

Jan. 19, 1971

PPH 11

Clark County Coroner Mark L. Herman, M.D., ruled today that former heavyweight boxing champion Sonny Liston died of natural causes and listed lung congestion as the immediate cause of death.

Dr. Herman, who also serves as assistant health officer at the District Health Department, said the pulmonary congestion and edema was due to probable myocardial anoxia or poor oxygen supply to heart muscles and a coronary insufficiency or insufficient supply of nutrient blood to heart muscles.

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fibrosis or hardening of heart muscle and pulmonary emphysema, a disease involving enlarged air sacs in the lungs, Dr. Herman said.

Traces of morphine and codeine were found in body tissues but not in sufficient amounts which could be considered as causing death.

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found on the left hand of the body. The hand was normally flexed from a hand which would be in the hand.

Autopsy and microscopic examination determined there were old scars within the bend of the left elbow which could have resulted from trauma, but needle punctures could not be excluded as a cause.

Since Jan. 5 when Liston's body was found in his Paradise Valley home, full scale examinations ordered by the Coroner's office were carried out.

Gross pathologic and microscopic examinations were carried out by Dr. James Y. Clarke, M.D., a Las Vegas pathologist.

The California Toxicology Service in Los Angeles conducted extensive toxicologic examinations of body tissues and used chemical, spectroscopic and other tests to rule out 30 to 40 drugs as possible causes of death.

The clinic is operated by Dr. J. Wallace Graham, M.D., who is one of approximately 75 qualified forensic pathologists in the nation.

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