

Boxing Ringside With Bobby Franklin

Tony DeMarco World Champion Boston's Champion We Will Miss You Champ

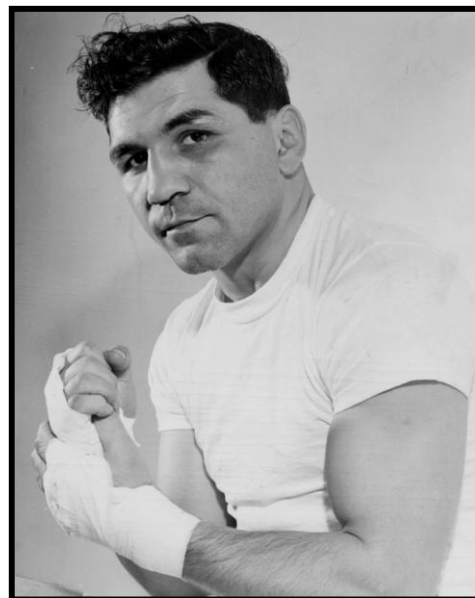
I got the news Monday morning that former World Welterweight Champion Tony DeMarco had passed at the age of 89. It seems fitting the Champ would take his final count on Columbus Day, the holiday recognizing another great Italian.

I know Tony was up there in years and the news of his death should not have come as a surprise to me, but it was. Tony was as much a part of Boston as Old Ironsides and the Common and it just seemed he would always be there. Born in the North End he was living not far from where he was brought up and within footsteps of the place where he won the title. He always filled a room and was quick to toss a friendly left hook at friends who walked up to greet him. Even though those left hooks were thrown in fun and friendship they still packed a wallop.

Tony DeMarco was a people person. He loved talking and was never short with anyone. He would answer questions and always had great stories to tell. Quick with a smile, I never saw him angry. He also remembered everyone which made those who made his acquaintance feel special. I was proud to call him my friend.

Before I knew Tony I ran into him at an event. I told him I was honored to meet him and thought he was one of the greats of the sport. He asked me if I had done any boxing. I responded I had but was so far removed from what he'd accomplished it didn't seem like I did. He looked at me and said, "You had the courage to step into the ring, that makes you a champ too". You can see why he had the ability to make people feel special.

There has been and will be much written about Tony DeMarco the boxer. His career was outstanding. At this time I want people to remember Tony DeMarco the man. I am sharing a



memory that my friend Mike Matarazzo wrote upon hearing of the Champ's death. It's what I call a Tony story of which there are many. I'm sure it will make you smile, and he would love that. This is what Mike wrote:

“Like so many people, I was able to call Tony DeMarco my friend. I met Tony when I was working for Gov. Weld.

Later, while I was collecting the boat tax for DOR, Tony would meet me for lunch once or twice a week.

The first time he met me for lunch, he asked me what I wanted. I told him that I was in the mood for a prosciutto, tomato, basil and mozzarella sandwich.

He told me that he knew just "the" place. Well, the place turned out to be several places. One place to buy the prosciutto, one place to buy the tomatoes and basil, and another to get the mozzarella.

With all the ingredients in separate bags, we went to a bakery where he ordered two rolls and asked the baker to put the sandwiches together for us with a little olive oil.

While it took most of my lunch hour, I did get to eat the sandwich on the corner of Fleet Street with Leonardo Liotta a/k/a Welterweight Champion Tony DeMarco - "The Flame and Fury of Fleet Street".

Rest in Peace my friend. You were a great fighter and a humble gentleman.”

Mike Matarazzo

My thanks to Mike Matarazzo for allowing me to share his Tony story.

My deepest condolences to Dottie DeMarco who was by Tony's side all the time and was his chief second in life.

God Bless You Tony DeMarco, Boston will not be the same without you.

