

# "HE'S THE GREATEST" - DON KNOTTS



Comedy actor Don Knotts may be the king of laughter (he won an Emmy for his role on "The Andy Griffith Show"), but he's the first to admit that Muhammad Ali is the undisputed king of the boxing ring--no matter what anyone says. That fact is convincingly clear when a feather weight actor puts on the gloves and enters the ring with a heavy weight champion, even when it's a make-believe match. Knotts is currently starring in the comedy-western, "The Shakiest Gun In The West."

## But Look At The Fun He Had



FOURTH PLACE winner in the first Annual, National Driver Excellence Contest for high school students--sponsored jointly by the Dodge Division, Chrysler Corporation, Detroit, and the American Veterans of World War II (AMVETS)--was Thomas A. Jeffries, Jr., (second from right), 19-year-old student at Phelps High School, Washington, D.C. The only Negro among 15 finalists to participate in the event staged at Soldiers Field, Chicago, last Saturday, Jeffries receives the congratulations of (from left) Anthony J. Coserta, president, National Service Fund, AMVETS; his father, Thomas A. Jeffries Sr.; and (at far right), A. Leo Anderson, AMVETS national commander, Washington, D.C. Though he missed out on first prize of a 1967 Dodge Dart and a \$500 scholarship; as well as the second and third prizes of \$1,000 scholarships, Jeffries did receive a trophy and a certificate of merit. (NPI Photo)

# NAACP Regional Director Issues Statement On Clay

By Leonard H. Carter

If Cassius Clay or Muhammad Ali as he chooses to be known can establish that he is a minister in the Muslim faith, he should be extended the same treatment that all others whose faith exempts them from service in the armed services as combatants.

WE BELIEVE the federal courts will have no alternative than to find in favor of Clay if he can prove that he is a Muslim minister. Since he joined the so-called "Black Muslim" faith he has publicly adhered to its teachings and views on many public occasions long before we were involved in the Vietnam war. This certainly should give credence to his claim that he is in fact a minister of that faith.

The fact that Clay is the heavyweight champion of the world, and a Negro, and a member of a not too popular religious group should not have altered the consideration his claim receives from the draft board and the Selective Service system.

If Clay conscientiously objects to service in the armed forces of his country and such objections are based on religious grounds his case should be treated as that of others in the same position. Before passing judgment on Muhammad Ali, admittedly a controversial figure, the U.S. public should let the U.S. courts decide whether Clay's claims are legitimate. Until then he is still not guilty of anything except exercising a constitutional right.

THE ALMOST indecent haste with which three boxing associations arbitrarily relieved Clay of his heavyweight title a few minutes after he refused to take the oath which would enroll him in the Armed Services is suspect. The three groups were the N.Y. Athletic Commission, the World Boxing Association and the British Board of Boxing Control. In contrast the Mexican Boxing Association refused to declare Clay's title vacant on the sound grounds that he has not yet been convicted of the charges which are to be lodged against him.

It is our belief that the three boxing associations have not been satisfied with Clay because he has refused to allow the white ring interests which have for years coined millions of dollars off the efforts of Negro boxing champions to the exclusion of Negroes, to financially control his matches with lucrative TV payoffs and related earnings from the championship.

Since Clay's contract with the white Louisville group ran out, for the first time in the boxing business history the bulk of the returns which have not gone to the U.S. Internal Revenue for taxes have gone into the pockets of the champ himself and other Negroes.

THIS FACTOR accounts in our opinion for the almost gleeful speed with which the three named boxing associations divested Clay of his championship.

Their move probably won't work because no matter who wins the planned eliminations, Ali will probably still be considered the world's champion by millions of devotees of the ring, the world over. Most knowledgeable observers know that many of the other boxers who are being touted as contenders have tieups with the sometimes unsavory characters who have viciously exploited and lived off the earnings of the Negro boxers for years.

Nothing in the foregoing remarks is intended to lend approval to the action of Muhammad Ali in refusing to take the oath for service in the United States army. However, I firmly believe that his objections to service should be given the same treatment afforded any other American citizen and his fate should be determined by the courts in a fair trial.

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