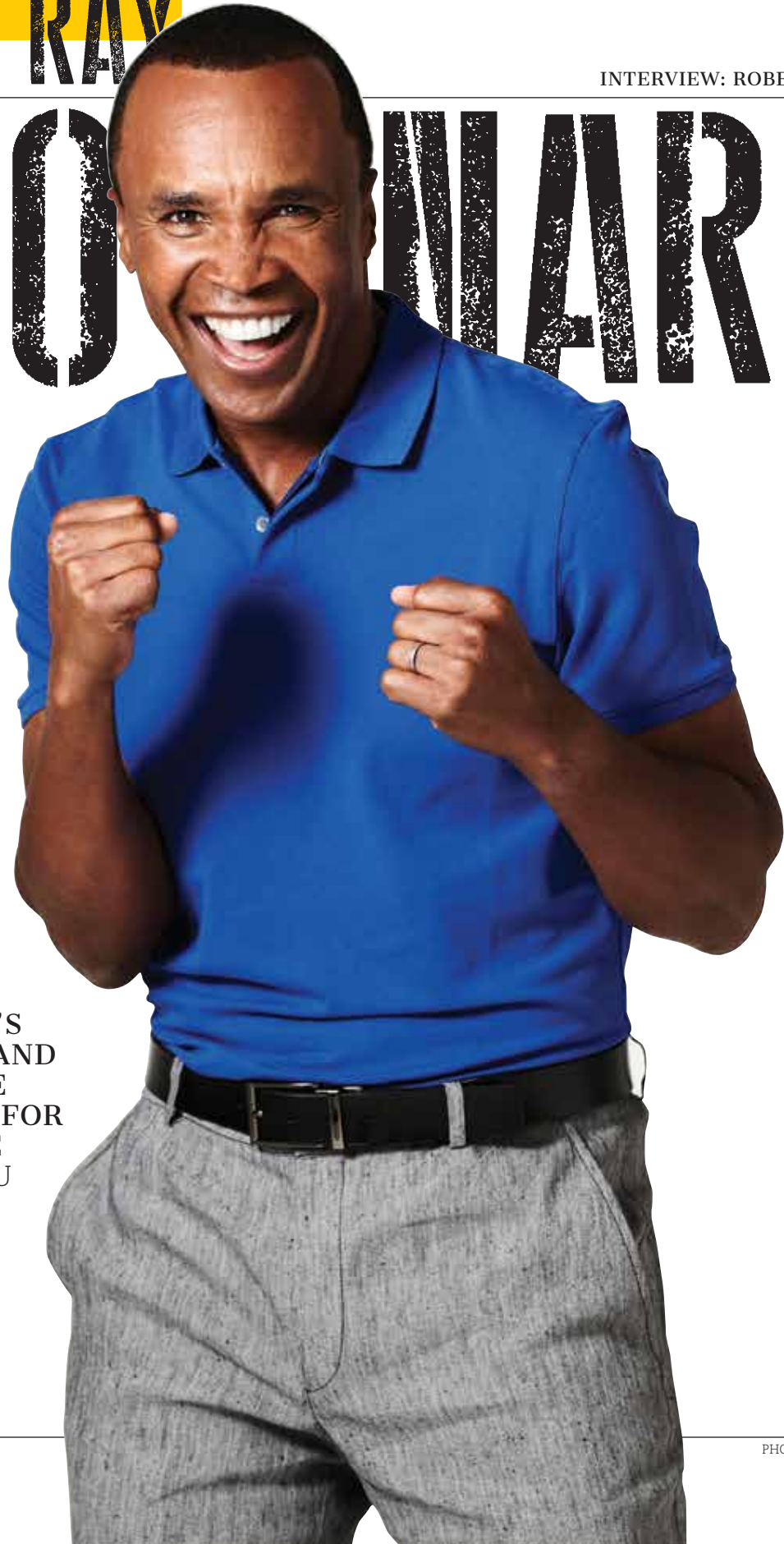


SUGAR RAY

INTERVIEW: ROBERT PIPER

BOXING LEGEND

LEONARD



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PHOTO: JOHN RUSSO

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ON BELIEVING IN YOURSELF, OWNING YOUR FAILURES, ADVICE ON WORKING OUT, AND OVERCOMING STRUGGLES

Robert Piper: What kind of workouts do you recommend?

Sugar Ray Leonard: I feel that, ya know, after a certain age, once you start hitting your forties or maybe your fifties, I'm actually waffling between which stage is harder. When you turn forty, it's a wakeup call that you are getting older. When you turn fifty, it's the "acceptability" of being fifty. But I listen to my body; I train hard, I run, I do a lot of cardio, but I listen to my body. If my body says, you know, Ray, let's take the day off or let's not go as heavy, I don't really lift a lot of heavy weights. I do a lot of reps and I enjoy that, Robert. I enjoy working out because it's like my state, it's like my therapy. When I used to go to the gym or to the training camp, that was my sanctuary, because all I thought about was working out, getting my body and mind in the best condition ever.

RP: Can you talk about overcoming failure and what it takes to really persevere in life?

SRL: Well, I think the hardest thing is to accept the fact that it's your fault, and that you are responsible for your failure and that you take it upon yourself to correct, to make those changes. It's very difficult, particularly in an individual sport; like a boxer, when he loses that fight, you can't really blame your trainers at a certain level, at my level. What happens is the fact that after you've lost that fight, you have your group, your guys, they tell you that fight was close, I thought you had it. But when you are by yourself, and I know this from personal experience, ya know you have to accept the fact that it was your fault. It was your mistake. It was you dropping down that right hand and getting hit by a left hook. It's interesting how this whole thing plays out.

RP: Can you tell me about the Sugar Ray Leonard Foundation?

SRL: Wow, ya know, it's something that's coming up for around six years. My wife Bernadette and I started this thing six years ago and the Sugar Ray Leonard Foundation, we've been raising awareness and raising funds for juvenile diabetes research. We've written a number of checks to provide Children's Hospital Los Angeles with programs that target inner city kids and those that don't have gardens to buy, they don't buy organic foods. There's reality to the whole thing, too: people who are at another level, they buy and eat what they can. You know what I mean?

RP: Right.

SRL: They eat what they can afford, and that's the reality of it. But I'm happy, especially with the exercise programs. Fitness is a plus for most diseases.

RP: What's your best advice for anybody, after you've kind of lived your life, for people to overcome struggles?

SRL: You know what, it's so funny you asked me that because I just spoke to this company and it's all about believing in yourself. You know people tell you you can't do something, because they can't do it. And they can easily convince you that you can't do it, whether you'll be successful at this or that. Whatever the case may be, they will tell you that you can't do it, because they can't do it. So you have to believe in yourself.

Sugar Ray Leonard is a retired professional boxer, author, speaker, co-host of Premier Boxing Champions on NBC, and president of the Sugar Ray Leonard Foundation. He is an Olympic Gold Medalist and six time world champion in boxing.