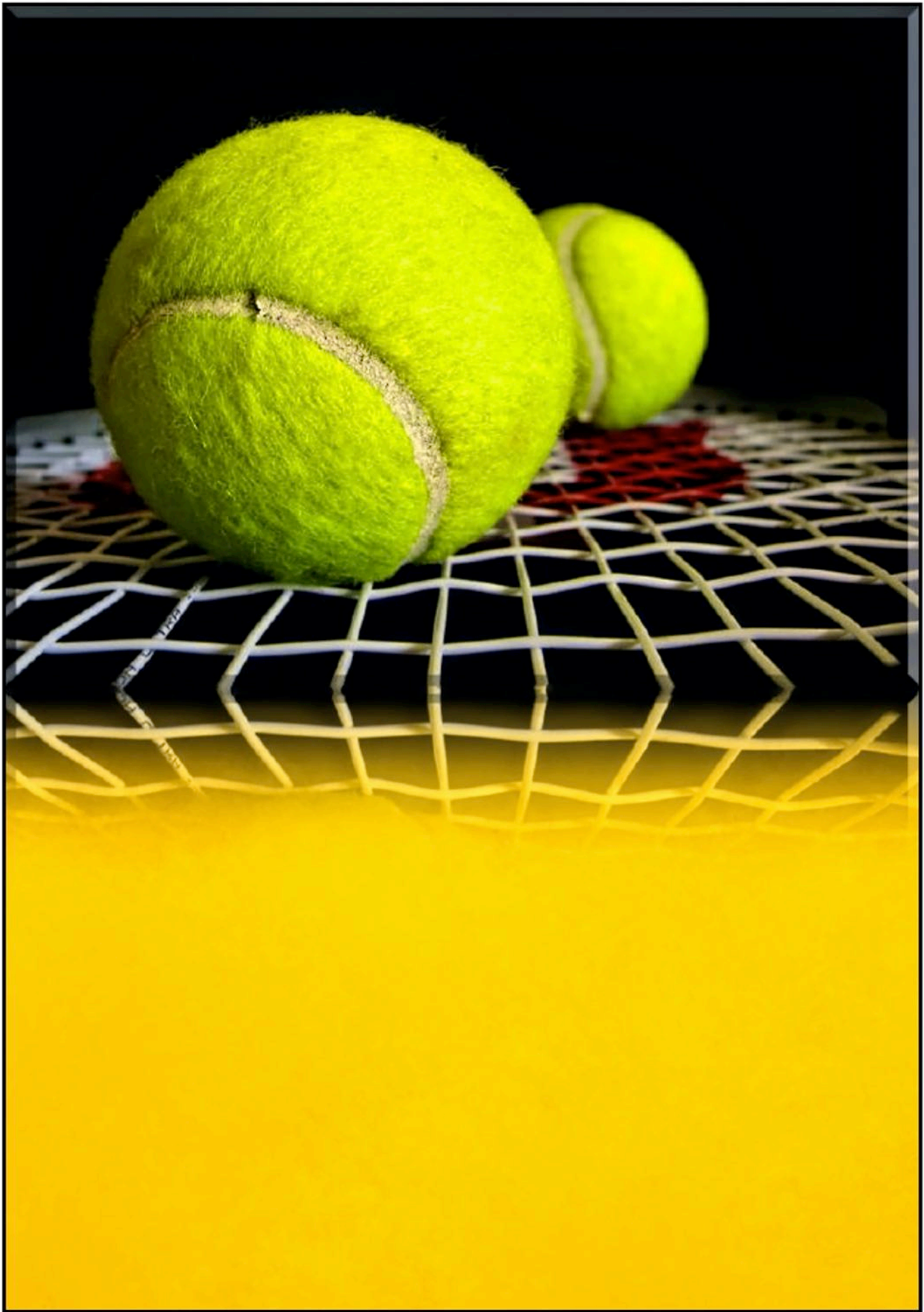
*Mind anticipated the coming tones,  
The transitional 'middle' blending it  
With those sounds not totally gone.*

*In this past-present-future resides  
The delight that none could produce alone:  
The smoothly rolling 'now'.*

The midwest, centered about Chicago, began to go into the deep hole of winter weather when a hoped-for mini-miracle occurred. Arizona called, Thursday night, and so we flew out to Phoenix Friday afternoon, for Robin and Kit had made the women's doubles tennis semifinals, and needed a coach, effectively giving me a free pass and a travel/hotel/food budget.









## Chapter 7: Doubles Tennis Play

Doubles tennis is a whole different game than singles: the court is wider; there is more net play, meaning hitting more volleys [the ball being hit in the air]; more lobbing [over one's head]; quicker reflexes needed for mid-court; more precision required [since there are two opponents], plus the teamwork of knowing where your partner is or will be for every situation.

In singles, one might hit a screaming ball deep into the court, handcuffing the opponent, but in doubles someone might just step over and cut the ball off at the net.

Well, they were ready, having practiced many tiebreakers—essentially a double length game in which everyone serves equally, which everyone does not practice often enough.

I reminded them to serve down the middle at certain times, not the easiest things to do in doubles, for one stands to serve way to the left or right in doubles—serving to the middle then having the ball never in or above the service court until it lands, near the “T”, where the opponent not only has to stretch to get to it, but is then not able to make a large angle return, making the return even more poachable [to anticipate and run to intercept] sometimes. Tennis encompasses Everything.

What's this to do with everything? Well, the umpires declared the truth, many of the players and shots were beautiful, 'Love' meant 0 score, some of the strategy was Perfection; They played in Time and Space: it had Motion, all was in a Continuum, plus there was hate, fear, joy, and sadness, but the Boss above was nowhere to be seen, although His name was sometimes heard in vain!



This was the last tournament of the year. The year was dying and the festive season loomed ahead. It was the final time for grace, beauty, style, and motion in the 2008 zen continuum of tennis. The player would become the ball. The court would become the universe. The racquet would just “know”. Time would slow down.

There was an antigravity pool of sorts at the hotel that was cool enough to refresh aching muscles, but those were few at this point. The ladies of the doubles 4.5 team were in good shape for their nearly four decades on Earth.

As a rookie 3.5 team a few years ago, they had even made it to Las Vegas then. Now they were seasoned and playing in Arizona at the top level of the Nationals as “Northeast”, having won the Regionals in New Jersey and the Sectionals in Pennsylvania...

“God” was on their side, a priest, Father Anthony having taken over their training the last two weeks. Actually, God does not take sides, although everyone wants Him to.

There was little talk of tennis at dinner on Saturday, just high spirits, vivacity, and much good humor. They had won the semis and were now in the Sunday morning finals.

There was no more coaching to be done, and it wasn't allowed during the match, anyway, except on the rare occasion that the other team took an injury time-out or a long bathroom break, for sometimes these were fake, and so the threat of coaching was supposed to weigh against these maneuvers.

Entering the court, Robin, an African-American, was all smiles, while her partner, Kit, an American-Indian, looked more serious. The French-looking umpire waved them onto



the court, whence they warmed up with their well tanned West Coast opponents.

There would even be line judges, one Polish-looking and one Chinese. The officials were taking on an international character, but heartland America was on the court.

NE won the racquet twirl and chose Robin to serve first, for it is always better to serve than to receive. The WC receiver was well centered but the serve was into her body and jammed her a bit. It is always a lift to win the first point.

The next serve, of course, was now from the “ad” court, and for some reason, the WC receiver was standing way wide, favoring a forehand return, albeit an inside out one. This was not necessary at this level, for a natural backhand return is often tough enough to retrieve [also a righty backhand], given the wider court. So, Robin served it up the middle for an ace. The receiver would adjust, perhaps, eventually, her coach probably squirming in her chair and wishing that she could signal.

These types of things were the nuances at this level, along with knowing when to serve and volley [running towards the net after serving], usually waiting to gauge the strength of the serve rather than deciding beforehand, unless this had become necessary as the general mode of play against very strong returners.

Half-volley pickups of smashes were quite routine, along with deft drop under-spin drop shots. Knowing where one wished to put the ball was the key, especially in doubles, this causing all one’s muscles and positioning to automatically follow suit without any step by step thinking, the active consciousness of which would have been deadly.

Where the shot was to be hit was seen well beforehand, but thereafter was only seen in the head, for one always wished



to see the racquet hit the ball, never looking up [ruining the shot] to see if the court was still there, for it always was.

NE won the first set easily, but WC was adapting well in the second, their serves getting stronger, as well, the score reaching 6-6 and so a tiebreaker was needed. Lose this set and it would be all tied 1-1, leaving the victory to the whims of possible 3rd set fatigue.

Kit served the first point, her partner, Robin, as usual, in the middle of the box near the net. Robin loved to poach, the key being in waiting for the serve to bounce before committing so that the returner could not adjust the shot. It worked.

WC served the next two points, both aces which was not good news, but there would be six serves before she served again.

Robin served next, missing her first serve, but landing the usual high kicker on the second. It was returned crosscourt into her alley, they continually forgetting that she was left-handed. She put the ball away.

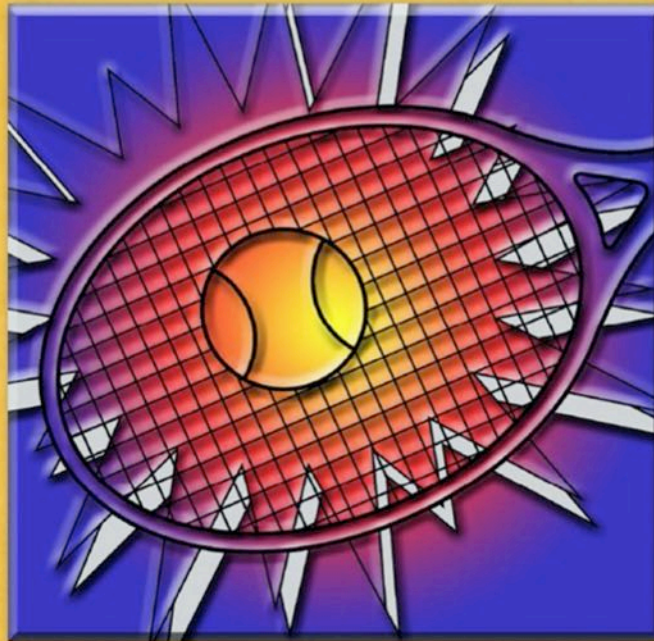
Next, a devastating topspin lob arrived over Kit's head, one that would bounce high, running away and back. Somehow Robin ran it down, bending down, while still facing the back wall, and hit it back through her open legs, a rare shot that brought the crowd alive.

They knew to wait for calm after this kind of thing. Plus, it was match point for NE by now, for I skipped over some points. WC used the unusual "I" formation, but this, too, was known and practiced. WC served a near winner, but Kit blocked it back as a lob, knowing that there would have been no time to swing at it; this also nullified the "I" formation.



The lob bounced high enough that WC tried an overhead on it, essentially a hard “serve” that, of course, was allowed to land anywhere, since it was not actually a serve.

Kit guessed the open spot, running to it at the last moment and somehow returned the screamer as another lob, her only real option. Not quite deep enough. It was clear that the WC net person would angle it short to the side. Robin, knowing this, charged into the path of the ball, a kind of suicide move that one would not do in routine play, and somehow intercepted it for a winner. The crown was theirs in two sets and so they whammed the balls up into the crowd.



Queen Carol, just arriving at the end of the ladies doubles final after her own match, asked Robin “What were you thinking when you ran in front of that shot?”

“That’s a trick question,” answered Robin, “for you always taught us not to think, after the learning took, but to just use action, reflex, and muscle memory!”

“You got it!”





HAVING  
A  
FINE  
TIME



## Chapter 8: Love, Love

Back in New York State, gaudy Christmas displays passed by, one near the tennis place being of a thousand Santas, to us looking like Buddhas and plastic figures, and even blow-ups. What a bunch of crap!

We arrived at the tennis facility, snowflakes falling like stars from the sky. Never did we discover a world so white, as when this snow-field was lit by moonlight. Oh it was a crystalline cathedral, built from falling stars in the holy night.

Echoes of love were all around, the moon lit by the loving sun. We tuned in to hear:

*To your lines of flux my path I align;  
I'm your constant paramour, crystalline.  
Your world pours life on mine, on mine!  
Dearest Earth, I must be thine, must be thine!*

We looked on ahead, through the moon-showers bringing the flakes, and, there the golden mane of Sister Karen shown and shined, she being dressed in black, and, too, in the dark of his robes, was Father Anthony, black upon black.

They gave us each a present, a can of balls that were red and green. We bowed to receive, then, standing hand in hand, looked up to the heavens and heard, we thought, just five words softly whispered, "I do" and "I do, too".

Father Anthony now calls me "The Pope", because sometimes my topspin shots hit just below the net cord, and climb over, and just plunk down out of reach. This, though, can be explained by physics, since the ball is rotating in the right direction to climb the net.





However, he gets to balls that are impossible to reach. It's true that he is lightweight and thin and is the fastest runner in the world, having been an expert soccer player, but he even not only reaches the balls but somehow gets some power into the shot. No one can understand this except as divine power, and so that is what is magical about this story.



Miracle Man



## Chapter 9: Advertisements



The indoor arena of courts at Taconic Tennis is massive.



Many cash prizes and promotions.





Spacious courts; refreshments; wild life.





## Chapter 10: Epilog

Now we have Zbig (Z, big and new), from Poland, and Logan, from Earth. Zbig can hit a soda can placed anywhere on the court at will. If I played against him I'd make sure all the soda cans were placed out of bounds, and then I could beat him 6:0. Logan is young, in his prime, and sometimes plays tennis while skiing down a mountain. Lately, he strings racquets 80 hours a week.

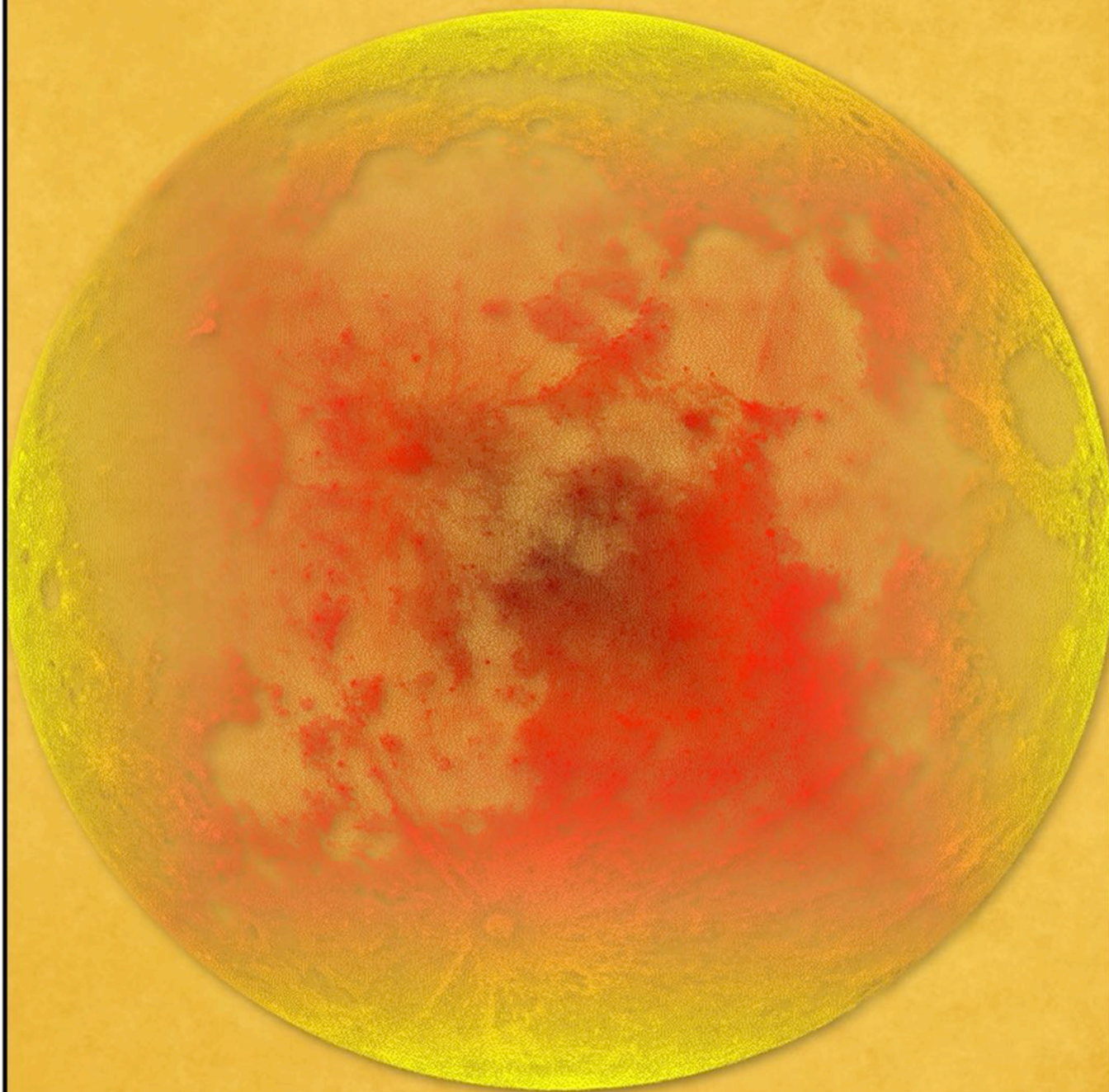
The tennis warriors and gladiators assemble, as ever, twice weekly, for doubles. I went back out onto the tennis court, one night, with Blake as my partner. He could run down any ball, even at his old age of 51. When I asked him how he could and was always doing this, he answered, "I have to, since I don't put my shots away well enough, and they keep on coming back."

"All but your last one," I noted.

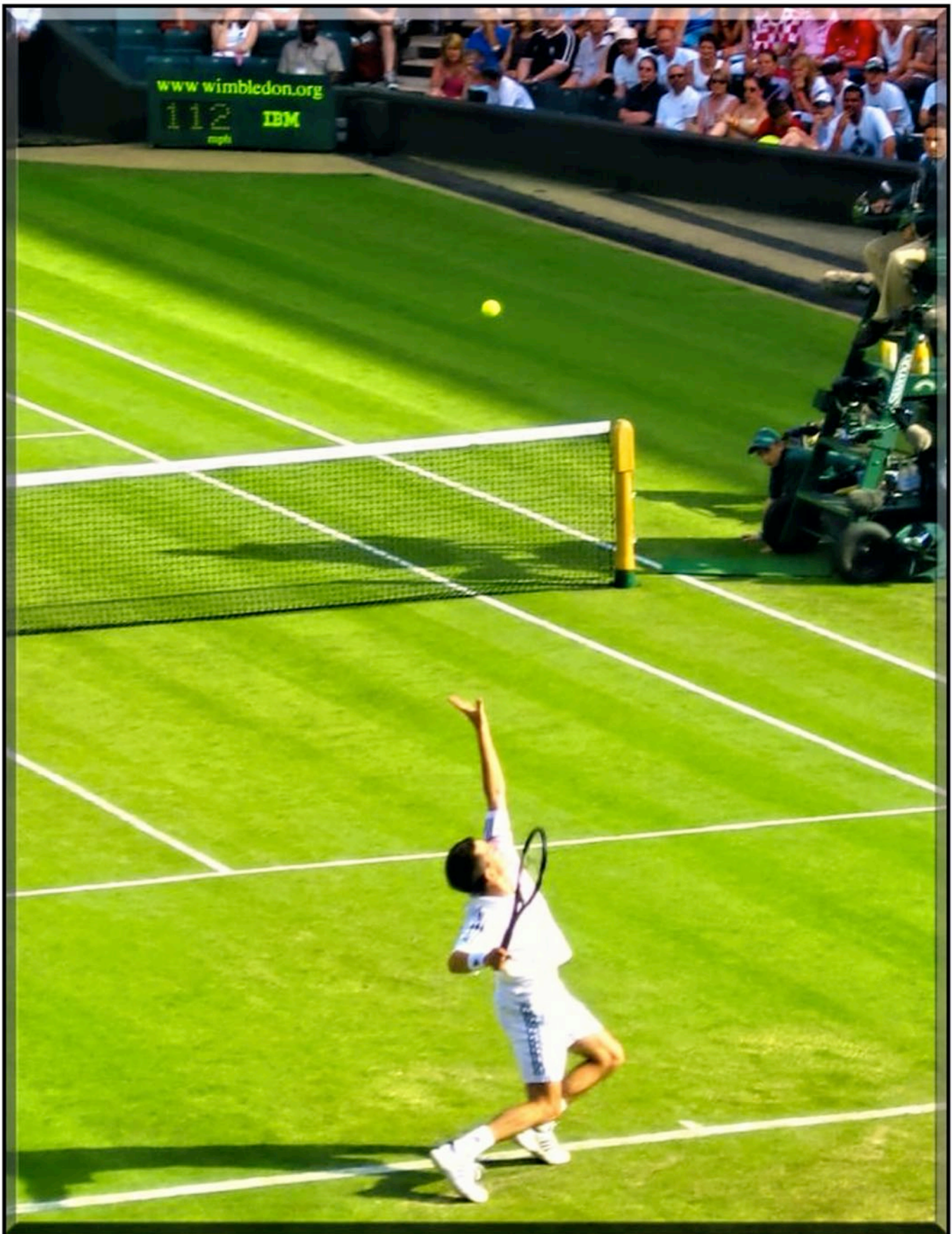
Robert hits every shot really hard, as does Harry, but most of Harry's go in. Harry's son, Harrison, is nearly as good, sometimes. Allen, a lefty, who serves from the middle, always says, to his net man, "Move over, please", and then the net man still almost gets hit with the ball. Rosie hits undercut balls that do very funny things when they land. Barbara hardly ever misses anything. Luis is super, both in serve (I wish I never saw it, which I hardly ever do) and in play, and his wife, Jolantha, is a very fine and lovely Princess. Zbig's wife is also named 'Jolantha', and before I knew there were two of them, well, it was really hard to figure things out, at first. Sheldon came back, after twenty years. The Singapore guys and girls are very fast. Grace held an art show. Werner hits the ball where I can't get it. As for the two "Robin's", it's hard to tell them apart, they having the same name. Solita, June, and Lydia are the happy faces behind the front desk.



Afterward, Irish Eileen tells a lot of stories, while we drink and eat, many about her long stay in Japan. I tell her that her name is really 'Irene', but that in Japan they changed it, by having to pronounce it as 'Eileen'.







Austin, not shown in the picture,  
playing for the championship.