

member of Ali's entourage, recall two moments that stand out in their minds.

**Norton:** "When it counted most, Ali was there for me. In 1986, I was in a bad car accident; real bad. I was unconscious for I don't know how long. My right side was paralyzed; my skull was fractured; I had a broken leg, a broken jaw. The doctors said I might never walk again. For a while, they thought I might not ever even be able to talk. I don't remember much about my first few months in the hospital, but one thing I do remember is, after I was hurt, Ali was one of the first people to visit me. At that point, I wasn't sure whether I wanted to live or die; that's how bad I was hurt. And like I said, there's a lot I don't remember. But I remember looking up and there was this crazy man standing by my bed. It was Ali, and he was doing magic tricks for me. He made a handkerchief disappear; he levitated. And I said to myself, if he does one more awful trick, I'm gonna get well just so I can kill him. But Ali was there, and his being there helped me. So I don't want to be remembered as the man who broke Muhammad Ali's jaw. I just want to be remembered as a man who fought three close competitive fights with Ali, and became his friend when the fighting was over."

**Wells:** "I'll never forget, one time we were in Haiti. We were driving to the airport, and all of a sudden, Ali said, 'Stop the car, stop!' There was an old Haitian lady sitting by the road; just sitting, not doing nothing else. And Ali got out of the car, walked over to her, reached into his pocket, and gave her a handful of bills. The woman looked at it, and started to cry. She couldn't believe it. And Ali did things like that all the time. Money and possessions never mattered to Ali. He'd spend on everybody but himself. I can't tell you how many times he'd get a check for five or ten thousand dollars, and say, 'Send this to my mother,' or 'Send this to my father.' And not only did he give away the money; he'd pay the taxes on it. I'm telling you, if someone cut Ali open, they'd find his heart was made of pure gold."

**Item:** Antagonizing opponents was always a part of Ali's game plan. The champ's apparent disdain was often perceived as malice. Ali responds.

**Ali:** "I never hated anyone I fought. And some of the guys -- Jimmy Ellis, Buster Mathis, Zora Folley -- I liked a lot. It's wrong to hate. Sonny Liston, Joe Frazier, George Foreman; we were all in it together. It was good; we had our day."

**Item:** Joe Frazier and Ali engaged in three brutal confrontations. And while Ali has always been well received by just about everyone,

"Smokin'" Joe has never been a fan of the champ. Even today, he's still ticked at Ali.

**Frazier:** I hated Ali. God might not like me talking that way, but it's in my heart. I hated that man. First two fights, he tried to make me a white

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— Muhammad Ali

man. Then he tried to make me a nigger. How would you like it if your kids came home from school crying, because everyone was calling their daddy a gorilla? God made us all the way we are. He made us the way we talk and look. And the way I feel, I'd like to fight Ali-Clay-whatever his name is again tomorrow. Twenty years, I've been fighting Ali, and I still want to take him apart piece by piece and send him back to Jesus.

"I know things would have been different for me if Clay hadn't been around. I would've gotten a lot more respect. I would've had more appreciation from my own kind. But the Good Man planned it for us to come together at the same time, and I'm sure he had a plan.

"We were gladiators. I didn't ask no favors of him, and he didn't ask none of me. I don't like him but I got to say, in the ring he was a man. In Manila, I hit him with punches, those punches, they'd knocked a building down. And he took 'em and he came back, and I got to respect that part of the man. He was a fighter. He shook me in Manila; he won. But I sent him home worse than he came. Look at him now; he's damaged goods. I know it; you know it. Everyone knows it; they just don't want to say.

**Item:** In spite of Frazier's feelings, Ali makes it clear that each fighter made the other. Ali points out that his antics were never intended to create ill-will and hostility.

**Ali:** I'm sorry Joe Frazier is mad at me. I'm sorry I hurt him. Joe Frazier is a good man. I couldn't have done what I did without him, and he couldn't have done what he did without me. And if God ever calls me to a holy war, I want Joe Frazier fighting beside me."

**Item:** In recent years, there has

been so much written and said about Ali's physical condition. Some have gone as far as saying that the champ is punch-drunk. Dr. Stanley Fahn, of the Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center gives his prognosis of Ali's condition. The champ underwent

extensive testing at Columbia Presbyterian in '84. Fahn is the director of CPMC's Parkinsonism and Movement Disorders Clinic.

**Dr. Fahn:** He's asked that I speak freely and completely [for this book], so I'll tell you my diagnosis that it was post-traumatic Parkinsonism due to injuries from fighting. Muhammad himself told me he thinks that most of the damage came from the third Frazier fight, the one in Manila. That may be where he started to get his damage, but it's highly unlikely that it all came from one fight. My assumption is that his physical condition resulted from repeated blows to the head over time.

**Item:** It's ironic that Ali went on record as saying that boxing has its perils for those shouldn't be in a ring. In '76, five years before he retired, he made the following statement on CBS's *Face The Nation*.

**Ali:** "I think boxing is dangerous. The brain's a delicate thing. If a fellow is not qualified, he shouldn't be allowed to fight. My jaw's been broken, and one nerve is just coming back from where I couldn't feel for a year or two. I got my eardrum busted in Manila training for Joe Frazier, and I just had it rebusted; the same one. I would advise nobody to box if they get hit too much."

**Item:** The champ isn't the same man that the public has always warmly embraced. Still, Ali's physical problems doesn't mean that his life is over. Dr. Fahn discusses the prospects for Ali at this point in his life.

**Dr. Fahn:** "As for the type of life Muhammad can expect to lead in the future, we rated him as being able to perform all the activities of daily living at 90 percent of what would be normal of him without his physical problem.

He's slightly slow, but certainly functioning. His condition is not in any way life-threatening. And I saw no indication that he was suffering from 'puglistica dementia.' In other words, the symptoms were in his motor skills; movement, speech, and facial expression. His condition did not affect his level of intelligence or the quickness of his mind. In fact, I was very much impressed by his street smarts and his ability to handle people, particularly the press:

"To the extent that people see Muhammad today and he's moving unusually slow or speaking particularly poorly, that simply suggests to me that he's not taking his medicine at that time. Nothing will make him 100 percent again. But with proper medication, exercise, and diet, the quality of his life should be good."

**Item:** Given the champ's condition, there has been a tendency to feel sorry for him. Lonnie Ali, Muhammad's current wife, explains that there's really no need for people to be overly concerned about her husband's health.

**Lonnie Ali:** "The tendency people now have is to feel protective of Muhammad and treat him as though he were fragile. But there's no need to do that. Muhammad travels more than anyone else I know on this earth. I'm a healthy woman. I don't have any physical frailties, and I can't keep up with his traveling schedule. I've begged off of trips that Muhammad went on because I just couldn't do it, and I'm fourteen years younger than he is. People don't understand when they see Muhammad what his previous days might have been. People say, 'Muhammad come here; Muhammad go there.' And he'll get on a plane and do it without any concern for his health or how tired he might be."

**Item:** Muhammad Ali has accepted what has happened to him. He isn't distraught, but reflective and philosophical.

**Muhammad Ali:** "I don't want anyone to feel sorry for me, because I had a good life before and I'm having a good life now. It would be bad if I had a disease that was contagious. Then I couldn't play with children and hug people all over the world. But my problem with speaking bothers other people more than it bothers me. It doesn't stop me from doing what I want to do and being what I want to be. Sometimes I think that too many people put me on a pedestal before and made me into an idol. And that's against Islam; there are no idols in Islam. So maybe this problem I have is God's way of reminding me and everyone else about what's important. I accept it as God's will. And I know that God never gives anyone a burden that's too heavy for them to carry."