

**PUBLICATION:** The Toronto Sun  
**DATE:** 2004.06.22  
**EDITION:** Final  
**SECTION:** Entertainment  
**PAGE:** 45  
**SOURCE:** BY BRUCE KIRKLAND

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## TRULY GIFTED IN THE ART OF STORYTELLING

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TO READ him was to respect him.

To know him was to love him.

To socialize with him was to live a better, richer, fuller life as a journalist.

Jerry Gladman was that kind of influence, that kind of colleague, that kind of friend.

Hearing of his death so soon after last week's Sun Media Dunlop Awards -- where it was a privilege to share the night and the podium with Gladman's remarkable family as Jerry, in absentia, won the Dunlop for best feature writing -- left me in tears.

Just as quickly, however, a smile forced itself through.

That in itself is a tribute to Jerry: He was an emotional guy, yet never maudlin, never the sap.

So I found myself laughing quietly as I remembered years of good times that preceded Jerry's personal tragedy.

It was his battle with a disease that robbed him of one of his greatest assets -- his power of speech, his magic with storytelling.

Jerry could mine anything that happened in his life, or to the people he knew, or to the interview subjects he met for an assignment, and spin out a vivid tale that made that story come alive.

He did that to the end.

His Dunlop Award was for writing so candidly about his own struggle with ALS, Lou Gehrig's Disease. As the poet Dylan Thomas advised, Jerry raged, raged against the dying of the light. There was nothing meek about his exit.

I knew Jerry for three decades. Even before joining the Toronto Sun in 1980, I met him when I worked the entertainment beat at The Star and later when I spent a year in Ottawa with The Journal.

That sojourn in Ottawa brings me to one of my favourite personal adventures with the guy.

Jerry, representing The Sun, Chris Cobb, representing The Ottawa Citizen, and I were assigned to a film story in Manhattan. Because it was the formal opening night of the New York Film Festival, black tie was required. The three of us trooped off together to get outfitted at a mid-town haberdashery. Given that each one of us, at the time, was a casually dressed hick from the Great White North, together we chose the wrong store, the wrong ill-fitting black suits and definitely the wrong frilly formal shirts. In mauve.

Lined up together, we looked more like Guy Caballero's marching band than a trio of film journalists. It was laughable, to ourselves, to everyone else at the fete. Even Francois Truffaut, elegantly turned out as he was, gave us a look and a sly Gallic smile.

It was Jerry, however, who knew how to turn this silly escapade into a delicious slice-of-life story for The Sun. He took as much delight skewering himself as he did mocking his Canuckleheaded colleagues, me included. That was Jerry.

Taken in isolation, that little saga may seem inconsequential. Taken in a lifetime of little moments strung together like shimmering jewels, it means something precious.

Jerry could be hilarious and serious in a single sentence.

He understood how lives were lived and how they careened wildly between extremes of pleasure and pain.

And he knew how to communicate that to his readers.

**PUBLICATION:** The Toronto Sun

**DATE:** 2004.06.22

**EDITION:** Final

**SECTION:** News

**PAGE:** 8

**ILLUSTRATION:** 2 photos 1. JERRY GLADMAN shares a smile in Cuba with Milton Berle, one of the many stars he met in his storied career. 2. JERRY GLADMAN in 1977: "One of the best ."

**SOURCE:** BY MARK BONOKOSKI

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## HIS WORDS MOVED WHETHER ALS OR BOXING, HE WAS A SWEET WRITER

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THE SUMMER solstice, the longest day of the year, was mercifully the shortest for Jerry Gladman as he died at home in his sleep yesterday before the sun had even risen.

One of the best in the newspaper business was gone.

"He died in his own bed, with me lying right beside him," said his wife, Norma. "Sometime in the wee hours of the morning. I couldn't wake him up."

Last Tuesday night, his family had gone without him to the Renaissance Toronto Hotel at the SkyDome to accept, on his behalf, Sun Media's 2003 Dunlop Award of Excellence in the feature-writing category.

"Living and dying with ALS" was the series' title. But Jerry Gladman wasn't writing about just anyone living and dying with Lou Gehrig 's disease, or amyotrophic lateral sclerosis -- an incredibly cruel disease that lays waste to the body while the mind remains just as cruelly cognizant of the waste being laid.

He was writing about his living and his dying.

It was gut-wrenching and it was humorous. And it was almost impossible to read without emotionally breaking down. Both friends and strangers were moved to tears.

But, through those tears, they also learned about a disease that is yet to have a cure. And, judging by e-mails and letters to the editor, they learned by the thousands.

At the awards ceremony, while Norma sat in the wings with son, Jesse, and daughter, Caitlin, Jerry's eldest son, Lee, took to the podium to deliver a speech his father had arduously written -- one letter, then another, with each sentence taking a seemingly endless amount of time because the hands no longer worked, and only one finger could be used ... if it twitched at the right moment, and if it happened to find the right key on the keyboard.

That night, through his son, Jerry Gladman spoke of his epitaph and how, before ALS brought an end to his long and storied career, he had found inspiration in writing the obituaries of others because he understood so much more about life than many who had faced no life trials, and could therefore write about life so much better than most.

"I would like to be known as the guy who didn't just get the facts of the story, but the humanity of it as well," he wrote.

Consider it a given.

The longest day of the year was mercifully short for Jerry Gladman because he died peacefully in his sleep, thereby allowing him to escape his greatest fear -- and that was the terror of consciously suffocating to death when his weakened body gave up on the unconscious act of breathing.

"But it didn't happen that way," said wife, Norma. "Instead, he simply slipped away."

He was 61.

Back in the days of the old Toronto Telegram, there was no sweeter a writer on the sweet science of boxing than Jerry Gladman. He was a heavyweight in lightweight's clothing -- so gifted with the turn of phrase that he could make silver dollars out of nickel and dime words.

Seek out an ex-boxer named Ronnie Edwards and he will pull from his wallet a tattered clipping of a long-ago fight that Jerry Gladman set up perfectly as a brutal 10 rounds between two fighters who refused to surrender.

"Ronnie Edwards and Aldo Carelli tried to kill each other last night," Gladman wrote in the Tely. "They almost succeeded, but Edwards came closest."

Jerry Gladman wrote of a fight to be remembered in words that no one there has forgotten, and that includes former Canadian heavyweight champion George Chuvalo.

"I've seen a few (fights)," said Chuvalo. "But this one had it all. It was a war -- and no one could describe it like Jerry."

We go back a lot of years, Jerry and I. I was there the day he returned from a blind date and could not believe that the beautiful airline attendant he had taken to dinner the night before had agreed to see a "schmuck like me" again.

Months later, I was best man at their wedding and, if life did not include Lou Gehrig's, there would be a 25th wedding anniversary being celebrated this August.

As I write this, however, I am burdened by guilt -- guilt for not having been able to muster the courage to visit Jerry when he was at his lowest, guilt because I knew I wouldn't be able to find the right words to say when he could say no words at all because Lou Gehrig's had stolen his voice.

But I did write and, at the awards ceremony last Tuesday, Norma Gladman said Jerry understood, his sense of humanity being the given that it is.

It was to be expected, of course. Both of Jerry and of Norma. They were always, without question, hopelessly in love and truly sensitive of heart.

Jerry called Norma his "life's preserver."

Yesterday she called him "my life."

**PUBLICATION:** The Toronto Sun

**DATE:** 2004.06.22

**EDITION:** Final

**SECTION:** News

**PAGE:** 9

**ILLUSTRATION:** 2 photos by Michael Peake JERRY GLADMAN was a big kid, working on a school story and playing Mr. Mom to his kids, Caitlin and Jesse, while Norma heads off to work during his sabbatical in 1986.

**SOURCE:** BY JASON TCHIR, TORONTO SUN

**TYPE :** Obit

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**SUPER STORYTELLER GLADMAN HAD A TOUCH THAT LEFT SUN READERS SAD, MAD OR GLAD**

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NOTHING GOT between Jerry Gladman and the story, not even high school.

"Jerry was a terror at Vaughan Road Collegiate and they said 'if you promise to never come back we'll give you your Grade 10 diploma,'" said John Gault, Jerry Gladman's best friend of more than 35 years. "And he ended up teaching at a university. That says a hell of a lot about the guy."

Gladman, 61 -- a longtime Toronto Sun writer, father of three and grandfather of four -- died early yesterday of ALS.

From his start as a 16-year-old copy boy, Gladman thrived as a journalist and later as a journalism teacher because he loved telling stories, Gault said.

"He sounded like a street guy and he wrote in that lovely person-to-person," said Gault, who met Gladman when both worked at the Toronto Telegram in the 1960s and stayed in touch, meeting him for lunch almost every week. "But he had a first-class mind and there was nothing he couldn't do."

#### STRICKEN IN 2003

Gladman was diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis -- a debilitating and fatal neurological disease also known as Lou Gehrig ' s disease -- in late 2003, about 10 months after symptoms started appearing.

Gladman was awarded the feature writing prize at Sun Media's 2003 Edward Dunlop Awards last week for his four-part series, Living and Dying with ALS.

His son Lee said it was the "last big story" in the 44-year career of a journalist who aspired to be "the guy who didn't just get the facts of the story, but the humanity as well."

Gladman had lifelong passions for boxing (he wrote about it for years) and westerns. And he discovered his love of teaching during the four years he taught at Ryerson before his diagnosis.

"A bunch of people called me and said he would make a wonderful teacher," said Ryerson's John Miller. "He would wow them with all these incredible stories. He brought the perspective of someone who is educated in the university of life."

When he quit teaching because he became unable to speak, "it saddened my students and broke my heart," he wrote in his series.

"Honest to God, I don't think I ever heard a person say the slightest negative thing about him, not even 'Jerry told a fib,'" said boxing champ George Chuvalo, a friend for 40 years. "He was one of the nicest guys you'd ever want to meet."

He leaves wife Norma, children Lee, Jesse and Caitlin, and grandkids Mathew, Jordon, Jamie and Emma.

Funeral service is at 11:30 a.m. tomorrow at Benjamin's Park Memorial Chapel on 2401 Steeles Ave. W.

**PUBLICATION:** The Toronto Sun

**DATE:** 2004.06.20

**EDITION:** Final

**SECTION:** News

**PAGE:** 44

**ILLUSTRATION:** 1. photo by Ernest Doroszuk MEET OUR Dunlop Award winners: Rob Lamberti, Rob Granatstein, Bill Brioux, Derek Tse, Andy Donato, Himani Ediriweera, Kim Bradley, Sarah Green, Mike Strobel, Thane Burnett, Steve Simmons, Bob Bishop, Mark Bonokoski, Kevin Connor, Bruce Kirkland and Ian Robertson. 2. photo The most popular feature writing winner Jerry Gladman.

**SOURCE:** BY SARAH GREEN, TORONTO SUN

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## LARGE SHOES TO FILL SUN'S JERRY GLADMAN WINS DUNLOP AWARD

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ALS MAY have robbed Jerry Gladman of his voice, but the disease has not stolen his words.

His brave and poignant account of his battle with ALS -- also known as Lou Gehrig's disease -- was honoured last week at Sun Media's 2003 Edward Dunlop Awards, winning the top prize for feature writing.

Gladman, a longtime Toronto Sun writer, did not attend the awards dinner. His wife Norma and three children shed tears as they accepted his prize on his behalf.

Yet, his presence filled the Renaissance Hotel ballroom, where writers and editors honoured Gladman as a friend and mentor, and his son, Lee, read a moving acceptance speech.

Gladman's four-part series, Living and Dying with ALS, was the "last big story" in the 44-year career of a journalist who aspired to be "the guy who didn't just get the facts of the story, but the humanity as well," his son said.

Gladman was stunned by the response to his story and found himself a member of a "very exclusive club" of ALS sufferers. He was "writing my story and theirs as well," his son said.

Toronto Sun columnist Thane Burnett, who earned an honourable mention for investigative writing, turned to Gladman's family as he described their husband and father as an inspiration.

"All of us are trying to walk in the heavy shoes he's left in the newsroom and we try to do that to this day," Burnett said.