

Gary Shaw, Jim Wilkes Reach out to Tsunami Victims

Written by Jake Donovan

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For those who celebrate Christmas, December 26 has never historically represented anything more than 'the day after', unless you celebrate Boxing Day (no fight fans, not THAT type of holiday). In 2004, it became a day of devastation, as a massive earthquake and tsunami wiped out a large portion of Southern Asia and parts of Eastern Africa. To date, there have been over 155,000 people declared dead, many more missing, and survivors from a dozen or so countries without a home – or even a town – to which they can return.

As 2004 became 2005, a global effort has jumpstarted, where many countries around the world have decided to contribute money, supplies and time toward tsunami relief. An estimated total of four billion dollars have been raised thus far, according to the United Nations. As countries offer record-breaking pledges each day, more and more individual contributions are being noted as well.

Which leads us to two amongst the boxing family who have elected to start their New Year abroad - Gary Shaw and Jim Wilkes.

Already the hardest working – and perhaps the most honest – man in the boxing industry, Shaw decided almost immediately after the disaster had occurred that he needed to be over there. Monetary contributions would not be enough, he figured. So while his promotional company, Gary Shaw Productions, LLC, was hard at work in securing big fights for its top fighters, the head man himself decided to board a plane and head to Southeast Asia for the second time in three months. The last time was to attend an annual boxing convention. A mere three months later, Shaw can hardly believe he was in the same location.

"It's just complete devastation over here," Shaw informed TheSweetScience.com while viewing the damage along with renowned attorney Jim Wilkes. "It's one of those things where seeing it on TV, you change the channel in hopes that it was just a show. To come over here and just witness the destruction that has been caused by this tragedy . . . it just goes beyond words."

Shaw and Wilkes plan on staying in Thailand for another week, though in the short amount of time they have been there, an immediate impact has already been made.

While in attendance at a local event a few days ago, an announcement was made that Wilkes and Shaw made a donation of 4 million Baht, the equivalent of roughly \$100,000 in US currency. The emcee could barely finish his announcement before the crowd had erupted in cheers. The reaction and reception the two had received thus far is all the proof they needed that the decision to make the trip was a no-brainer.

"It always feels good to give back, and especially give during a time of need," Shaw said. "But to be there in person and being able to contribute really made me feel like I was doing my part, even though I feel like I need to do so much more. When they announced Jim's name and the

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donation and the crowd reacted as they did, I honestly had goose bumps. To think of the reality that the survivors over here are forced to deal with, and for them to still find time to be that joyous over a simple act – it's just a wonderful feeling, and a wonderful experience to be a part of."

Wilkes, who represents consensus world junior middleweight champion Ronald "Winky" Wright and super middleweight titlist Jeff "Left Hook" Lacy among others, was equally appreciative, though still overwhelmed by what he has witnessed first hand so far.

"I couldn't believe what I was seeing when I first got off of the plane. I knew what had occurred, obviously, and I knew that we were coming here to offer our support in any way we can. But you're still never fully prepared for something as devastating as this. It's just a downright shame. It truly is."

Shaw and Wilkes both plan on staying in Asia until January 11, and have offered to continue providing future first hand accounts. In the meantime, for those looking to get involved in any way possible, a great starting point would be to contact your local Red Cross chapter, or visit them online at www.redcross.org .

For more on Gary Shaw, feel free to visit his promotional company website : www.garyshawproductions.com

To learn more about attorney James Wilkes, please feel free to visit the Wilkes-McHugh website: www.wilkesmchugh.com