Although he was a strapping youngster who was pretty good with his hands, “Big” George Mitchell always fantasized about being a cutman more than a fighter.

Growing up in the Bay Ridge section of Brooklyn, New York, the 63-year-old Mitchell – now 6’7” and 285 pounds – used to watch the old *Friday Night Fights* with his father on the family’s black and white TV. While doing so he would place a towel around his neck because he related to the cutmen more than the fighters.

“I used to make believe he (his father) was cut and I only had a minute to stop the bleeding,” said Mitchell, whose intimidating physical stature is offset by an almost priestly demeanor. “Everyone I knew wanted to be a fighter, but I always wanted to be a cutman. I don’t know where the interest came from.”

Mitchell wound up having several amateur fights for the New York City Transit Police Department’s boxing team. A member of that now defunct police force from 1966-86, Mitchell rose to the rank of lieutenant but never turned pro because Transit rules prohibited him from doing so.

(In order to avoid any confusion, Rick Frazier, who fought Roy Jones for the light heavyweight title, was a member of the NYPD, which was merged with the Transit and Housing police departments in 1995. Until recently, NYPD officers were allowed to fight professionally but are no longer allowed to do so).

Regardless, as a police officer, as well as a licensed emergency medical technician, Mitchell got to stop plenty of cuts during his public service career. However, it was after apprenticing for several years with the late, great Al Gavin that Mitchell began making a living in the sweet science.

“Being around Al, I really started to pick things up,” said Mitchell. “Around 1997, I started traveling with him as his assistant. In one capacity or another, I’ve probably worked over 1,000 corners in my career. Sometimes I’ve worked every fight on a card.”

On September 15, Mitchell was working the corner of debuting welterweight Mike Ruiz at the Huntington Hilton on Long Island. After being stopped in the second round, Ruiz went ballistic and even attacked his opponent, Jason Thompson.

At one point Mitchell wrapped his bear-like arms around Ruiz’s torso in a vice-grip. While it looked like Mitchell was exerting no effort whatsoever, Ruiz was trying desperately to break from his grasp in order to continue his unsportsmanlike extra-curricular activities.

“It was just another day at the office,” laughs Mitchell. “I try to be like a father figure to some of these kids because I have a lot of experience that I can impart on them. Mike got a little upset

because he felt the fight was stopped too early. I convinced him to apologize to the Athletic Commission and to the crowd. Hopefully he’ll keep his composure in the future. With unsportsmanlike conduct, there’s so much to lose and nothing to gain.”

Mitchell also works the corner of New York-based Irish middleweight sensation John Duddy. “John says that I’m not just his cut man, I’m his friend and mentor,” said Mitchell. “That means a lot to me. I’m able to gain a fighter’s trust because I genuinely care about them. When I work with them, I’m completely absorbed in the fight. I’m not there to enjoy the show.”

Mitchell puts a lot more preparation into his work than one might imagine. He makes his own Q-Tips out of lollipop sticks and cotton balls because he doesn’t think the store-bought variety are suitable for boxing. On the morning of this interview, he had just made 20 such recreations for a fight he’d be working later that evening with Long Island heavyweight Derrick Rossy at the Mohegan Sun in Connecticut.

“I’m fastidious in my preparation,” said Mitchell. “As a police officer I wouldn’t go to work without my gun, handcuffs or flashlight. A carpenter would never go to work without his tools. Being a cutman is a craft that I take very seriously.”

What started out as a hobby for Mitchell has evolved into a nearly fulltime job. When not working a part-time security gig at a Long Island heart hospital, Mitchell is on the road or researching prospective opponents for his fighters on the Internet. The first site he clicks on every morning is boxrec.com.

He is equally relaxed studying the records of potential opponents as he is closing wounds on the faces of his fighters. Mitchell appears especially unflappable while doing the latter.

“The worst cuts are on the cheekbones and the smaller cuts are harder to stop than the larger ones,” said Mitchell, who also works with, among others, junior middleweight contender Raul Frank. “The worst cut I ever worked on required 60 stitches. It was a blood blister that exploded. I was able to put my finger in the hole. But the smaller cuts – I call them leakers – they are tougher to patch up.”

More than one person has told Mitchell that his unique appearance would be well-suited for character roles, especially as bad guys, in Hollywood films. While he always did have an interest in acting, he believes all the time spent auditioning would keep him away from doing what he likes and does best.

“What I remember most about boxing was the taste of old leather and horse hair,” said Mitchell. “Once you get boxing in your system the way I have, there is nothing you’d rather be doing. Boxing has taken me all around the world. I’d much rather be working a corner than sitting around a movie set waiting for the director to yell ‘Action.’”