My father was a boxing fan. So it was natural that his two sons would also be boxing fans. Growing up, we would watch the fights with our father on Saturday afternoons, but the first time I saw a live fight was when my older brother Adam took me to the Felt Forum – which, as all of you know, was the smaller stage in Madison Square Garden. Adam and I were both hooked by boxing and we became regulars at the Felt Forum for their Thursday night cards. Our routine was always the same – we would buy $10 tickets, the ticket taker would rip our tickets in half, and we would head for the best open seats we could find. The Felt Forum always had exciting fights – we used to watch Buddy McGirt, Tunde Foster, Glenwood Brown, Tyrone Jackson, Chris Reid, Merqui Sosa and Aaron "Superman" Davis – who sits on this dais today – with his rapid-fire left hooks that would often come three at a time.

We went for the fights, of course, but the Felt Forum did something else right. There always came a moment when Ed Derian, the Felt Forum's ring announcer, introduced the boxers in the audience and brought them up to the ring. Champions and prospects, most of them New Yorkers, would greet each other inside the ropes, always showing a genuine respect for each other that was born of their shared experience as fighters. And they would take in the crowd's adulation. It was a true boxing crowd that gathered at the Felt Forum, fight fans who

recognized that fighters are a special breed. Fighters bring us moments that we cannot find anywhere else, thrilling moments, and in the most satisfying fights, a sense of catharsis. Because of what the boxers gave to us, and because of what they were, we loved the fighters, and we relished that time of the night when we could show our appreciation. These were men (and at that time, it was only men) who had earned their place inside the ring at the Felt Forum.

You don't see that anymore – a time put aside during a boxing card when the fighters in attendance are called into the ring to be recognized. And that's too bad. It's too bad because fighters deserve that recognition, fighters who do their work in a place where hard truths are revealed deserve a special moment when they are acknowledged, without distraction, for their accomplishment.

Thankfully, the NYSBHOF has picked up where Ed Derian left off. It brings together New York fighters, as well as the supporting players in this great sport, and allows them to be recognized. And it gives an opportunity to those of us who are fans, fight fans, fans who love boxing and love the boxers, to show our appreciation. Those of you on this dais, and those being honored who unfortunately are no longer with us, you are a special breed, and we are fortunate to be able to honor you.

Congratulations to all of today’s inductees, and thank you for what you have given us.