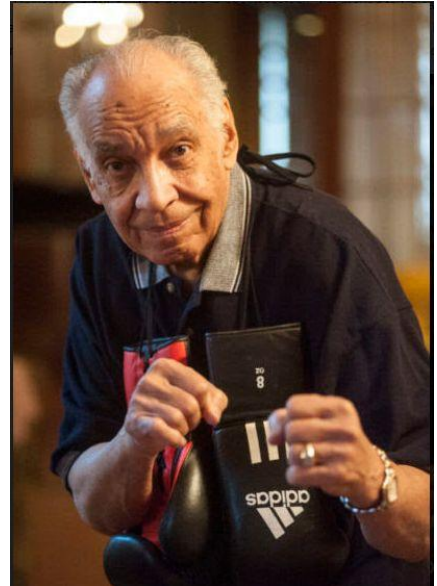


## Jim Strickland, National Boxing Hall of Fame Inductee, Exits the Ring. Famed Boxing Cutman Passes at 90

*I never met a finer man in boxing than Jim Strickland, a man of class and dignity.  
-- Bruce Kielty*

Jim Strickland, who had successful careers in pharmacy and boxing, passed away at the age of 90 due to complications from Coronavirus at St. Francis Hospital in Evanston, IL on June 3rd. Jim, known as “Strick” in the boxing world, led a unique life by building a reputation in a corner of boxing that few people outside of the ring are familiar with, a cutman.

In his hometown of Kansas City, KS, Jim Strickland learned about the sweet science of boxing as a teenager under the tutelage of Golden Gloves Hall of Fame trainer Arrington “Bubble” Klice. When Jim traveled to Chicago to box in amateur matches, he fell in love with the alluring buzz of the Windy City. After graduating from Kansas University in 1954 with a degree in pharmacology, Jim moved to Chicagoland and worked as a pharmacist apprentice at the Joslyn Family Clinic in Maywood, IL. Soon, he met Don Williams and the pair became the first two Black pharmacists in Maywood and lifelong friends. In 1968, Jim opened his own business, Strickland Drugs, on Chicago’s southside at 47th and Prairie. He later opened other pharmacies at 79<sup>th</sup> and Cottage Grove and 79<sup>th</sup> and Michigan. In order to provide children with medical care and revive 47<sup>th</sup> Street, he orchestrated the opening of the Prairie Place Medical Clinic in 1973.



Jim had endless energy to pursue his passions. While managing three pharmacies and acting as the Board of Directors’ Vice Chairman of the Chatham Business Association, he actively advocated for the African American community. Karen Yarbrough, daughter of Don Williams and Cook County Clerk, remembers him stating, “A giant has fallen. Jim and Don stood up for justice and equality for African Americans through their work with the NAACP in the Proviso school system in the 60s. They were responsible for getting Fred Hampton involved with the NAACP in the fight for equality for all.” When Don became the mayor of Maywood, Jim helped him to bring friends and families together in the community by acting as the Chairman of Special Events of the Maywood Family Fun Fest. Although Jim had moved with his family to Oak Park, he sought to stimulate community pride in Chicago’s southside. He envisioned the creation of a mural at 4701 S. Prairie and co-sponsored the work, along with the Community Arts Foundation and Chicago Public Art Group. Artist Carol Yasko and students from the Dr. Martin Luther King Art Workshop brought Jim’s idea to life. When no White boxers from Chicago qualified for the National Golden Gloves, the Chicago Tribune Charities pulled their sponsorship of the event for the first time in 43 years. Acting quickly, Jim spearheaded a team to raise the funds necessary for their trip.

Through the years, Jim never forgot his first love, boxing. Pursuing his dream, he learned the trade from legendary trainer Eddie Futch. Jim then began his second career as a boxing manager, trainer, and cutman, the latter being the corner person who enables the fight to

continue by tending to bloody noses, lacerations, or facial swelling. Jim soon trained Chicago boxers Wayne Lynam, Orlando Johnson, Randy Smith, and Michael Brothers, all of whom won number 1 rankings and national tournaments. The first world champion Jim trained was Lee Roy Murphy, who won the 1979 National Golden Gloves. Murphy went on to win the 1980 Gold Cup International Boxing Tournament (which was held for countries boycotting the Summer Olympics in Moscow) and the 1984 IBF World Cruiser Weight title.

Due to his outgoing and caring nature, Jim formed friendships in the boxing community that spanned decades. Jim kept in touch with numerous boxers including Michael Brothers, Lee Roy Murphy, Montel Griffin, Mike Garcia, Alfonso Ratliff, and Willie McDonald, as well as boxing promoters, managers, and doctors such as Bob Arum, Bob Foley, Emanuel Steward, Cedric Kushner, and Dr. Glenn Bynum. Chicago boxing trainer and gym owner Sam Colona says that when he thinks of Jim, "The first thing that comes to my mind is how caring a person he was. Jim would treat everybody equally and go out of his way to make sure that he would make your life easier. He loved what he was doing and was a father figure to many young men."

As Jim's career in boxing took off, he closed his three drugstores one by one to dedicate himself fully to boxing. He worked as the Golden Gloves head trainer for 10 years and trained a second world champion, William Guthrie, who won the IBF Light Heavyweight Title in 1997. In 2001, he began to manage and train his third world champion, Chicago's "Dangerous" David Diaz. Diaz held the WBC lightweight title from 2007 to 2008 and fought against Pacquiao in 2008. Jim and David formed a lasting and close bond that they both cherished. David fondly remembers Jim stating, "Strick was more than just a coach. He made me a better boxer, a better husband, and a better man. A lot of who I am today is due to him."



Jim stayed in the ring well into his 80's, traveling across five continents to work the corner for 25 world champions, 75 world title fights and hundreds of boxers including: Michael Spinks, Cory Spinks, Leon Spinks, Andrew Golotta, David Tua, Mike McCallum, and Jeff Lacy. When Mike Tyson bit Evander Holyfield's ear during the infamous "Bite Fight," Jim was working Holyfield's corner as his cutman. With the support of his friend Ernest Brown, American Boxing Organization Board Member, Jim was inducted into the Illinois Boxing Hall of Fame in 2016 and the National Boxing Hall of Fame in 2019. That same year, Sam Colona awarded Jim the Golden Gloves Lifetime Achievement award for his 50-year commitment to boxing.

Deanna Strickland, Jim's wife of 51 years, remembers him lovingly. "Jim was a unique, multifaceted man. He enjoyed taking the family to boxing matches as much as he enjoyed taking us to plays!" Jim was an avid theatergoer, often gathering friends and family to enjoy dramas and musicals at the ETA Creative Arts Foundation, Goodman, Steppenwolf, and Court theatres. His love of music led him to visit the city's many jazz and blues clubs and take family trips to Interlochen National Music Camp in Michigan to enjoy classical music. As all his friends know, he had an encyclopedic knowledge of restaurants across the country long before YELP existed. He delighted in discovering new restaurants and revisiting his favorites such as Manny's, The Berghoff, Lem's, MacArthur's and Al's Beef in Chicago, Brennan's in New Orleans, the Stage Deli in New York and Gates Barbecue in his hometown of Kansas City, KS.

Jim Strickland will be dearly missed by his wife, Deanna, his four children: Jay, Jeffery, Deanna (Williams) and Dori, granddaughter, Crystal, three great-grandchildren, and all of his family members and friends. There will be a quiet emptiness in the corners of boxing rings around the globe where he used to stand, bucket and towel in hand, ready to ensure that



the fight will go on.

*The above piece was written by Dori Strickland, daughter of Jim Strickland.*