The world is a lesser, sadder place today. It has been ever since Artie Curry drew his last breath, alone in his home in Brooklyn three days ago.

Artie Curry was the kind of guy the world knows little about but should mourn loudly for he was about all of the things that are right in this world. He had every reason to complain about the cards he was dealt as a young boy but he didn't. He had every excuse to fail but he didn't. He had every reason to be bitter and angry but he wasn't. Artie Curry was who and what I'd like to be if I ever fully grow up.

Curry died Wednesday of causes not yet known. The belief is it was a heart attack. It would be a cruel joke for someone with so big a heart to pass away because it failed him, because it seldom failed anyone else.

Born to a alcoholic father he met only once and a mother he once told the writer Tom Hauser was "just a lady I saw from time to time,'' Artie Curry bounced from one foster home to another from the age of four to 16. It was then that a jazz singer named Edward Curry and his wife, Lise, adopted him and a new world of love, respect and a comforting hand to guide him opened up.

Artie responded and within a few years was working in the mailroom at Time-Life and greeting everyone he met with a smile. That smile and his competence and way with people would eventually lead him to then HBO Sports president Seth Abraham and a job in which he would become a boxing legend.

First hired as a production assistant, Artie's kindness to everyone he met and his unique understanding of boxers and their needs ultimately led him to a job as Director of Boxing Talent Relations at HBO. In other words, he looked out for fighters in their most tense days, the days before they would step into their underwear and step under the hot television lights HBO would train on them.

In a world filled with backstabbers, double dealers, thieves, liars and brave men, Artie Curry made no enemies. He made only friends for himself and friends for HBO. Friends among some of the greatest boxers of his time, like Roy Jones, Jr. and Arturo Gatti, and among some of the biggest business men in the sport, like Abraham, HBO sports president Ross Greenburg and former vice-president for programming Lou DiBella, who is now a promoter but who remained close to Curry all his life.

"If ever there was a person who was a perfect fit for his job, it was Artie," Greenburg said after learning of his passing. "He loved boxers, and they loved him back. Artie was in many ways our personal ambassador to the boxing community, and he will be sorely missed by all of the people that he touched.

"He will be missed by all of his friends and colleagues at HBO Sports, who looked forward to

his friendly greeting every day. This is a big loss for everybody who knew Artie. I am grateful that for two decades he represented HBO Sports and distinguished himself every day."

I am grateful too for all the times we clasped hands at ringside after that Barry White voice said, "What's up, bro?'' Artie really didn't have to ask because no one knew more about what was up in boxing than he did. His life was the world but his business was boxers and boxing and he knew what time it was.

He understood a fighter's whims and needs. He understood their moodiness and their madness. He saw them not simply as fighters but as men like him, human beings who could be hurt but would fight on.

They might be just fighters to the world but to him they were friends. Everyone he met seemed to be. If there is someone in this world who disliked Artie Curry, it says more about them than it does about him. That is not to say he was an angel because no man is an angel but where ever he is today, Artie Curry is among the angels.

Seven weeks after turning 49, still recovering from a knee replacement that had left him limping for some time yet still smiling, Artie Curry was taken away from his friends, which is to say from everyone who knew him. It is our loss and boxing's loss. It is the trainer Jimmy Glenn's loss because Artie used to sit on a stool at "Jimmy's Corner,'' a saloon not too far from the Garden in Manhattan, and hold court sometimes. When he was there, everybody was laughing.

Just six weeks ago, his sister passed away from cancer. Maybe he didn't want her to go on her last trip alone. It would have been just like him.

Artie was a guy who visited both locker rooms before a fight just to check in and see what you needed. A lot of people do. He was also a guy who visited both locker rooms after a fight just to check things out and see what you needed. Not many people do.

That was Artie Curry, always in your corner, win or lose.