

Don King at Philippe Chow...HAUSER

Written by Thomas Hauser

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It's a half-mile from the Rainbow Room high above Rockefeller Center to Philippe Chow (a Chinese restaurant in midtown Manhattan). For Don King, those destinations are decades apart.

When King was in his glory years, the Rainbow Room hosted some of the most remarkable press conferences in boxing history. Major media feasted on all manner of cuisine as the promoter held court with Muhammad Ali and others.

On October 25th, King was back in New York on the second floor of Philippe Chow. He was there to plug a night of boxing that will be televised by a small cable network called WealthTV.

Let's get the administrative details out of the way. On November 5th at the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel and Casino in Hollywood, Florida, GUILLERMO JONES (King shouts the name when he says it) will defend a cruiserweight belt that he won by defeating someone named Firat Arslan against the challenge of Mike Marrone. Three other "championship" bouts will also be televised.

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WealthTV is distributed by a limited number of cable systems, so the fight will be available on various other electronic platforms as well.

King loves a challenge. That night, he will be going up against Alfredo Angulo vs. James Kirkland on HBO; Lucian Bute vs. Glen Johnson on Showtime; and LSU vs. Alabama (college football's match-up of the year) on CBS.

Anthony Evans once wrote, "I seldom get a buzz from meeting famous people. The hot girls are never as hot in person, and the funny guys are never as funny when they aren't paid to be. The action heroes are so small that it ruins the illusion. But whenever I meet Don King, he's Don King."

King is eighty years old now, but he still has a magnetic personality. Wearing his trademark "Only in America" jacket accessorized with mountains of bling, he entered the room waving sixteen flags representing the nations of fighters who be on the eleven-bout card.

"We'll have great fights," King told his audience. "We'll have dancing girls. We'll have Harold Melvin and the Blue Notes [a Philadelphia rhythm-and-blues group that was popular in the 1970s]. We'll have GUILLERMO JONES. And I guarantee you that, unlike another television network, we will show our National Anthem being sung as a matter of respect for our brave troops overseas. We must respect those who defend the glory of America, the greatness of America, the grandeur of America. Our troops overseas are fighting for our safety and freedom. Because of them, we know that we can be here and eat lunch at Philippe Chow without something bad happening to us."

Follow Don King around as he works a room, and you will be rewarded. Among the words of wisdom that he offered were:

- * "I've never done anything dishonest in boxing, but I have outmaneuvered many."
- * "Everybody loves you when you're on top and can help them make money, but I'm a true friend to those in dire need and distress."
- * "Robin Hood stole from the rich and gave to the poor. I don't steal from anybody, but I certainly give to the poor."
- * "If you want to see dancing, show me Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire, not Bernard Hopkins and Chad Dawson."
- * "I don't talk trash. I speak in an uplifting manner with respect toward all people."
- * "The one thing a man can give and still keep is his word."
- * "The best thing about Tom Hauser is his momma." [I had to get that one in]

Don King is no longer ringmaster of the boxing circus. The man who promoted Ali-Foreman in

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Zaire and Tyson-Holyfield in Las Vegas is now regarded by many as a benign sideshow. But he's still Don King. And like Elvis Presley in his later years, he is still capable of great performance art.

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