

Muhammad Ali

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

twice, toppled the mighty George Foreman with the rope-a-dope in Zaire, and nearly fought to the death with Joe Frazier in the Philippines. Through it all, he was trailed by a colorful entourage who merely added to his growing legend.

"Rumble, young man, rumble," cornerman Bundini Brown would yell to him.

And rumble Ali did. He fought anyone who meant anything and made millions of dollars with his lightning-quick jab. His fights were so memorable that they had names — "Rumble in the Jungle" and "Thrilla in Manila."

But it was as much his antics — and his mouth — outside the ring that transformed the man born Cassius Clay into a household name as Muhammad Ali.

"I am the greatest," Ali thundered again and again.

Few would disagree.

Ali spurned white America when he joined the Black Muslims and changed his name. He defied the draft at the height of the Vietnam war — "I ain't got no quarrel with them Viet Cong" — and lost 3 1/2 years from the prime of his career. He entertained world leaders, once telling Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos: "I saw your wife. You're not as dumb as you look."

He later embarked on a second career as a missionary for Islam.

The quiet of Ali's later life was in contrast to the roar of a career that had breathtaking highs along with terrible lows. He exploded on the public scene with a series of nationally televised fights that gave the public an exciting new champion, and he entertained millions as he sparred verbally with the likes of bombastic sportscaster Howard Cosell.

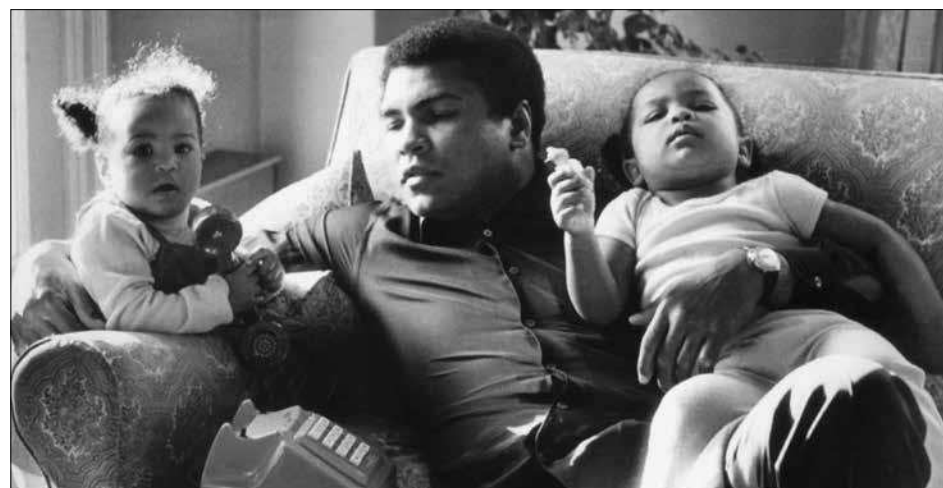
Ali once calculated he had taken 29,000 punches to the head and made \$57 million in his pro career, but the effect of the punches lingered long after most of the money was gone. That didn't stop him from traveling tirelessly to promote Islam, meet with world leaders and champion leg-

islation dubbed the Muhammad Ali Boxing Reform Act. While slowed in recent years, he still managed to make numerous appearances, including a trip to the 2012 London Olympics.

With his hands trembling so uncontrollably that the world held its breath, he lit the Olympic torch for the 1996 Atlanta Games in a performance as riveting as some of his fights.

Born Cassius Marcellus Clay on Jan. 17, 1942, in Louisville, Kentucky, Ali began boxing at age 12 after his new bicycle was stolen and he vowed to policeman Joe Martin that he would "whup" the person who took it.

He was only 89 pounds at the time, but Martin began training him at his boxing gym, the beginning of a six-year amateur career that ended with the light heavy-

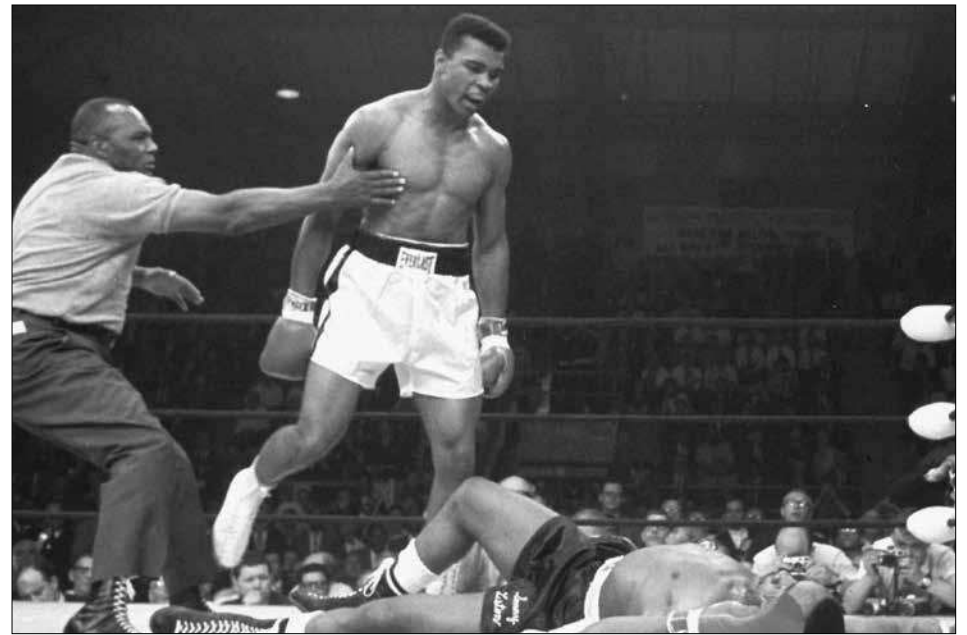


Heavyweight boxer Muhammad Ali with his daughters Laila and Hanna at their home on Dec. 19, 1978.

weight Olympic gold medal in 1960.

Ali had already encountered racism. On boxing trips, he and his amateur teammates would have to stay in the car while Martin bought them hamburgers. When he returned to Louisville with his gold medal, the Chamber of Commerce presented him a citation but said it didn't have time to co-sponsor a dinner.

In his autobiography, "The Greatest," Ali wrote that he tossed the medal into the Ohio River after a fight with a white motorcycle gang, which started when he and a



Heavyweight champion Muhammad Ali stands over fallen challenger Sonny Liston, shouting and gesturing shortly after dropping Liston with a short hard right to the jaw in the first round of their 1965 title fight in Lewiston, Maine, one of sports' most iconic moments.

outraged and disturbed many white Americans, but it was his refusal to be inducted into the Army that angered them most.

That happened on April 28, 1967, a month after he knocked out Zora Folley in the seventh round at Madison Square Garden in New York for his eighth title defense.

He was convicted of draft evasion, stripped of his title and banned from boxing. A few months later the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the conviction on an 8-0 vote.

Many in boxing believe Ali was never the same fighter after his lengthy lay-off, even though he won the heavyweight championship two more times and fought for another decade.

With his fourth wife, Lonnie, at his side, Ali traveled the world for Islam and other causes. In 1990, he went to Iraq on his own initiative to meet with Saddam Hussein and returned to the United States with 15 Americans who had been held hostage.

For his part, Ali didn't complain about the price he had paid in the ring.

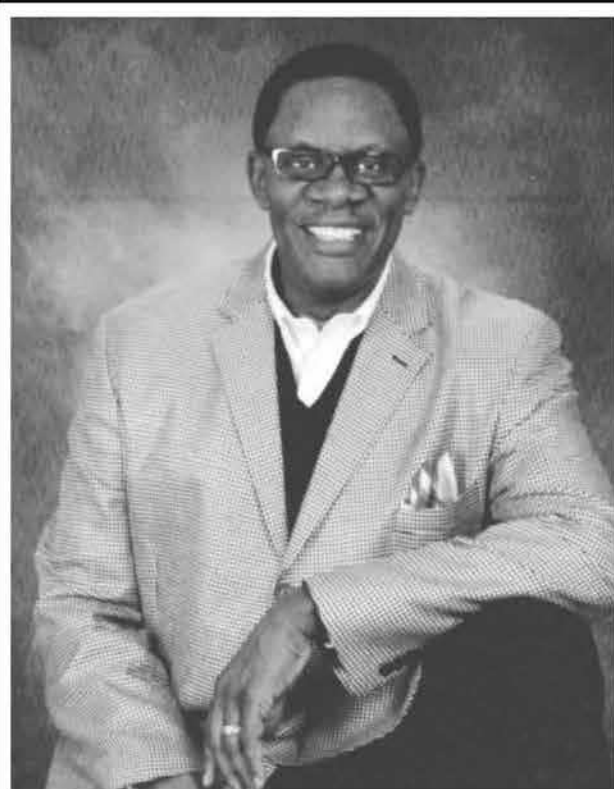
"What I suffered physically was worth what I've accomplished in life," he said in 1984. "A man who is not courageous enough to take risks will never accomplish anything in life."

friend were refused service at a Louisville restaurant.

After he beat Liston to win the heavyweight title in 1964, Ali shocked the boxing world by announcing he was a member of the Black Muslims — the Nation of Islam — and was rejecting his "slave name."

As a Baptist youth he spent much of his time outside the ring reading the Bible. From now on, he would be known as Muhammad Ali and his book of choice would be the Quran.

Ali's affiliation with the Nation of Islam



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