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SUNDAY STORY



Tom Jones, a world champion kickboxer who trains in Costa Mesa, is intent on helping others win the fights he's had.

An extreme life



Lolita Harper
Daily Pilot

It is a typical weekday morning, and Tom Jones readies himself for his daily routine. He is an unassuming man with a mainstream name, of average height and build.

He enters L.A. Boxing, a gym in small Costa Mesa, dressed in bright yellow kickboxing shorts and a hooded sweatshirt, not unlike his peers. Jones, a Huntington Beach resident, quickly dispenses the usual pleasant salutations and then gets down to business.

His cloaked frame blends into the backdrop of dozens of flung heavy bags and he avoids the usual chatter that surrounds him. He goes virtually unnoticed until the thunderous sound of his kick is heard, smacking against the solid leather bag. With each punishing crack, Jones unleashes a guttural sound, and heads turn. But the 40-year-old doesn't care who is or isn't looking.

His face is stern and concentrated. His drive is unrelenting. He is like a machine, producing punishing kicks at an astonishing pace. He has a job to do and he won't be distracted.

SAVING A HARD LIFE

Other fitness enthusiasts can't help but feel inferior as they observe Jones' unyielding determination. But his rigorous workout doesn't even begin to tell his story. In the midst of this modest Costa Mesa gym trains a man who has lived through the unimaginable, accomplished the impossible and dreamed the ideal.

From an outside perspective, his brutal assaults on the heavy bag scream of violence, but in reality, martial arts and competitive fighting has been his salvation from a life of pain.

"I had a hard life," Jones says matter-of-factly. From the age of 8, Jones lived at the Masonic Home for Children in Covina. It was in that orphanage that Jones received his informal fighting training.

"I got in a lot of fights," he said. "A lot." Using the rage life had given him as fuel, Jones dropped out of school and embarked on a

PHOTOS BY SEAN HILLER/DAILY PILOT

ABOVE: Tom Jones shows his speed and flexibility during a training session at L.A. Boxing in Costa Mesa.
TOP RIGHT: Tom Jones runs wind sprints between lifeguard towers on his home turf in Huntington Beach.

INSIDE THE PILOT



LIFE & LEISURE

The Coast Aquarium Society of Costa Mesa meets monthly to discuss everything about fish. The group brings together the young and old, the veteran and novice hobbyist.

ALSO: Karen Wight shares the hidden treasure that is the woman behind the newly-opened Patina. See Page A5



COMMUNITY FORUM

City Editor James Meier sits down with new Newport Beach Councilman 'Walkin' Don' Webb to discuss the switch from public works employee to elected official. See Page A9



SPORTS

Anteaters post 20-point victory over rival Fullerton in Big West Conference basketball. See Page B1