Plimpton wears a red badge of courage and honor, and a big grin, after Moore touched him up in 1959.

Boxing writers are notorious for venturing from their cozy ringside seats on press row into the raucous fray of the ring. Who knows why? Some of them are likely looking for a way to prove themselves. Others might be hoping to relive some sort of the glory from their athletic exploits of younger days. I'm sure most of them simply do it because they love the sport. After all, participating in something is the most substantial form of honor one can bestow.

Let's face it, though, some of them might just be misguided and dumb. Punching someone, and getting punched back in return, for anything other than necessity at the very least begs meditation on the matter no matter who you are. Kelly Pavlik thought long and hard about this over the weekend and decided to call it quits. There's a reason for that. Boxing is difficult and dangerous.

Regardless of what drives our writing friends, though, those of them who actually end up lacing up the gloves find themselves among noble company. It's rarified air, really. There's just

something that seems to draw writers towards boxing, and some of the very best have given live action a go.

Perhaps the greatest example in recent history was brave George Plimpton, whose documented literary foray, *Shadow Box*, culminated in hard lessons from Archie Moore. Participatory journalism, he called it, and it's been quite popular throughout the ages. Nobel laureate Ernest Hemingway loved boxing so much that he'd spar with almost anyone and everyone he could find, writer or boxer, even going so far as to trade leather with Gene Tunney. A.J. Liebling would pick fights at a boxing gym in New York and even once boxed Philadelphian Jack O'Brien.

Perhaps the most comical of these endeavors is that of early twentieth century newspaperman Paul Galico. The ill-fated pug made a name for himself the hard way by braving the ring against reigning heavyweight champion Jack Dempsey while the Manassas Mauler was prepping for a defense against Luis Firpo. He persuaded Jack and his handlers to give him a feel for what it was like to be in the ring with the champ. Dempsey and team obliged. Jack famously shook his hand in the center of the ring, went about stalking him and knocked him out cold in mere seconds.

When I talked to boxing scribes Jose Santiago and Cesar Hernandez last week, I'm not sure they knew any of that. In fact, I'm sure they'd argue it doesn't matter in the least. They're not Ernest Hemingway or George Plimpton, after all. They're just a couple of boxing writers looking for stories of their own.

Georgia boxing promoter and former women's world champion, Terri Moss, was the one who gave them their opportunity. Terri is a jack-of-all-trades. She fights, judges, promotes, trains. She's even making a documentary called *Boxing Chicks* to help promote the sport's continued ascension amongst the fairer sex. Moss was doing her usual round of promotion for her Corporate Fight Night series on an internet boxing radio show call
Noche De Boxeo
when she saw her opportunity. "You should try it," she told host Cesar Hernandez.

Hernandez told her to find him an opponent and he would. Moss recommended mutual acquaintance Jose Santiago from Fightnews.com. Hernandez and Santiago had worked together at the latter's *Georgia Fighters* online magazine.

“He called me out on the radio,” Santiago remembered.

He was just the man to call out. Having had six glorious months as an amateur boxer in his youth, he left it behind when distractions took hold and now he’s hoping to find some of what he let slip away.

“The mean streets of Chicago grabbed me, and I turned away from boxing,” he lamented.

Santiago loves boxing. Like many on the scene, he works hard at his day job first, then just as hard afterwards to help cover a sport that provides little by way of significant monetary benefit for any but the top one percent. He’s devoted the last eleven years of his life as a contributor to Fight News along with several other media ventures, mostly because he simply cannot get enough of it.

“I can’t remember not being a fan of boxing,” he said.

Hernandez shares a similar story. He said he’s anxious to get taste of ring life because he’s always had an affinity for combat sports and that he was in the right place at the right time.

“It just worked out. Terri suggested I give it a try and Santiago accepted,” said Hernandez. “Honestly, I was in horrible shape so I said I’d give it a try.”

Both guys are eager to prove something and said they were excited about a chance to mix it up.

“We both want to experience the whole fight thing,” Santiago said. “I think we know it’s just a glimpse of what the fighters we cover go through.”

It seems the rigors of training have been fully appreciated by both men.

“Boxing is beyond the shadow of the doubt a young man’s sport,” the 39-year-old continued. “How people like Bernard Hopkins and Glen Johnson fight beyond forty at a world class level is beyond me. I already had the utmost respect for these guys, but now...”

Both men say they are taking things extremely seriously. Long hours have been spent at the gym hitting bags, jumping rope, sparring. Diets have been modified and sweat poured. The 43-year-old Hernandez even enlisted the help of Jesse James Leija in his quest to lose over fifty pounds so the USA Boxing sanctioned event can even take place.

Honestly, it sounds as if it will be a high class event, and promoter Moss is proud of it. She’s earned it. She’s pushed this brand of boxing awhile now, and she hopes black-tie boxing events such as this one will begin to become as popular in the United States as they are in other countries.

“I’ve been so busy!” she said. “This will be our sixth show. It’s doing great. We’ve had a really good response. In 2012, we received awards for best local boxing brand and also got an award for promoter of the year from the Georgia Fight Association. We’re being recognized not just as an entertainment source but as a legitimate boxing show.”

How legitimate the fight itself will turn out to be is up to its competitors, of course. When the bell rings, will Jose and Cesar be lions like the passionate Hemingway? Will they hold their own with each other as Plimpton did with Moore? Or will the reality of the sport turn out to be colder and more brutal than they ever imagined.

“Win, lose or draw, once that bell rings, I’m a winner,” said Santiago. “I mean that.”

Ah yes, but winners look different in boxing than in other sports. They wear bloodied noses and black eyes. They’re ribs crack and they grin with toothless smiles. What of that?

"It's already gotten pretty crazy at times," Moss laughs. "There's been pushing and shoving and name-calling…"

It's going to be a real fight, it seems, and that's exactly what Jose and Cesar are hoping for. It won't change their past or propel them into some sort of pugilistic greatness. What it will do, though, is make them more than just writers for a change. If only for one night, these men will have been fighters, and maybe that's enough.

[And yes, Moss has already tried to lure me into one of these as well. Come to Houston, I said, but not loud enough for her to hear me.]

Atlanta Corporate Fight Night 6 will take place Thursday, January 24, 2013 at The Foundry at Puritan Mill in Atlanta, Georgia. Visit the website for more information.

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deepwater says:

Get in the ring !!! June 3rd at gleasons . Masters tournament . 16 oz gloves . No excuses . If you match up with me I will carry you until the 3rd then your own your own.