



## TRIBUTE TO RON RICHARDS

"When the majority of boxing champions are but names in the record book, the fans will still talk of Ron Richards," writes Ray Mitchell, Australia's leading boxing authority.

Ron Richards, 56, died of a heart attack on 14 January at his home in Dulwich Hill, Sydney. He was buried at Rookwood Cemetery after a service at St Brigid's Roman Catholic Church, Marrickville.

The boxing world's farewell to Ron, the man who once held the Empire middleweight and Australian middleweight, light-heavyweight, and heavyweight titles, was a moving tribute.

Jimmy Carruthers, George Barnes, Dimitri Michael, Clive Stewart, Vic Patrick and Fred Henneberry were his pall-bearers and 40 other famous names in the boxing world formed a guard of honour.

Chief mourners were Ron's widow, Mrs Colleen Richards, his mother, Mrs Florence Richards, his daughter, Mrs Bernadette Setnick, his brother, Max, and his sister, Mrs May Ford.

Representatives of the N.S.W. Aborigines Welfare Board, the Queensland Aboriginal and Islands' Affairs Department, and the Eastern Suburbs Police Boys' Club—of which Ron was a member—were also present.

When mourners spoke of Ron Richards, they talked with pleasure of his fighting days, of an era in the 1930's when he was one of Australia's great champions.

The *Sydney Morning Herald* quoted them. "The best since Darcy," they said. "The best counter-puncher we've ever had." "Calm, always balanced, quick and as hard as a bullock." "One of Nature's gentlemen. Never did a dirty thing in the ring."

They spoke of his 100 wins, of his points defeat of the American Gus Lesnevich in 1938 and the fact that Lesnevich went on to win the world light-heavyweight title in 1941.

They talked of his 10 battles with another great national middleweight champion, Fred Henneberry—a series which boxing fans will always remember.

After Ron's fighting career ended in the ring, he faced another fight—with drink—which continued for the rest of his life.

During these years he suffered several knock-downs at the hands of louts who wanted to boast they had knocked out the mighty Ron Richards.

In an attempt to escape from the troubles of his life in Sydney, he went to Palm Island Aboriginal settlement off Townsville, and, for more than a year, had a good measure of peace—something he had not known for many years.

Last year Ron heard that his wife Colleen was seriously ill in Sydney, and he returned to Sydney to help her.

His failings will be forgotten, and Australians will always remember Ron Richards as the champion he was.