He stood with a giant check for $100,000 dollars hoisted above his head with the most genuine smile you'd ever seen. The WBC Super Bantamweight champion Israel "Magnifico" Vazquez was being honored by his promoters at Sycuan Ringside for his win and brilliant performance in his third fight against Rafael Marquez on March 1st.

The setting on April 9 was the U.S. Grant Hotel, a luxurious Sycuan-owned property in downtown San Diego. After being presented with the six figure bonus, Vazquez stated his feelings about the event. "When I heard they were going to put this dinner together I was really touched," Vazquez said. "I felt this thing in my heart that's hard to describe. The whole event is beautiful. I wasn't expecting anything like this."

Vazquez is an "aw shucks" type of guy, a humble, smart and likeable sort who I venture to say will always remain the same.

Vazquez's manager, Frank Espinoza, who brought the Mexico City native to Sycuan Ringside, feels that the Vazquez honors are well merited.

"Here's a kid that no one believed in," Espinoza said. "And look at all he's done. All these great victories against great fighters. And more importantly, it's the way he's won. Like a future legend. If anyone deserves all this, it's Israel."

Sycuan Ringside Vice President, Scott Woodworth, spoke about the final round of Vazquez's last fight which he says still plays over and over in his head.

"Coming into the last round, my wife Leslie asked me if we were winning," Woodworth recalled. "I said it was close and that if we ever needed a round this was it. And Israel came out and dominated that round to the point that some members of the media scored it 10-7. It was truly amazing."

President of Sycuan Ringside, Glenn Quiroga, proudly spoke of Israel's win and what it's meant to him.

"I wanted to thank Israel for dedicating the fight to my daughter. We watched and we cheered and we cried," said Quiroga, whose young daughter is going through chemotherapy treatments and has experienced some trying times. Vazquez's win provided him with a much needed moment of happiness. "All the rounds in all three of the fights were amazing. It was 'here comes Marquez' and then 'here comes Vazquez.' I didn't see the fight live but when I saw it, I was jumping up and down with excitement."

Sycuan stated that they have big plans for Vazquez and boxing in general. "We look forward to having some more fights and continuing our relationship with Israel," said Sycuan Treasurer Cody Martinez. "Especially when we build our own arena that will hold five to six thousand

people."

Vazquez's win over Marquez was projected on a giant screen for the guests to enjoy as they finished their dinner and started in on dessert. I've seen the fight a dozen times and the drama still captivates you. Seeing Vazquez's super human display of courage is mesmerizing.

The triumph of the human spirit should always be rewarded. Sycuan Ringside and their guests did just that as they recognized and applauded "El Magnifico" for proving all his doubters wrong and winning the most intense and action filled trilogy in the history of the sport.

The honors continue:

The next tribute for Vazquez took place yesterday in L.A. The Showtime Cable Network paid tribute to both Vazquez and his rival Rafael Marquez for their participation in the historic trilogy.