

## A Farewell to Bob Sheridan

By Arne K. Lang (Published in *The Sweet Science*, September 28, 2023)

Boxing broadcaster Bob Sheridan passed away at his home in Henderson, Nevada on Wednesday, Sept. 27. Sheridan was 79 years old.

As noted by Ron Borges in a 1999 story for the *Boston Globe*, “Colonel Bob” (an honorary title) called “more fights in more places watched by more people than anyone else in history.” All told, he was the blow-by-blow announcer for more than 10,000 fights, a number that included more than a hundred heavyweight title fights. The irony is that he was more well-known in places like Australia than in the United States. This was because when boxing switched from closed-circuit to pay-per-view, Sheridan didn’t make the transition, except for those tuning in overseas. During his long association with Don King and beyond, he was the anchor of the international feed.



Born in Boston to Irish immigrants who arrived in the U.S. as toddlers, Sheridan grew up in nearby Lexington, Massachusetts. He attended the University of Miami on a baseball scholarship and cut his teeth as a boxing broadcaster covering Chris Dundee’s Miami Beach club fights on WGBS radio.

Sheridan’s first heavyweight title fight was the 1968 match in Oakland between Jerry Quarry and Jimmy Ellis for the vacant WBA belt (Ellis won a narrow 15-round decision). He would subsequently sit ringside for some of the sport’s most legendary fights, including the “Rumble in the Jungle” (Ali-Foreman), the “Thrilla in Manila,” (Ali-Frazier III), and Tyson-Holyfield II, the infamous “bite fight.”

During his early days on closed-circuit telecasts, Sheridan was often forced to take on a celebrity as his color commentator. For Ali’s fight with Chuck Wepner, it was Pearl Bailey. For the “Rumble in the Jungle,” it was British TV talk show personality David Frost. (Sheridan recalled that Frost was very professional, assuaging his qualms that he would be a train wreck.)

In an article for *The Ring* written seven years ago, New Jersey good guy Henry Hascup noted that it was a miracle that Sheridan was still alive considering his myriad health issues which included seven heart attacks and a quadruple bypass. He famously announced one fight with his cardiologist sitting next to him with a defibrillator just in case.

Colonel Bob was inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 2016, the third blow-by-blow announcer accorded this honor following Don Dunphy (1993) and Jim Lampley (2015). May he rest in peace.

***Arne K. Lang is a recognized authority on the history of prizefighting and the history of American sports gambling. His latest book, titled Clash of the Little Giants: George Dixon, Terry McGovern, and the Culture of Boxing in America, 1890-1910, was released by McFarland in September, 2022.***