

Fighting fit to meet every challenge

James Woodall

Born: Perth, May 1916

Died: Perth, April 2003

JIMMY "BOXALL" was prepared to box 'em all, even other members of the Battling Boxall Brothers.

James, Paddy and Arthur (Artie) Woodall achieved notoriety as boxers in the 1930s and 1940s. James, known as Jimmy, outlived his brothers even though he was the eldest.

They were named the Boxall Brothers because they would box anyone and everyone after they began training as teenagers at a gym in Plain Street, East Perth.

Jimmy had been WA amateur featherweight champion in 1933, lightweight champion in 1941 and interservices welterweight champion in 1942, before winning the WA professional welterweight crown in 1943.

Paddy won the Australian lightweight title in 1939 in a legendary fight with American Todd Morgan over 15 rounds at Hollywood stadium.

Artie, the youngest, turned professional in 1946 and retired unbeaten as a welterweight.

Though Paddy was the first inductee in the WA Boxing Hall of Fame, Jimmy was rumoured to have beaten him the only time they ever fought.

Jimmy called himself a fighter rather than a boxer. He plunged himself into every match, throwing everything at his opponent. His matches were usually over by the third round, with a knockout either to him or his opponent.

Somehow he remained physically unscathed. Unlike most boxers, he was just as handsome on his retirement from the ring, with a fine straight nose, blue eyes and a full head of hair.

Jimmy knew from their childhood growing up in East Perth — then a bit of a roughhouse — that in the long run a fighter needs to win outside the ring. Looking after yourself and avoiding too much strong drink, for example.

Jimmy and Artie were close companions in their old age and had a regular Sunday session at the Knutsford Arms in North Perth.

The brothers saw less of Paddy because he moved to the South-West, where he managed several hotels.

The boys' childhood became much harder after

their father left home. Maud Woodall had her hands full with four boys — the youngest, John, never boxed — and for a couple of years they were sent to Clontarf College as wards of the State, an experience of which Jimmy spoke little.

At 29, he suffered a cerebral haemorrhage during a fight and had his last rites read to him by a priest as he lay in hospital. Luck intervened. A British surgeon travelling through Perth was familiar with a new procedure of injecting a needle into the spine to drain fluid from the brain.

Such a close shave was among the reasons why Jimmy's first wife, Alma Stanfield, hated him entering the ring. She had little room to argue, however, when his purse from a win formed the deposit on a home in Maylands. Alma, who was only 15 when they married in 1940, had a daughter, Aloma, by the following year, then sons, James and John.

Jimmy became an accomplished speaker at Masonic Lodges after quitting boxing. He provided for the family by becoming a salesman for Boans but had little input into raising his children. The Freemasons took up most week nights, after his time at home was spent shut in the bathroom, rehearsing his speech.

The marriage lasted 30 years and Jim was devastated when Alma left him.

He was lonely for several years until marrying Wanteh Yip, a Muslim he met during a holiday in Singapore that was a gift from his son. That was his first trip overseas. Though many Australians left the country during World War II, Jimmy was most valuable to the RAAF, first as a fitness

instructor and second as an entertainer, in boxing bouts, for troops in Melbourne.

Realising that his two sons would not be able to make a living with their fists, like the past generation of Woodall boys, he encouraged them to do apprenticeships as soon as possible.

James junior established a business supplying electrical and cleaning goods and employed his father until his retirement.

Jimmy Woodall (Boxall) is survived by Wanteh, his three children, six grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

To their amazement, the day before his death, he recited without fault his favourite speech about speaking plainly and truthfully, which had been heard many times by his family and Freemasons all over the State.



LEITH PAGANONI