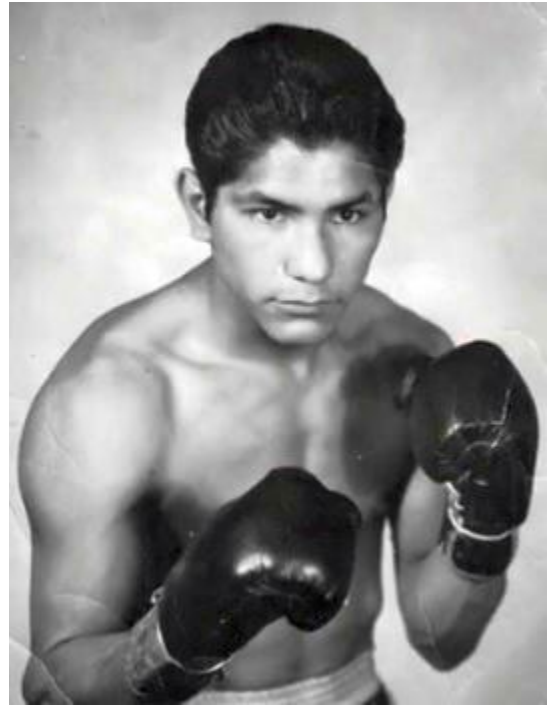


Saying goodbye to Uvalde's world champion boxer – Shotgun Albarado

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World boxing champion Oscar "Shotgun" Albarado, who suffered from pugilistic dementia caused by repeated concussive and sub-concussive blows, died Wednesday, February 17, 2021, at Amistad Nursing Home at the age of 72. Born in Pecos, raised in Uvalde, the young man with humble beginnings etched his name alongside some of boxing's greatest when he won the Junior Middleweight boxing title on June 4, 1974, Nihon University Stadium in Tokyo, Japan.



Albarado reached the pinnacle of his profession when he knocked out Koichi Wajima at 1:53 of the 15th round. The 25-year-old Texan punished the 31-year-old champ with brutal body blows, but it was a long right that sent Wajima down for the compulsory eight count.

Moments later, Wajima was on the canvas again, desperately holding on to Albarado's leg, but the title belt was already on its way to Uvalde.

In this Thursday, June 23, 2016, file photo, Oscar Albarado (seated) is joined for a picture by his son Jacob Albarado and grandsons Jacob Zachary (back) and Jordan Isaiah during a celebration held at Amistad Nursing and Rehabilitation Center. The celebration was held to mark the 40th anniversary of Oscar Albardo Day in Uvalde. Albarado was fêted by family, friends, and fellow residents with refreshments and a viewing party to watch the former champion's boxing matches.

It all started in the back of the American Legion Hall on West Main in Uvalde. He was a little boy with a big dream, and he loved boxing. He was a scrappy lad who would climb into the ring with anyone. He won three Golden Glove titles as a member of the Uvalde Boxing Club.

He was fearless, dedicated, determined, and perhaps too competitive. But, if allowed, he would fight every night. He was only 15 when he had his first professional fight in San Antonio, knocking out Jenaro Morones in the third round.

When the boxing commission found out about it, they banned him from the ring until he reached legal age. That didn't stop Albarado or his handlers as they went south of the border and booked fights.

Albarado came of age, and the ban was lifted. The best that local managers could do were fights in San Antonio. Many kept telling Albarado that he needed to hook up with a promoter who could get him the fights needed to climb the ladder of success.

When he joined the Harry Kabakoff stable, he moved to Los Angeles, California, to the action's training facilities. The fights began to come frequently, and the same people who had advised him to make a move suddenly realized he might be climbing into the ring too often. The future champ was fighting at least once a month.

Albarado was having fun. He would continue as long as the promoter booked the fights.

Albarado was becoming the crowd favorite at Olympic Auditorium in Los Angeles. He was the big draw, and promoters kept booking fights to fill the arena.

Three years in a row, he averaged 10 fights a year. His first big fight was against Hedgemon Lewis on April 10, 1969, in Los Angeles. Albarado was undefeated in 24 fights at the time with 20 knockouts. Lewis won a 10-round decision, but the fight was so intense – Albarado almost floored Lewis – that it catapulted him into the top 10 of his class.

A major step was taken May 6, 1971, when the underdog Texan won a decision over Armando Muñiz in Los Angeles. Muñiz was highly ranked and fighting in his home town.

Albarado was unbeaten during the years 1972 and 1973, and a second win over Eddie Mazon in April of 1974 prepared and earned him a shot at Wajima and the championship.

A couple of times in his career Albarado seemed ready to hang up the gloves, but each time he resurrected himself and finally achieved what every boxer dreams.

One of the happiest days of Albarado's life was June 20, 1974, sixteen days after becoming a world champion. He returned as a triumphant hero to his home town Uvalde.

Mayor Howard Langford proclaimed it "Oscar Albarado Day," and there was an appreciation dinner at the city fairgrounds.

Albarado held the title for 230 days and successfully defended it once before awarding Wajima a rematch. However, his boxing career ended in January of 1975, when Wajima recaptured the trophy.

There would be no rubber match. It was five years before Albarado boxed again, and he was no longer the same fighter.

It seems like a steep price to pay for a short moment of glory, but he got his due in October of 2017 when he was inducted into the West Coast Boxing Hall of Fame. His children – Jacob, Angela, Oscar Jr., and Emmanuel – traveled to North Hollywood to accept his award.

Albarado ended his 72-fight career with a record of 58-13-1 and scored 43 knockouts. In his prime, he was an all-out, bombs-away fighter with a lethal punch.

He was a hard banger and a crowd-pleaser who battled some of the best welterweights of his era. He was a favorite at the Los Angeles Olympic Auditorium.