

PULLING NO PUNCHES

Valley stuntman/actor aims to break heavybag Guinness Book World Record

By E.M. Fredric

Losing a parent at any age is not easy. For a child, it's even more difficult. Ron Sarchian was only three years old when he lost his father to testicular cancer. "I have no memories of my dad. It's a lot to throw at a kid at that age. I know once they diagnosed him, he didn't live that long and back in '67 cancer was a taboo. People stayed away from you. Grownups try to shelter you for as long as they can. How do you figure out when it's a good time to tell a child his father is dead or why? I don't remember when it really sank in for me. I can remember trying "to figure it out" and got taunted by other kids. For me it was more of an internal point of view. I'd think 'why don't I have a dad? Why did this happen to me?'"

Sarchian, a Hollywood stuntman and actor — not to mention spinning and kickboxing instructor, is combining his athleticism with his passion to help eradicate the cancer that claimed his father as he pounds a 100 pound heavybag relentlessly with the intention of shattering a Guinness Book World Record — 24 hours and 16 minutes — this month in the valley.

His open invitation to the public is personal. He will turn 40 during the event that takes place just days before Father's Day. "This devastating disease really hits home for me. This will be the most difficult thing I've ever attempted to do. It will be a huge physical accomplishment but an even bigger emotional high." All proceeds that he raises go to the Lance Armstrong Foundation — a

cancer organization that is committed to enhancing the quality of life for those living with, through and beyond cancer.

The road from his Detroit, Michigan home to the San Fernando Valley and ultimately to this attempt to break a world record was one filled with twists and turns — and some of those twists and turns even took place while tumbling in the sky. "The neighborhood I grew up in was pretty rough. My mom and I lived near 8 Mile and Woodward. Like the movie "8 Mile," it used to be the border between the blacks and the whites. We moved to Royal Oak after the '67 riots and my dad had died." Sarchian's mother raised him alone with the help of her large extended family. "My three uncles were carpenters. It's a great trade, but hard work, and in Michigan it's icy



and snows five months of the year. My mother worked a lot and we lived in a rough part of town, but she taught me to be responsible for my actions and to work hard. She's always been behind me."

At age eight, Ron started working out with the heavybag, which gave him focus and ultimately a purpose. A Boys Club field trip to a thrill show at the Detroit area's Pontiac Silverdome all but sealed his fate when he was first exposed to stuntwork in person. Watching the athletes with awe, he was determined to be in top physical shape himself. In high school he was named best offensive lineman on his football team and he became involved with martial arts to help him with off-season conditioning and training. He continued to play football at Northern Michigan University, where he graduated with a degree in Industrial Technology.

His degree took him to Seattle for a job

with Boeing, where he continued to play on semi-pro football teams and began work in acting and stuntwork, appearing in shows like "Northern Exposure."

He says somewhat conspiratorially, "I left a cushy job at Boeing to specialize in fire stunts. That's when you find your true friends. Some friends and relatives told me I was nuts. In college, I broke my neck by cracking a couple of vertebra. With fire stunts, I've burned off the back of my hands, parts of my ear and forehead — but it grew back in about a year. Stunt is a sport. You're going to get hurt if you do it long enough. I'm a skydiver also. I pack my parachute the best I can. You can't worry about it. It's like playing sports. If a guy is throwing a 90 mile an hour fastball at you, you can't stop to worry if you're going to get hit. There's an ease you have to have under high pressure and stress that comes

from doing it over and over because there's cameras, lights and props to be reset. It's one thing to screw up a line, a complete different scenario on a stunt."

While he enjoyed success in Seattle — being named as a principal stuntman with the United Stuntmen's Association in Seattle, he headed to Hollywood for even more opportunities and landed gigs on shows the likes of "Simon & Simon," "Nowhere Man," "Mr. & Mrs. Smith," "The Bold and the Beautiful" and "Murder, She Wrote."

Today, the local resident and personal trainer specializes in kickboxing, boxing, spinning and teaches "Action for Actors," instructing the only comprehensive training program designed to prepare professional actors to execute action scenes. Sarchian may not be a movie star, but he has the looks, drive, and mental focus to stand along-

side the best of them. As an actor, he's appeared as the bad guy or hit man on hit television shows "The Division," "Nash Bridges," "Star Trek: Enterprise" and "General Hospital."

His focus for now is training for the event. "I'm currently recovering from my 16 hour rehearsal which resulted in me being tired — but not sore at all, even though I threw almost 40,000 punches. I guess that means I'm doing something right."

Ultimately, Ron wants to design a video or DVD workout solely on the bag. "People don't realize they don't need, unless they're going for bulk, to use the weights so much. The bag itself, if kicked and punched at properly, will give you an entire workout to tone your body. It's a workout for the entire family."

Four hour changing shifts of medics, professional trainers and other Guinness' required witnesses and personnel will be present and video-taped as Sarchian punches to beat the last record holder, Uunan Devenney of Ireland in 2001. Ron is confident, "I ran a marathon in Seattle and equate it to that, the time, the dedication. I put a lot of stress and pressure on myself because I have to do this right. I'll be able to look back and say, WOW, I did that."

The philosopher with a punch is off with his open invitation to the public. Come join in a bit of one man's history. What better gift to give than love, awareness and courage for Father's Day to be sure they're around to enjoy many more. Wish him a Happy Birthday, sign his guest book and have some great food while supporting a great cause. Local restaurants, like



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Danny Bonaduce's Fiorini's, are already pitching in with food to sponsor the event. There will be surprise sports guests and celebrities and your support is welcome and needed.

Where: Premier Fitness, 16654 Ventura Blvd. Encino (off Balboa) across from Kinko's. Phone: 818-789-5553

When: Starting at: noon, Tuesday, June 15 and finishing at sometime on Thursday, June 17.

Ron's number for more information or literature: 818-702-7540 or 818-389-2522 Web: LAF can be reached at 512-236-8820 Web: www.LAF.org and visit the Peleton Project. Lance Armstrong's Foundation has endorsed Ron's inspirational challenge. Important hours are during the morning hours of 12:00 am (midnight) through 6:00 am on Wednesday, June 16th.