

Rest In Peace, Murray Wilson

Written by Michael Woods
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He was something of a rarity in this business, a manager with a single client, who looked after his client with the utmost integrity, and was seen by that client as a father figure.

Murray Wilson, a New York City restaurateur turned boxing manager, who got involved with Yuri Foreman after reading about him in the NY Times, and believed in the light hitting junior middleweight when others dismissed the boxer as an overhyped media creation, died of a heart attack in his office Wednesday.

Wilson, who owned the NYC Italian eateries Campagnola and Ecco, and is survived his his wife Sandra and daughters Lori and Dina, was 72 years old.

In a 2009 New York Times piece, Wilson shared his reasoning for hooking up with Foreman, and confessed his fondness for the boxer who made him swell with pride on Nov. 14, 2009, when he beat David Santos and won the WBA junior middleweight crown.

What can I say? Im a loudmouth Jew and he gives me a lot of pride. Our original contract with him is that wed send him a check every week for expenses until he starts making his own money, Wilson said. We havent taken a dime. Hes like a son to me.

Foreman, on the phone with TSS on Thursday afternoon, shared that level of devotion.

He was my father figure, the boxer said. He was like a rabbi. The things hes done for me in boxing, and outside the ring...I just wish I spoke to him yesterday. I wish I called and said, I love you.

Foreman said he and Wilson, who managed Foreman along with partner Alan Cohen, were scheduled to meet Thursday at noon, to go over Foremans comeback from knee surgery in June. But the 30-year-old fighter takes solace in the fact that Wilson was there to see him win a world title, against Santos, and more importantly, held his new baby, Lev Micah, while the newborn was circumcised during the ceremony Jews call bris.

I will always remember that. He held the baby on his knees. He was very happy.

Wilson shared with the Daily News after the win over Santos his joy, and his wishes for the Foremans future.

It was the best he has ever looked, he said. Its a life dream fulfilled. I want him to make some money, defend his crown and finish his studies in school. His desire is to be ordained as a rabbi and continue fighting.

Wilson suffered a heart attack in his office on Wednesday. Foreman said that hed suffered fainting spells, and in fact, the boxer caught Wilson when the manager fainted while walking to

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his office, in January, after leaving the Manny Pacquiao-Joshua Clottey press conference. I was on his behind, telling him to check his health, Foreman said. Wilson saw a doctor in Las Vegas, Foreman said, who pronounced him fit. The doctor, he said, said maybe it was a stomach issue. But he had a another fainting spell soon after, while in Las Vegas, in front of promoter Bob Arum. Again, Foreman pressed Wilson to get it checked out, and again Wilson reported back that he received a medical all clear.

Foreman admitted that he feels slightly adrift now. Murray had rich experience, he always taught me street smarts, and business wisdom. And I would not have been able to win the title without him. In my boxing career, he was a big part of it. I feel suddenly like a child exposed to the world. I wished he stayed longer.