Teddy B. Blackburn has been one of boxing's premier photographers for the past 15 years. Prior to moving to New York in 1990, the 47-year-old native of Ann Arbor, Michigan, had lived in various parts of the country.

Among the places he called home were New Orleans and Atlantic City. Blackburn had no shortage of wondrous experiences over the years, some of which are best forgotten.

When he began shooting fighters through his lens, he was also capturing the essence of their being through his own eyes. Having once been a fighter himself – in more ways than one – Blackburn knew a thing or two about life.

All of that was captured in his vivid photographs, which were regularly emblazoned across magazine covers and even on the front pages of the two major New York City tabloids.

Over the years Blackburn has shot a wide range of subjects for the Reuters wire service and scores of other publications. He has been courtside at the U.S. Open, in a dank prison visiting room with Joel Rifkin, New York State's most notorious serial killer, and at the sites of plane crashes and terrorist attacks.

Nothing, however, touched his emotions more than boxing. And no boxer's personal saga touched him more than former middleweight champion Gerald McClellan, who was left physically and mentally crippled after a devastating defeat to Nigel Benn in 1995. He is now completely blind, 80 percent deaf, and confined to his sister's home in Freeport, Illinois. The medical bills are nothing short of astronomical.

The only people who never forgot McClellan are his sisters, who take turns feeding and bathing him, and Blackburn, who visits as often as he can.

A little over a decade ago, McClellan, who was known as the G-Man, was a knockout machine. He wasn't just Blackburn's favorite fighter; it seems as if he was in everyone's favorite top-five. If you were fortunate enough to be able to cut through his surliness, he was a warm human being. The laidback Blackburn was able to do just that.

"I remember shooting pool with the G-Man in Los Angeles," said the low-key Blackburn. "Once he let his tough guy shield down, he was a genuinely nice guy. A real nice guy – and a helluva fighter."

For the past nine years Blackburn has worked laboriously to help McClellan out. He arranged to have him brought by train to the Boxing Writers Association of America's annual dinner in 2002.

McClellan wasn't exactly sure what was going on, but he sensed that the affair was all about

him. His sisters said he was emotionally floating on air for weeks. Blackburn's benevolence earned him the BWAA's Good Guy Award.

Blackburn, with the financial assistance of promoter Lou DiBella, and the editorial aid of Steve Farhood, one of the finest writers and most decent human beings in a sometimes sordid business, just published "In the Other Corner: A Tribute to Gerald McClellan." The publisher is Four Angels Press, which is owned by DiBella's mother Anna.

The book chronicles, in words and photos, the biggest boxing stories of the past decade and a half. There is a gem of a photo of McClellan knocking Julian Jackson out to win the title, as well as Oscar De La Hoya playing pool and James Toney sucking on a stogie in a bathtub. Anybody who was or is anyone in the sweet science has made it on to the pages of this pictorial masterpiece.

"Many fighters have suffered injustices and injuries both inside and outside of the ring," said Blackburn. "The book is a tribute to a true champion. The G-Man gave the fans exactly what they wanted for seven years. Now is our opportunity to give something back to him when he needs us most."

So much has happened since that fateful night when McClellan was left nearly lifeless in a London ring. Back then, there was no such thing as the Internet, the terrorist attacks that rocked the United States and reverberated around the world were inconceivable to most Americans, there were no ongoing conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, and Blackburn lost both of his parents.

Although his father was a college professor who was intellectually inclined, Blackburn found no shortage of trouble for himself as he took to the streets as a teenager. He sometimes found himself sleeping in rooms with steel windows. Realizing he was on the path to nowhere, he made his way to Detroit's fabled Kronk Gym, which is where he met McClellan.

Although Blackburn's boxing career was lackluster – he quit after being stopped in an amateur bout against future USBA light heavyweight champion Booker Word – he always showed the heart of a champion in the ring and out.

He showed it as he helplessly watched his parents die torturously slow deaths, and he showed it in every visit he paid to McClellan. The measure of a man is most apparent by the way he treats someone who can do nothing for him.

Using that criterion, Blackburn's altruistic endeavors on behalf of McClellan and his family are akin to Mahatma Ghandi's actions towards the world at large.

Every penny derived from the sale of Blackburn's book will go to a fund to assist The G-Man and his family. The book costs $50, which includes postage and handling. It is worth even more than that.

To order, send a check for $50 to: Teddy Blackburn, 2985 Botanical Square, #6E, Bronx, NY 10458. Checks should be payable to Fighters Need a Hand.

Anyone wishing to make a separate donation to the McClellan's trust fund can send a check to: Gerald McClellan Trust Fund, c/o Fifth Third Bank, PO Box 120, Freeport, Illinois 61032.

Have a wonderful holiday season. Don't forget to keep the McClellan family in your prayers.