

# Boxer traded gloves for hair dryers

SCOTTSDALE

**I**t's amazing what athletes do when they retire from professional sports. Their successes seem to continue even after they leave the spotlight.

Some go into new lines of work or start businesses.

Ira Michael turned in his boxing gloves for a hair dryer and scissors in the 1960s after an accident ended his boxing career. He spent three years as an amateur and a year as a pro.

He won't give his age, but says his hair-styling skills have lasted him more than 30 years in the salon business.

He owns Ira Michael Studio, which recently moved to a spot in Sundown Plaza, 7121 E. Sahara Drive, after 13 years in downtown Scottsdale.



ANGELIQUE SOENARIE

Inside the cozy, contemporary salon that Michael runs by himself, he offers a personal one-on-one service. Haircuts start at \$50 and include blow drying and styling.

Michael says most of his regular customers consist of working professionals, whom he gives knockout hairstyles.

Back in his boxing heyday, he worked and trained at the famous 5th Street Gym in Miami Beach, Fla., under famed boxing coach Angelo Dundee, who trained Muhammad Ali, Sugar Ray Leonard and George Foreman.

"I had good publicity when I was in Miami Beach. I knew all the big reporters there," said Michael, who knew journalists such as George Solomon, *Washington Post* sports columnist and *ESPN* ombudsman.

"I was the story back then because I was local. I worked out in the gym, but was also the round boy. I used to do the rounds that you see the girls do," remembers Michael, who used the job to pay gym dues. "They had fights every Tuesday. I made \$5 a night. So you know, I was always around boxing because I sat ringside."

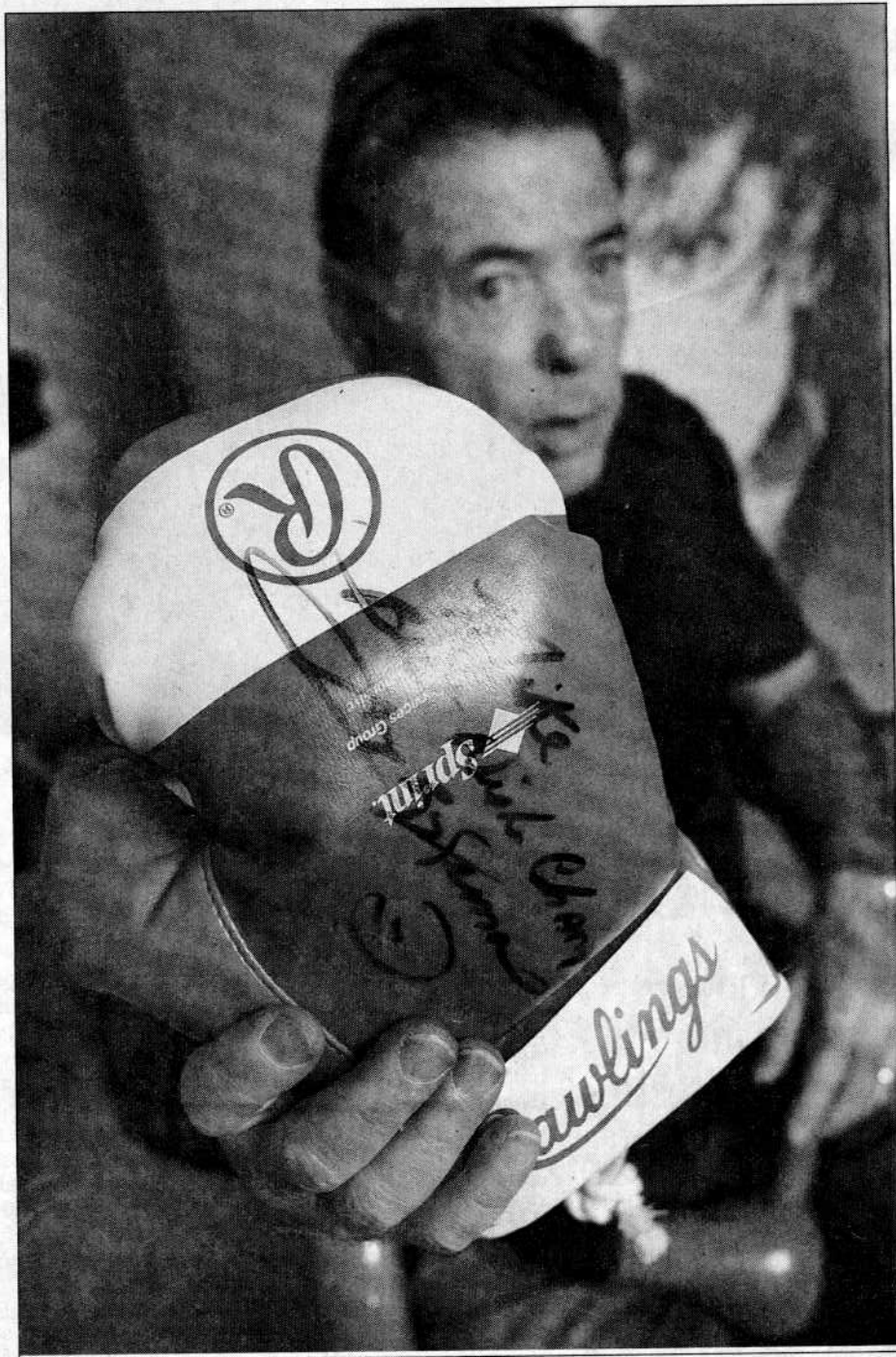
At one point, Michael says, he got a full-page spread on March 31, 1957, in the *Miami Herald*.

A 1962 car accident forced him to change his career. So he moved back to his hometown, Brooklyn, N.Y.

"So what could I do where I could travel, meet girls and be in my own business without having a business degree?" Michael asked himself then.

He went to Marinello Schools of Beauty, in Manhattan, now headquartered in Beverly Hills.

"Never in a million years would I have thought of it," Michael said with a



SUZANNE STARR/THE REPUBLIC

Ira Michael, a former boxer, owns a hair salon, which he recently moved from downtown Scottsdale to Sundown Plaza on East Sahara Drive.

laugh.

He later opened his first salon in 1966 in Silver Spring, Maryland, where he cut hair for 20 years. Ironically, Michael said, Angelo Dundee was one of his first customers. He later moved to Arizona to escape the cold weather.

For this professional round, he trained under the best in the salon industry, such as Paul Mitchell and Vidal Sassoon.

Like boxing, he is devoted and dedi-

cated to his second career. Being consistent is his secret to staying in the business for more than 20 years.

"Both of those are the same in a way. I think its personality," he said. "You have to hit it each time and that's the pressure of being a hairdresser."

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