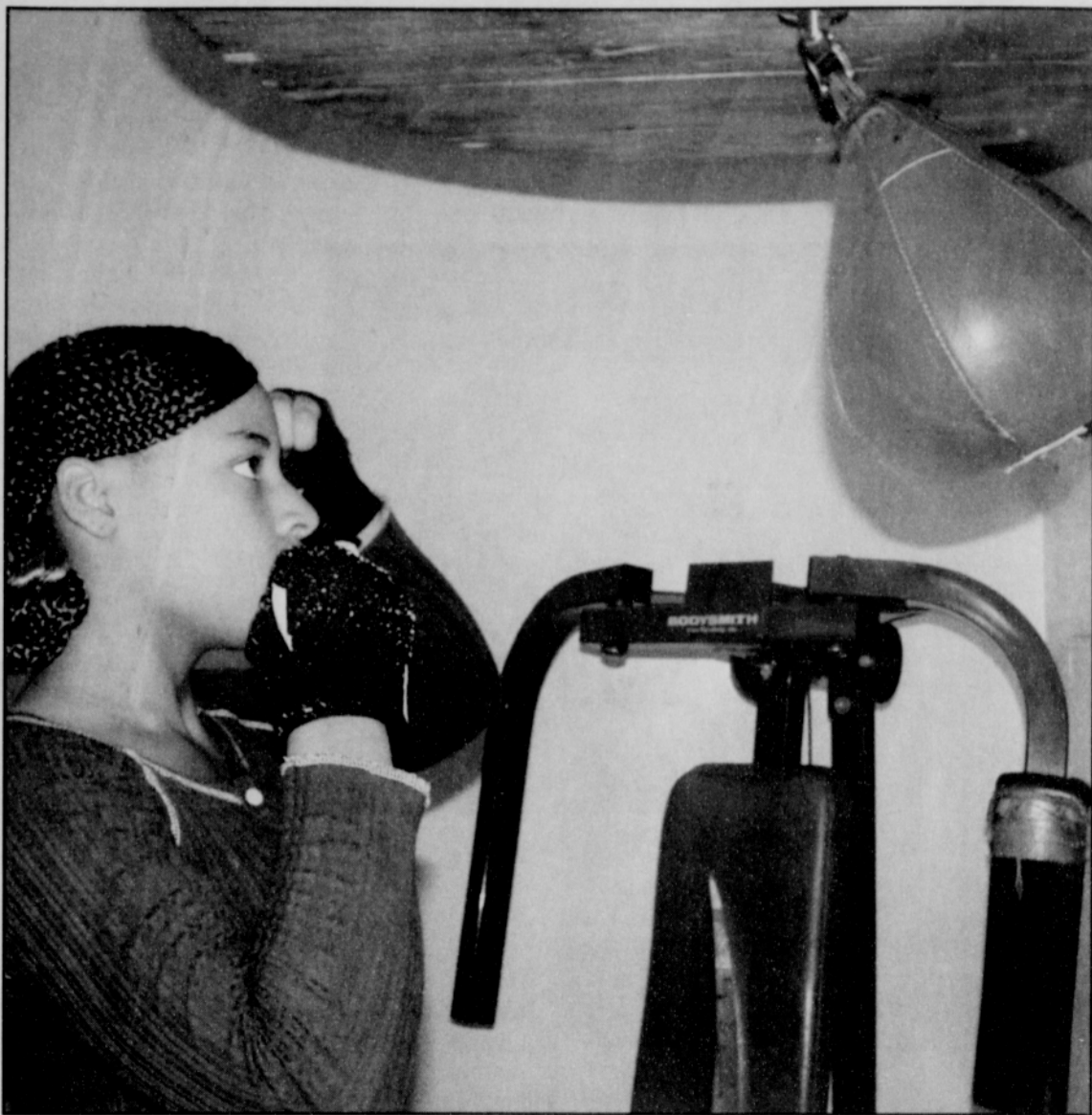


# 'Knott Street' Fights for Recognition



Female boxers were unheard of in the '50s and '60s, but are a common sight in a new generation of Knott Street boxers. China Gonzales, 15, has been boxing for four months now.



PHOTOS BY KATHERINE BLACKMORE/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER  
Champion Knott Street boxer A. Halim Rahsaan, formerly known as Bill Cross, stands proudly with trainer Chuck Lincoln in front of trophies won by the team over the years.

continued **▲** from Front world title.

Individuals from the collective have taken home eight "Golden Boy" awards, a title given to the outstanding boxer in a tournament. They've had international Olympic contenders, including Louis Johnson, Jodie Harris, Wade Smith and John Howard. The remarkable accomplishments of the boxers that stepped out of that gym are simply too lengthy to list.

**Hoping for honor**

"The Knott Street team was known nationally. We were like rock stars. Every kid in that era looked up to you, asked for your autograph," Rahsaan said.

Yet the team still hasn't been honored as a whole by the Oregon Hall of Fame. They're hoping for a chance this year, with final decisions being made on Thursday, June 30.

"It's a long time coming. It baffles me why, as a team, we haven't been able to get in given our accomplishments," Rahsaan said. "It makes you wonder what they're looking at other than athletic ability."

Rahsaan implied that other factors were at hand, like race or economic background. This is open to debate, considering the Board of Directors at the Oregon Hall of Fame is comprised of six men and one woman, all Caucasian. Before final decisions are made by the board, however, 600 ballots are

given out to former inductees and members - which includes a diverse population of voters.

Over 300 teams have been inducted thus far, said Jack Elder, development director of the Oregon Hall of Fame. Each year, six entities are inducted in categories including individuals, teams and special contributors. Knott Street is under the special contributor category, competing with 53 other entries total on the ballot.

"We encourage everyone to contact their fellow members and support their nominee through lobbying, through influence," Elder said. "The Knott Street Boxers are impressive. They're making people more aware of their story. Because of their efforts, people are talking

about them more."

Elder said it often takes years on the ballot for an individual or team to be recognized, so the boxers' plight isn't uncommon.

Announcements will be made anywhere from mid to late July, with the induction ceremony held in October.

realizes the significance of an induction.

"They were the most successful boxing team at that time. They were Oregon's claim to fame in sports," said Brame, a graduate of Jefferson High School in the '60s. "It's kind of faded from people's memories and we want to make sure it gets its

place in the Hall of Fame."

No one from the team, except Ray Lampkin, has been honored and inducted. Unsuccessful tries were made to get other Knott

Street fighters on the ballot. This is only the second year they've made it, along with boxer Thad Spencer.

"Some of the disadvantage is that they're from a community-based group," Brame said. Without the financial backing and coverage that other high school and college sports like basketball, baseball or football have, boxing is less likely to be noticed. In fact, that could also be why the sport has diminished in appeal over the years.

"At one time, you could get a college scholarship as a fighter,"

Brame said. "Once it was dropped from school supported programs, it began to lose its popularity. It's definitely fallen off."

He noted that there simply aren't enough good trainers anymore, either, mentioning Knott Street's Chuck Lincoln, "one of the best in the country."

"He was so good he couldn't get fights," Rahsaan also mentioned.

Community funding for children in general has gone beyond low, Brame said, which is another reason boxing has faded.

"If you were a low income kid, you could turn to Knott Street to learn how to play, box, keep busy," he said. "That sort of thing encouraged a lot of kids to go in there, but now you have to pay for everything."

Support from city leaders and grassroots effort is what kept it going - for awhile.

The Matt Dishman Community Center still holds a boxing gym, but the fervor for the sport isn't as stirring as it once was.

For now, the Knott Street Boxers wait to be rejuvenated and remembered by the state they helped put on the map of sports.

*They were the most successful boxing team at that time. They were Oregon's claim to fame in sports.*

**- Herman Brame, Multnomah County contract administrator**

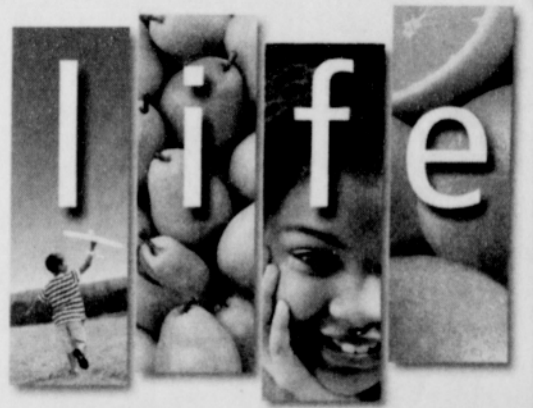
**Remembering history**

All the boxers' want is some acknowledgment of their united achievements. For them, that's part of what boxing was and is about.

"It was the recognition, winning the team trophy, being a champion. People congratulating you for your efforts," Rahsaan said.

Herman Brame nominated the Knott Street Boxing Team this year. Currently a contract administrator of Multnomah County, Brame served on the Oregon Hall of Fame board of directors in the '90s and

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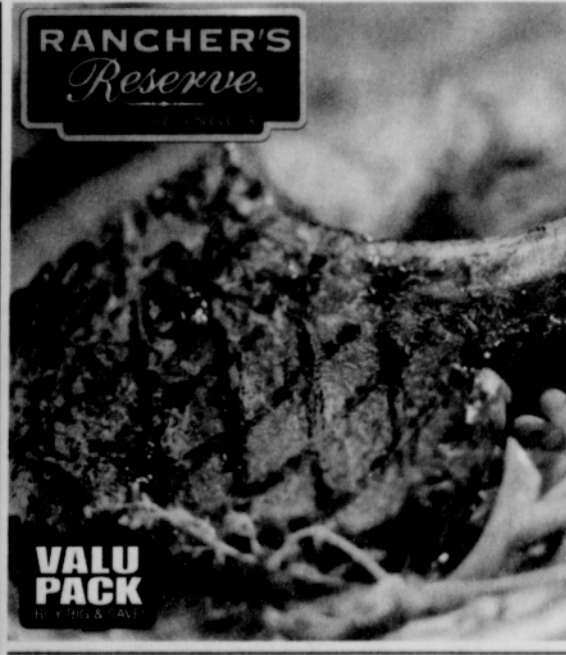
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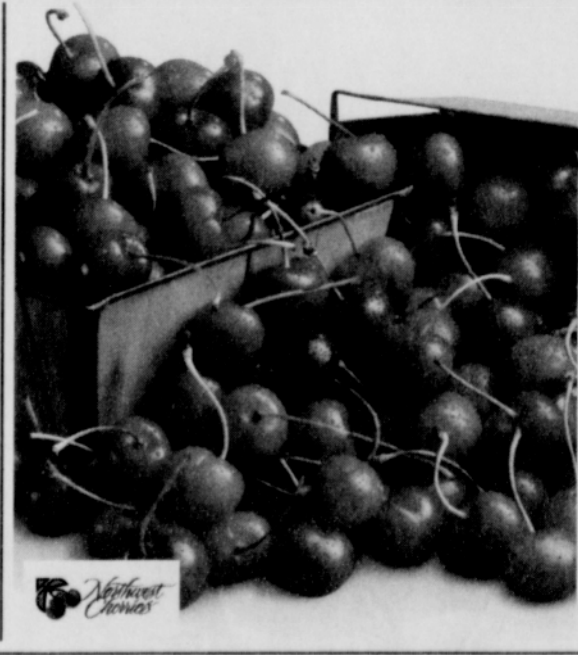
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