



Sports roundup

By WILLIAM CHAPIN
Guest Columnist
(In the San Francisco Chronicle)

IT WAS MONDAY, the day before the fight that turned out to be the most famous fizzle of all time.

You know the one we're talking about, because you've been told about it over and over again—that exorcism in Lewiston, Maine.

It was early, perhaps 8 o'clock — an hour when most of the fight crowd is recuperating from the night before. And it was a grand, bright, brisk morning. The only sound was the faint rustle of a breeze moving through a stand of ancient pine trees.

I walked out to the front porch of the Poland Spring Hotel. The porch is very long, and it has an agreeable clutter of wicker rocking chairs. It seems real homey-like.

Only one of the chairs was occupied. Alone with his thoughts, staring vacantly toward a distant lake, was Jersey Joe Walcott, former heavyweight champion and the man who suffered the fate of being chosen referee of the Clay-Liston atrocity.



Jersey Joe Walcott

NOW SONNY LISTON, of course, is the guy who did the actual falling down on that awful night. But there is, obviously, a growing movement to find a fall guy, someone to blame for the mess. Joe Walcott is a prime candidate — for various reasons. Walcott was confused. He failed to get Cassius Clay into a neutral corner. (Clay was like a maniac at the moment, and I contend that no referee could have controlled him.) Walcott failed to pick up the count from the knockdown time-keeper. (The timekeeper was a 62-year-old former printer frightened into near paralysis by his sudden responsibility.)

Anyway, the hunt is on for a scapegoat. It should not be Jersey Joe Walcott, regardless of whether he did or did not do a lousy job. I sat down and talked with Walcott on that quiet Monday morning before the fight. He is a very decent man, with much quiet respect for himself, and when you consider how many crumbly characters were connected with that farce, there is plenty of room to look elsewhere for a man to blame.

WALCOTT IS no stable-hand, no hard-out con. He has a strong, clean face. He does not seem old. The only revealing mark of his former profession is a thick one-inch scar near his right eye.

We talked first about what it was like to hold a fight in such a remote, unlikely part of the country. Joe said he didn't think much of it, but even as he did, a white-haired man approached and said: "I'd just like to shake your hand."

Walcott stood, saying, "It's a pleasure to meet you, sir. A real pleasure."

At that moment, he seemed far removed from what is admittedly a dirty and dubious business, and I'm sure that the white-haired man from Maine was genuinely pleased.

Later, I asked Walcott what he did for a living. "I work in Camden, New Jersey," he said. "You know, that's kind of a tough city, plenty of tough neighborhoods. I work for the police department."

Joe took out a large leather case and handed it to me. It contained an enormous badge that was inscribed: "Special Assistant Safety Director, Camden Police Department."

"I do what I can to keep the kids out of trouble," Walcott said. "You know, they got no place to go, they stay out on the streets. Some get to be cop-haters. But if I can talk to them, sometimes, because they look at me now and know I used to be the champ, they decide it's better to string along with my way of doing things."

"It may not be much, but whatever I do, I figure it's very worthwhile. You know?"

I KNEW. Jersey Joe Walcott is a valuable person. He shouldn't be destroyed by being made into a clown who didn't know his trade.

If you have to have a fall guy, look somewhere else.

New Freeway, Other Factors To Displace 635 Local Families

A NEW REPORT prepared by the city planning department reveals that a total of 635 West Las Vegas families will have to be relocated during the next two years due to construction of the interstate 40 freeway, building code violations and illegally parked trailers.

However, according to the relocation

study adopted by the Citizens Committee on Urban Renewal and Development, there will be plenty of new housing available for those forced to move from their present homes.

According to the report, a survey indicated that most of the families to be affected prefer to remain in the predom-

inantly Negro section of West Las Vegas for "socio-economic reasons." This will pose no great problem because there is an abundance of new homes under construction in the area, including 400 units of public housing and 200 private dwellings, the report said. It was noted that there may be some temporary difficulty in relocating extremely large families with low incomes.

It was estimated that about 200 families living in the path of the freeway will be forced to move. The remaining 435 families who will be required to find new homes by mid-1967 are presently occupying buildings or trailer locations that have been condemned or face condemnation proceedings in the near future for various reasons.

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