

JIMMY CARROLL HESTER



Sometimes, life just isn't fair.

And sometimes, the promise of potential lost weighs heavy in the atmosphere.

That might have been the case with Lexington's Jimmy Hester who, under the watchful eye and guidance of former Lexington boxer Bruce Hayes, was turning out to be a pretty good boxer himself.

Hester, a product of Erlanger Village and a neighbor of Hayes, became interested in the Sweet Science of dodge and weave as a youngster, and by the time he was in high school he was winning lightweight boxing titles in Carolinas AAU events.

How good was he? He once entered the Mount Holly Golden Gloves lightweight tournament as a 17-year-old, but was entered in the highly competitive open division by mistake instead of the novice division. Nevertheless, Hester, equipped with a powerful left hook, went on to win the division.

Hester eventually boxed out of High Point under the coaching of veteran boxer Wayne Vuncannon.

Hester enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1965 at the age of 19 with the hopes of improving his boxing skills.

But he was deployed to Vietnam and died on Christmas Eve, 1968, of injuries he received in a helicopter accident. He was just 22 years old.

Just weeks earlier, Hester wrote a note to his mentor Hayes. It said, in part, *"You know, Bruce, I have always wanted to tell you how I felt about you. My Senior Project in high school was about a man who always helped me and trusted me like a brother. He ran with me and always treated me like someone. He helped me do something I love. You might say he helped me learn to love boxing. ... I got a B+ on my project! ... You know I have always looked up to you and respected you. ... Thanks for everything."*

