

Rest in Peace, Joe Rein

Written by Zachary Levin
Friday, 08 November 2013 08:31



I first met Joe Rein through his boxing writing over a decade ago. I loved what I read and was grateful there was an email next to his byline. I reached out and in no time daily emails and long late night phone chats became our routine. There was about a 35-year age difference between us, but it only deepened our bond. I was amazed by the things he had seen and done. I couldn't get enough of his stories about his days as a young amateur at Stillman's Gym, where got advice from Willie Pep and Sugar Ray Robinson, watched Marciano spar and did roadwork with Sandy Sadler. But Joe wasn't living in the past. A transplanted New Yorker, he was a fixture at the Wild Card Boxing Club in Hollywood, CA. Freddie Roach knew what he had in Joe and how valuable it was to have a guy like him hanging out and mingling with the fighters. Joe's two favorites were James Toney and Manny Pacquiao, both of whom he spent a lot of time with.

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I received word on Thursday that Joe, who'd been battling cancer, had died on Nov. 7. He was 77 years old. Joe is survived by his wife Bonnie Edwards, his daughter Kimley Maretzo and younger brother Laurence Reinlieb.

It was clear why I would want to be friends with this old head, but I didn't get why he was wasting his time with me. But he genuinely wanted to know what I thought, laughed at my jokes, and selflessly pored over my writing in an effort to improve it.

I eventually came to learn that I was one of many whom he sought to help. He was like that character Harold from the Lyle Kessler play *Orphans*, who says, "Everyone needs a little encouragement now and then." Don't get me wrong, if Joe thought you were a schmuck, you'd know it. He was Brooklyn tough to the core. But his M.O. was to encourage and help. He was thrilled to see others succeed and point them in that direction.

The comedian Maz Jobrani, who's done specials on Comedy Central and Showtime and been on the *Colbert Report* and Leno, continually credits Joe for helping him realize his dreams. (Google the two names and you'll find Maz saying it again and again.) In an interview he gave in 2011 with *The Tech*, MIT's newspaper, he said, "The person who inspired me to go after my dreams and be creative in my life is a gentleman by the name of Joe Rein. He was a producer at an advertising agency where I had a day job in my 20s. He knew I wanted to act and do comedy. He asked me if I'd considered trying it professionally. I told him I was going to wait till my 30s to give it a try. He took me into his office and told me, 'Look, I'm in my 60s. When I was in my 20s there were some things I wanted to do. I never got around to doing them. So if you really wanna do it, do it now!'"

When word spreads of Joe's passing, there will be countless others who will be more than just sad, they'll reflect, "He was always encouraging me." I can't think of a kinder legacy.

You can find Joe's excellent writing work [here](#) .

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kidcanvas says:

its the Joe Reins of this sport that give it character and when one passes they leave a legacy..
RIP Joe

Radam G says:

My deepest condolences. And ten beats from heart to honor such a gentleman. Holla!

ArneK. says:

How kind of Radam G to take a moment to offer his condolences considering the great tragedy that has afflicted his country. Stay strong, sir.

One of the benefits of being a hobbyist boxing historian is that one is exposed to great writing. Indeed, no other sport has attracted so many great wordsmiths as has boxing.

I just re-read Joe Rein's piece "Corazon." Magnificent! Never met Mr. Rein, but I know where he is right now. He's shooting the breeze with A.J. Leibling, kindred souls who knew how to make words sparkle on the printed page. RIP.