



BOXING

THE HOLLYWOOD LEGION STORY ON BOXING

By "GOWANUS" GINSBURG

Part I

Broadcasting from a local radio station, Bob Kelly stated "the Boxing Managers Association will have to settle with the Hollywood American Legion Stadium under terms dictated by the Legion Committee. If they do not, Hollywood, together with William Randolph Hearst, as an ally, will drive boxing out of the State of California."

The Legion's attitude in this matter is right down Hearst's alley. Rule or ruin.

Let's examine the record of the past quarter of a century of Legion boxing.

Back in the early twenties, the Legion Stadium was not the smart modern building you see on that site today. Instead they had four walls and no roof. There wasn't even a floor, other than the natural earth. Wood fires in buckets were kept aflame to help keep the air as close to body temperature as such a method could. Fighters dressed across the alley in the old clubhouse. On many a rainy night managers carried the boys on their backs so that their boxing shoes could remain dry in order that they might keep the ring clean and be on sure footing.

The aim and goal that the Legion aspired to was a roof to cover the old structure. The best bid was one that required a \$2000.00 down payment. The Legion did not have the money. At the time the matchmaker for the Hollywood Legion Stadium was Frank Crowley. He was and he is a square shooter and well-liked by all the managers.

With the assistance and cooperation of Dick Donald, Gig Rooney, Charley Mac-

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LEGION STORY

(Continued From Front Cover)

Donald, Jim Cullen and Jockey Levy, who were the local managers of their day, Crowley approached the roof problem with a plan to stage seven four-round main events. The plan provided for the first \$2000.00 to go toward the payment for the roof, the balance of the money to pay certain back wages for employees, after which the remainder was to be divided among the fourteen main event fighters. These fighters had been receiving from \$750.00 to \$1000.00 per fight in Vernon Arena. The show was held, the \$2000.00 was paid toward the roof, the back wages were paid as well as operating expenses and the fighters were each given \$166.67.

Managers of fighters, therefore, must be given the credit for putting a roof on the Hollywood Legion Stadium, which permitted that arena to go on and enjoy the success that it did for many years. At the present time, on the same site, the new Legion Arena represents a replacement value of over \$400,000.00 On Highland Avenue, not very far away, the Legion Clubhouse stands in all its glory. I doubt whether you could replace it for upwards of a half million dollars. These buildings and the property on which they stand, were built from the profits of fights held at The Legion Stadium. They are a monument to the cooperation which existed between the fight managers and the Legion Stadium employees.

In the early years of the Stadium's existence, boxing was a tolerated sport and the law forbade professional boxing. Bouts held at all clubs were of four round duration. Legislators Morrison and Pedrotti drew a bill providing for ten round boxing in California under the supervision of a boxing commission. Don Shields, author of the present boxing law, appeared at the State American Legion Convention in 1924, urging the Legionnaires to sponsor and support the boxing bill; the same bill that gave to the Veterans Home the income from the 5% tax and eliminated Veterans clubs from payment of this tax. The Convention refused this support. Since the boxing law was repealed by a vote of the people, it was necessary that it be put back by a vote of the people.

Before this bill could be placed on the ballot it was necessary to procure 78,000 signatures to a petition. Don Shields, now Chief Inspector for the Commission in Northern California, Harry Morrison, Joe Pedrotti, Gig Rooney, Dick Donald, Jack Doyle and several others set out to secure these signatures. Every manager of boxers in the State of California carried a copy of the petition on his person for months. They covered the state at their own expense, making speeches, posting placards and spreading the word for the boxing

game. Over 82,000 names were secured, the largest contribution coming from Dick Donald, who secured 22,000 signatures. A committee of managers approached the Hollywood Legion Stadium officials requesting permission to address their weekly crowds on behalf of this bill. They were flatly refused permission.

The law, which provided for a 5% tax to be added to admission prices, was passed. This is the first case in the history of California where a law repealed by a direct vote of the people, was restored by a direct vote of the people. The 5% tax was to be a means of providing funds for the support of various Veteran organizations. The Veterans Home at Yountville, California has been the chief beneficiary. However, the Legion Stadium and other Veteran boxing clubs were exempt from such a tax. The foundation upon which the law was passed did not apply to Legion boxing clubs, who were supposed to be the chief exponents for this cause.

During the years that the Legion Stadium has operated, the gate receipts have amounted to upwards of six million dollars. Had they paid their 5% tax the State, the Veterans Home at Yountville would have been enriched by approximately \$300,000.00 For many years they did not even pay Federal amusement tax. Some five or six years ago, the Federal Government demanded that tax be charged and collected.

As a result of the enactment of the new law, providing for professional boxing in the State of California, the State Athletic Commission was appointed by Gov. Richardson. Capt. Seth Strelinger, Hollywood American Legion Post No. 43 Commander, was the first Chairman. He ran boxing in this State for the benefit of the American Legion. In those days when a boxer was suspended it was always for an indefinite period. If a top notch boxer accustomed to boxing in Vernon Arena or the Olympic before a \$19,000 or \$20,000.00 house was suspended for an infraction of the rules, the suspension could be automatically lifted if he appeared before Capt. Strelinger and agreed to box at the Legion Stadium, which had a limited capacity of about \$7,000.00 net.

A number of managers who helped put the roof on the old Legion Stadium are still managing fighters today. These are the men whom the Hollywood Legion, with the help of William Randolph Hearst, intend to run out of business in the State of California.

How apt are Shakespeare's words:

"Blow, blow, thou winter wind,
Thou art not so unkind,
As man's ingratitude to man."

(Next week—Part II)

HOLLYWOOD LEGION AND HEARST

RULE OR RUIN

Part II—The Hollywood Legion Story.

Last week in this space we quoted Bob Kelly, local sportscaster, who broadcasted that the Hollywood Legion, with Hearst as an ally, would campaign for the repeal of the boxing law in California. We then related some of the history of the Hollywood American Legion in boxing. This week we give you some facts about Hearst and boxing.

William Randolph Hearst, in the early days of the century, was known to be a boxing enthusiast. The great Tad, for the New York Journal, and W. W. Naughton, for the San Francisco Examiner, were his favorites, and they were boxing writers. The Hearst papers reflected the boss' interest and supported and featured boxing news.

When Tex Rickard was in his heyday, the Hearst papers in New York ran two big shows annually—the Hearst Milk Fund Show out doors in the summer and the Hearst Christmas Fund Show in the Garden in December. Rickard gave them the best talent in the world and the best dates. The Hearst papers supported these shows with a lavishness never before or after equalled. This went on all through the twenties and the gates totalled in the millions.

When Tex Rickard passed away, Jimmy Johnston became the boxing promoter for the Madison Square Garden. The lean days of the depression were setting in and Johnston did not see fit to give the Hearst papers the choice dates and best attractions. There was a dispute and the Hearst papers split away from the Garden.

Damon Runyon, Eddie Frayne and Bill Farnsworth, all top sports writers for the New York Hearst papers, formed the Twentieth Century Sporting Club for the purpose of carrying on the Hearst Milk Fund and Hearst Christmas Fund shows. Being newspaper men, they could not appear as promoters and so induced Mike Jacobs to join the act and be the promoter. Their first show was the Barney Ross-Billy Petrolle fight staged in the Bronx. This was a resounding success and the promotion continued. The boxing fans in and around New York called this club the Hearst A. C. Several years later Mike Jacobs bought out his newspapermen partners, and went at it alone. All this time and since, the Hearst press in New York have given boxing strong support. The ace fight writer of the country is a Hearst man—Bill Corum.

In Los Angeles we had a counterpart of the New York Milk and Christmas Fund shows. They were known as the Marion Davies Fund Shows, and the Hearst interests in Southern California gave them the

same lavish support as they did in New York. In one of the shows at Jack Doyle's Vernon Arena, Jack Dempsey boxed Rocky Stragmalia.

In 1928 Jack Doyle promoted a Paolino Uzcudun-George Godfrey fight. Hearst opposed this bout strenuously. He threatened to run boxing out of the state if this fight came off. The bout did come off, it broke all existing records for attendance in California. It was after this bout that Hearst spearheaded an attack on the California Boxing Law. Petitions were circulated to place the repeal on the ballot and sufficient signatures were obtained. Hearst went all out in his papers for the repeal of the law, using the same methods and extravagant use of space that he did in supporting MacArthur for President many years later. And he got the same results. He was defeated at the polls. Boxing continued in California. Hearst support, as with MacArthur, proved the kiss of death. Fortunately people do not vote the way Hearst wishes them to.

It is inconceivable that the aging and ailing Hearst, regardless of his feelings towards boxing, will make the same mistake again just to help seven disgruntled Committeemen of the Hollywood American Legion.

These seven Committeemen represent the Hollywood American Legion, the richest and most influential Legion Post in the country, which owes everything it has to boxing; a business they now threaten to destroy.

As for the Legion-Hearst tie-up to destroy boxing in California, I again quote the Bard of Avon:

"Tis an idiot's tale,
Full of wind and fury
But signifying nothing."

(Next Week Part III—Hollywood Legion and Jim Crow.)

Rudy Davila is in line to box J.J. Cracknell on the Bolanos-Jke title go July 21st at Wrigley Field.

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THE HOLLYWOOD LEGION STORY

PART III—The Legion and Jim Crow
By GOWANUS GINSBURG

The year 1919 saw the birth of the American Legion in Paris, France. During the same year in Hollywood, California, American Legion Post No. 43 was founded by Hollywood veterans. The war to make the world safe for Democracy had just been won. This year also saw the Hollywood Legion present a card of four round fights for the purpose of raising revenue for veterans.

I have told you how and when the boxing managers raised the money to put a roof on this meagre building. For twenty years this organization ran their bouts, from the four round days up to and including the enactment of the present law. During this time they excluded members of the Negro race from performing in their club. This denied a colored veteran an opportunity of earning a livelihood in the Hollywood Legion Stadium. They made no bones about it, colored boxers just could not show their wares at the Legion Stadium. There was no question about it—Jim Crow's ugly head reared itself at the American Legion Stadium.

Matchmakers Frank Crowley, Tom Kennedy, Tom Gallery and Charley MacDonald wanted to use the great and colorful Negro boxers that were available during this long period. Such great attractions as Danny Edwards, Baby Joe Gans, Young Jack Thompson, Gorilla Jones, Young Harry Wills, George Godfrey, Chalky Wright, Dynamite Jackson, Mack House, Neil Clisby, Cannonball Green, Long Tom Hawkins, Vic Alexander, Sammy Jackson, Young Peter Jackson were around. Matchmakers and fans wanted them, but the Legion policy dictated "No blacks."

During the time that the present stadium was being built in 1938, the Legion held their weekly shows at Gilmore Stadium. Outdoors was not doing as well as usual and talent was not as easy to get. At this point Hollywood Legion modified their policy of "No blacks." With their pocketbooks endangered they hastily reached out for colored talent for use on their losing outdoor shows. However, when the new stadium was completed, the ban was again imposed and colored boxers were denied the right to share in the lucrative gates.

Again in 1940, they saw fit to change their policy when they sponsored a championship bout between Middleweight Champion Ceferino Garcia and triple title holder Henry Armstrong at Gilmore Stadium. Armstrong had never been allowed to perform in the indoor stadium but when prospects of a tremendous gate appeared the Legion policy and conscience became flexible once again. Back into the Stadium after

this successful show and once again the policy of "No blacks" prevailed.

At about this time, George Moore, nationally known fight manager, enlisted the aid of a colored attorney named Hugh MacBeth. They organized a campaign to lift the ban against colored boxers at the Legion Stadium. They interested a group of influential civic and racial leaders in the cause. This was no new matter to Moore. He had carried the banner single handedly into the State of New York many years previously and forced Danny Edwards into mixed matches where all others had failed.

The group, headed by George Moore and attorney Hugh MacBeth, petitioned the Governor and the State Athletic Commission for a hearing. Noted attorney Jerry Giesler was chairman of the Commission. Everett Sanders was the Commissioner in charge of the Southern California area. A hearing was held. The Legion Committee fought bitterly, contending it was their business and they could hire whom they wished. They fought the case tooth and nail for days. Mr. Giesler's opening comment was "This is not right and it cannot exist."

With public sentiment mounting against them and their defense crumbling, the Legionnaires called a hurried huddle. They saw the handwriting on the wall and capitulated before a decision could be rendered. From their point of view, this was a strategic move. Had the decision gone against them, (and it certainly would have) it would have been recorded that the Legion officially had banned colored boxers from the Legion Stadium. They just did not want this recorded as a Jim Crow proposition.

Legion officials, those interested in the welfare of Post No. 43, can thank their lucky stars that they unwillingly lifted the ban against colored boxers, for during the years that swiftly followed, talent became scarce. It was impossible to make a complete card without using colored boys. The war had taken most of the talent and at one time or another as many as seven or eight boys on a boxing show were colored. Again the Legion was saved in spite of themselves. Post No. 43 prospered to such an extent that it is now the richest Legion Post in the world.

This is the story of Hollywood Legion and Jim Crow. This is the story of soldiers returning from France and finding that the spirit of democracy bans some of them because they were not white. Colored soldiers who fought and bled alongside of their white buddies were denied the use of what was supposed to be democracy's stronghold, The American Legion.

Next week: Part IV—A Comedy Of Errors. The Story of Baron Stumme.

THE HOLLYWOOD LEGION STORY

PART IV—A COMEDY OF ERRORS

BARON STUMME

By GOWANUS GINSBURG

In the bizarre lore of the boxing game, there are many laughable tales and many truly comic characters. To my way of thinking, by far the funniest of these stories concerns the entry of Baron Stumme into the boxing game. Old timers around Los Angeles will agree to that.

In the late twenties the mustachioed Baron was the manager of a third rate hotel on West Sixth Street. His first experience in boxing was the result of a friend's invitation to attend the fights at the Olympic. This friend had a pair of passes and the good Baron blithely accompanied him. The sell out crowd intrigued the Baron and his commercial mind went into action. Asked he of the friend, whom we shall call Harry Comer, because that was his name, such questions as: How much do these seats sell for? How often do they run fights here? How much do the fighters get? How much are the expenses? Comer answered the amazed Stumme as best he could. Quoth the Baron: "This is a terrific business." On the way home from the fights the Baron asked many more questions and the voluble Comer supplied the answers. The Baron learned that the greatest moneymaking team in boxing was Dempsey and Kearns. He then decided that all he had to do to emulate Kearns was to get another Dempsey. This chore he delegated to Comer.

Comer performed like a bird dog. He found the new Dempsey lying under an auto in a West Pico St. Garage. After considerable coaxing plus the promise of a new suit of clothes, the reluctant young giant was before the critical eye of the "New Kearns" (Baron Heinrich Von Stumme). He circled the youngster, appraised his fine physique and nodded approval to his friend Comer. A quick huddle with Comer over terms and Stumme had the contract and Comer had a thousand dollar check in his pocket plus a promise of a sizable amount when the "New Dempsey" started earning big purses. The baron hired the former Pittsburgh heavyweight, Frank Moran as trainer at the ridiculously low figure of \$125 per week. The career of Baron Von Stumme as a manager was launched.

Moran worked diligently for several months and the young mechanic was unveiled at the old Pasadena Arena in a four round prelim. He was flattened in two minutes. The Baron, by this time an expert, was not daunted nor deterred. He decided the Kid needed a new trainer and so procured the services of Chet Neff, ex-lightweight fighter. The Baron was cagey, he only paid Neff \$75 per week. Neff was indeed an improve-

ment. After several months training, the young hopeful met the same opponent at the same Arena. He was stiffened in two heats, a 100% improvement. The "New Dempsey" disappeared from the scene but shortly after Comer recognized him under a car in a West Pico St. garage.

The "New Kearns" branched out. He would do business on a grand scale, and so rented a large house at 609 South Westlake. A ring and gym were set up in the back yard and all the broken down homeless fighters moved in. At this time, Oscar Baker, a Venice newsboy, was cutting a wide swath in the ranks of the local prelim heavyweights. By considerable maneuvering, the Baron bought his contract from Jimmy Murray for one thousand dollars cash and a promissory note for a substantial amount, which note Murray still holds. Baker's first fight under the Baron's management was with Ernie Owens at The Culver City Arena. Owens toyed with Baker and stopped him in a few rounds. Rumor has it that Baker got his revenge on the Baron in the dressing room after the bout. Oscar Baker was not heard of again.

The ensuing years were rough on the good Baron but occasionally he came up with a fair fighter such as Chico Romo and Jack Van Noy. Eventually he got Richie Lemos, a rough, tough club fighting young Mexican. Lemos was a good fighter, in fact, he was good enough to win the featherweight title. At last the Baron had arrived. He was now truly the "New Kearns." He had a champion. In his first defense of the title, the Baron reversed the accepted order of things—he guaranteed the challenger a sizable amount while the champion went on a percentage. The challenger was Pittsburgh Jackie Wilson, managed by crafty Jack Laken. Although Wilson was a master boxer, Laken convinced Stumme that he was washed up. They fought—before a poor gate. Wilson won. He got the title and the money. There was a return match with the same result—Wilson got the verdict and the money. There is no record of any champion ever earning less than the Baron's titleholder.

Stumme was a member in good standing of the Southern California Managers Association at the time that organization struck against the Legion on the television deal. It is worthy of note that while the

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FISTICALLY SPEAKING

By Danny Jackson

Smilin' Jack Andrade is really smiling these days. Reason: He saw the television pictures of the Ezzard Charles-Jersey Joe Walcott fight recently. . . . "My Pat Valentino will murder Charles and bring the heavyweight title back to California. . . . Pat hits too hard, is too strong and a perpetual fighting machine," says manager Andrade. . . . The latter is willing to make the match in Chicago, New York, California or anywhere, as long as Charles' newly won bauble is a stake. . . . Lloyd Marshall's Houston Brown is the new rage of the Barbary Coast. . . . This kid turns 'em away each time he appears in the Bay Area. . . . Don Jensen, S. F.'s blonde tiger, who won 12 in a row, may be seen in a main event attraction very shortly. . . . Jensen is a good boxer, a strong puncher and has a fighting heart—which are all essential to go far in the game of beak-busting. . . . Bruce Richardson, Los Angeles dynamiter, is after a Benny Walker rematch. . . . Richardson dropped a split decision last week as National Hall. . . . Milio Milletti, manager of Mel Modesti, has received several offers from Eastern promoters to show his giant heavyweight charge. . . . San Francisco's old timers are awaiting the arrival of a heavyweight from Palestine named Oi Voy Goldberg. . . . With a hello to all and best wishes. . . . 'Bye now. . . .



MEETS MAXIE—Jesse Flores, Stockton belter, figures to give Maxie Docusen the fight of his life at San Francisco for Thomas-Kyne on July 22nd. Plane reservations can be made by calling Archie Miller at DR. 8261. Don't miss this affair!!



HERE COMES DAVIS—Oakland's John L. Davis peddled his way into the lightweight picture by dropping a disputed split decision to Tommy Campbell last week on The Fight For Lives show.

THE HOLLYWOOD LEGION STORY

(Continued from Page 2)

strike was in progress, the Baron was the first to reach a telephone booth at the close of each meeting of the Association.

Shortly after the strike was temporarily settled Stumme was chosen by the Legion Stadium committee as its matchmaker. His tactics forced the managers to strike again. The Baron was riding high, he was boss and told everybody so. He commenced the sorriest series of matches ever seen here or anywhere. He imported hamdonnies and palookas from all over the land. With a ballyhoo worthy of P. T. Barnum, he imported stiffs like Pescatore, Powell, Fernandez, Hunick, Jackie Burke, Richards, Heinhold, and Desjardins. Each was labelled a champion from some section or other; elimination tournaments were started but never finished. Publicity knew no limits. But alas and alack, the gate receipts dropped to the lowest point in seventeen years. With waxed mustache bristling, the pompous Baron still struts the aisles of the near empty Legion Stadium.

This is the story of Baron Stumme. For over twenty years he has been posing as a Baron and now for six months he has been posing as a matchmaker.