Rocky Balboa movie

Rocky's back. The sixth installment of the boxing film opened on Wednesday Dec. 20 nationwide. It's called "Rocky Balboa" and features Sylvester Stallone who wrote, directed and produced the film. Also starring is real boxer Antonio Tarver in the role of Mason Dixon.

What's special about this movie?

Well, a number of things come across but they're not exactly told in the movie. Stallone has created a flood of memories in that creative mind of his awash with tears, joy and regret that life brings in general.

Watching Rocky Balboa hit me like a freight train on the Santa Fe rail.

In 1976, when "Rocky" was made, the country was a lot different. Muhammad Ali still roamed the ring and was the idol of the entire world, not just the USA.

At the time I was attending UCLA and was involved in a number of things. Jimmy Carter spoke at the school before winning the Presidential election. It would be the only election he would win.

That year was the Bicentennial birthday of our country. Celebrations were taking place all over the nation. It was my second year at UCLA and it would be the first time the basketball team did not win the NCAA title.

But there were more important things in the world.

As a country we were just getting over the shock of President Richard Nixon resigning after Watergate. The movie "All the Presidents Men" came out the same year as Rocky. All of the men in Vietnam had not yet been pulled out. I had two brothers in the U.S. Marines that concerned me.

In my hometown of East Los Angeles a whole generation of boxers were lost to the war. Though many boys from our neighborhoods joined of their own accord, the other half didn't have a choice and were drafted. I remember most of the boxing gyms were empty.

Then along came Rocky and the gyms swelled once again. It was the younger kids that came running to the gyms to start the rebirth of boxing in East L.A. in the 1970s. It was kids like Paul Gonzalez, Joey Olivo and later Oscar De La Hoya that emerged from those boxing schools.

The Main Street Gym was still open and many of the old-timers like Sugar Ray Robinson, Joe Louis and Art Aragon stopped by frequently to say hi.

Those gyms saved many lives. It was during this time that drive-by shootings were at a peak in my town. Where I lived you couldn't step out the door of your own home unless you were strapped and looked twice before feeling somewhat at ease. I lost dozens of friends and acquaintances during this period.

But the gyms began to fill and the youth began to take up boxing gloves instead of guns. Slowly the neighborhoods began to become more tranquil and life began to improve.

It would be exaggeration to say the movie Rocky solved my town's woes. But it would be a lie to say it did not contribute to making it better. Watching the movie brought back memories of a different place and realizing that time is racing by like one of those Apollo Creed jabs.

Hatton tickets

Ricky "The Hitman" Hatton is fighting Juan Arango for the WBA junior welterweight title at the Paris Hotel in Las Vegas on Jan. 20. If that's not big enough for you, well Jose Luis Castillo is tangling with Herman Ngoudjo too. If Hatton and Castillo are victorious, they'll meet sometime in the summer.

Sergio Mora and Jermain Taylor, No Go

Negotiations for a match between world middleweight champion Jermain Taylor and Sergio Mora have tumbled. According to Team Mora, Taylor's people have decided to go to easier pastures to beef up the champ's credentials. "Jermain Taylor didn't look good so they need someone easier," said John Montelongo, a corner man for Mora. One fighter mentioned as a possible opponent for Taylor is Germany's Felix Sturm.

Mora seeks a fight in March or April. "Sergio would love to fight someone like a Fernando Vargas, if he's still fighting, or an Oscar De La Hoya of course," said Montelongo. "He's anxious for a big fight. We (Contender company) feel he could beat Jermain Taylor."

Arreola fighting in February

Chris Arreola is scheduled to fight on Feb. 9 on a ESPN televised fight card. Opponents mentioned have been Malcolm Tann and former world champion Evander Holyfield. Henry Ramirez , trainer and adviser to Arreola, said the negotiations are ongoing but might be finalized in a week or two.

Mayeather-De La Hoya tickets
Tickets for the biggest fight of the century are now on sale for the showdown between Floyd Mayweather Jr. and Oscar De La Hoya. The fight will be held at the MGM Grand on May 5, 2007. The prices range between $300 to $2,000. Get them now. They won't last very long.

Jorge Arce and company in Anaheim
Mexico's popular Jorge "El Travieso" Arce will be fighting Argentina's Julio Ler at the Honda Center (formerly the Arrowhead Pond) in Anaheim on Jan. 27. Also on the card will be

middleweight contender Kelly Pavlik meeting rugged Jose Luis Zertuche. Tickets are priced between $30 to $200.

Rocky Marciano's gloves

For just $95,000 you can purchase former heavyweight world champion Rocky Marciano's training gloves. They're available at the DuPont Registry and come with a letter of authenticity. Ask for Chris O'Connell at (818) 992-4353.