

Ray

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never beat any of us. But he should be right up there.

KW: Mike also asks: Was the Dicky Eklund knockdown, highlighted in the movie "The Fighter," legit?

SRL: It was legit that I was knocked down, or pushed down. [Chuckles] But I remember that fight like it was yesterday because that guy, Dick Eglund, was so unorthodox. And it was the first time in my life I really experienced racial hatred from the fans. We're talking about Boston back in '78.

KW: I lived in Boston from '75 to '78. It's the most racist city I ever experienced before or since. You couldn't step foot in white neighborhoods... they wouldn't serve you in some restaurants... and you couldn't go to Fenway Park or the Boston Garden.

SRL: I can believe it. When I arrived at the airport, I had a priest or a pastor greet me with, "Hey boy, welcome."

KW: I could go on and on about Boston.

SRL: I could, too. That's what it was like back then.

KW: When I interviewed Governor Deval Patrick last year, I told him I never would've believed that Massachusetts would ever elect a black governor after my experiences in his state. Mike has one more question: Do you regret coming out of retirement past your prime to fight Terry Norris and Hector Camacho?

SRL: Do I regret it? Yeah, I do, but it took that to wake up to the fact that my time was over, my time was gone. Sometimes it just takes that kind of beating, if you will, to wake up. It does. I didn't want to take it. I took it in intervals. The first time was in '91. I retired and came back in '97. Woo! I mean, come on! I don't know, man. A six-year layoff? That was crazy! My career was relatively short, whether you look at either its length in years or the number of fights I had. But it was brutal.

KW: That's because it was the Golden Age in terms of welterweights and middleweights.

SRL: Exactly! You couldn't mess around in that era there.

KW: Harriet Pakula Teweles says: With

mounting medical evidence that contact sports aren't providing ample equipment to mitigate against cerebral concussions, how would you feel about boxing associations mandating protective headgear for fighters, not just for sparring, but also during bouts?

SRL: I'm not in favor of that because we learn as amateurs how to protect ourselves. And that's why there's a third man in the ring, the referee. And that's why there has to be a very strong boxing commission that doesn't allow guys in the ring who don't belong there. Look at football, where you still have injuries no matter how much they improve the helmets and other equipment. Boxing's a poor man's sport. We can't afford to play golf or tennis. It is what it is. It's kept so many kids off the street. It kept me off the street. What's my options?

KW: Harriet also asks: Is it true that once, when you were climbing between the ropes and entering the ring, a reporter put a microphone up to your face and asked, "Sugar Ray, are you going to win tonight?" And you replied, "I didn't come here to lose." I hope it's true because I've always loved you for that—it's a great life lesson story. If it isn't, I'm going to continue to attribute it to you anyway, because you're a great life lesson guy.

SRL: Thanks, Harriet. But yes, I did say that.

KW: Yale grad Tommy Russell says: I really respect your admission about battling drug abuse during the tough times of your professional life. What is the most important thing you have learned from that experience?

SRL: I learned that I had character defects, that I was allergic to alcohol and drugs, and that I had an obsession with all the bad stuff. But thank God that I woke and that I had good people around me to support me. There's not much more I can say about it. You have to want to be a better person.

KW: Larry Greenberg says: On *Celebrity Ghost Stories*, you appeared with one of my favorite young ancestresses, Leila Jean Davis, and you shared some very personal experiences. How did you like being on the show?

SRL: I enjoyed it. I never thought in a million years that I would tell people that I saw a ghost. And I've seen a lot of ghosts. [Laughs]

KW: Is there any question no one ever asks you, that you wish someone would?

SRL: Yeah, how's your day? [Chuckles]

KW: The Tasha Smith question: Are you ever afraid?

SRL: Yes, we all are afraid of something. We might not admit it, but we are.

KW: The Columbus Short question: Are you happy?

SRL: Extremely!

KW: The Teri Emerson question: When was the last time you had a good laugh?

SRL: Just now. [Chuckles]

KW: What is your guiltiest pleasure?

SRL: It used to be a pint of ice cream in bed.

KW: The bookworm Troy Johnson question: What was the last book you read?

SRL: "The Big Fight." <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0452298040/ref=nosim/thslfofire-20>

KW: What inspired you to write the book?

SRL: To be honest, I don't know. I started one back in 1982 or '83 when I first retired. But I was only 25 or 26 and not ready to write my memoirs.

KW: The music maven Heather Covington question: What music have you been listening to?

SRL: "Dance with My Father" by Luther Vandross.

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/B000099J41/ref=nosim/thslfofire-20>

KW: What is your favorite dish to cook?

SRL: I'm pretty good with oatmeal.

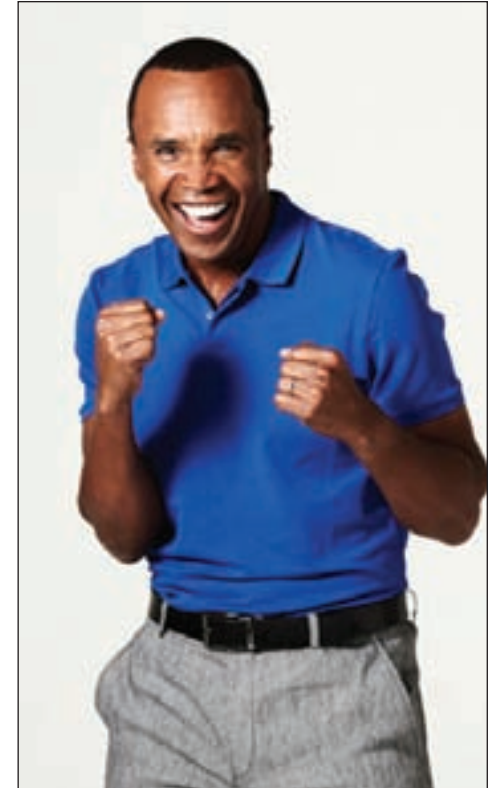
KW: The Sanaa Lathan question: What excites you?

SRL: Success. But not necessarily monetary success.

KW: Judyth Piazza asks: How do you define success?

SRL: Success is attaining your dream while helping others to benefit from that dream materializing.

KW: Dante Lee, author of "Black Business Secrets," asks: What was the best busi-



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ness decision you ever made?

SRL: Remaining conservative.

KW: The Ling-Ju Yen question: What is your earliest childhood memory?

SRL: At about 6, seeing my mom and dad kissing and understanding it.

KW: The Melissa Harris-Perry question: How did your first big heartbreak impact who you are as a person?

SRL: It made me realize how much I loved that person.

KW: What advice do you have for anyone who wants to follow in your footsteps?

SRL: You don't play boxing. [LOL] You really don't. You play golf, you play tennis, but you don't play boxing.

KW: The Tavis Smiley question: How do you want to be remembered?

SRL: As someone who had an impact outside the ring.

KW: Thanks again for the interview, Ray, and best of luck with the book.

SRL: Thank you, Kam.

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