

A Letter from Emanuel Steward

Written by Thomas Hauser
Monday, 17 December 2012 22:31



Dear Tom,

I never got to say goodbye the way I wanted to. So I thought I'd say hello from here and bring you up to date on what's been happening lately.

I was in the hospital, not feeling good. Then I fell asleep. And the next thing I knew, I was in a car going through some pearly gates. I asked the driver where we were, and he said, "You'll

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see.”

That night, there was a big welcome dinner for me. I couldn't believe all the people who were there. James Corbett, Bob Fitzsimmons, Ezzard Charles, Marcel Cerdan.

John L. Sullivan was at the next table. He's drinking again. What a character.

I was sitting next to Joe Louis. That was a real honor. I was so happy, I said to Joe, "This is fantastic. I feel like I've died and gone to heaven."

Joe told me, "That's exactly what you done."

It's amazing up here. The first fights I saw were Sam Langford against Gene Tunney and Benny Leonard against Joe Gans. There's boxing three nights a week and everyone goes in tough. Rocky Marciano has lost a few times. Joe Louis stopped him in the eleventh round. That was payback for what Rocky did to Joe at Madison Square Garden in 1951. But Marciano has won his share of fights and a loss on a fighter's record doesn't matter that much.

There are no sanctioning bodies. We've got same-day weigh-ins. All the fights are on free TV. It's boxing, so the only way a fighter can win is by hurting the other guy. But they fight more often here than down on earth because the recovery time is shorter.

Arturo Gatti fights mostly in the small clubs. Every time out, it's standing room only. He had a war against Lenny Mancini about a year ago that people are still talking about. Teddy Brenner made that match.

Joe Frazier got here, and the first thing he wanted to do was fight Jack Johnson. He said that Papa Jack reminded him of Ali.

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Eddie Futch and Yank Durham told him, "Joe; hold off a bit. You have to get used to the altitude."

Joe said, 'F--k the altitude. I want to fight.'

I'm training fighters with Luther Burgess and Bill Miller the way I did years ago. Ray Arcel has given me a lot of tips. What's really exciting is that Archie Moore asked me to work his corner when he fights Sugar Ray Robinson at Yankee Stadium at the end of the month.

That's the old Yankee Stadium. One of the things I love about this place is the venues. James Jeffries is scheduled to fight Jess Willard at the Polo Grounds later this year. George Carpentier is going up against Billy Conn at Boyle's Thirty Acres.

I've also been doing some television commentary. Last week, I called the fight between Henry Armstrong and Salvador Sanchez. It was my first time working with Don Dunphy, and I was a little nervous. But before the fight, Don told me, "You don't have to talk all the time. There are no network executives to please. Just sit back, enjoy the fight, and say what comes to mind when there's something important to say."

I learned so much over the years working with Jim, Larry, and Harold that I fit in fine with Don. The fight was amazing. I used to watch films of Henry Armstrong. And now I was watching him fight live.

Well, not exactly live. But he was right in front of me.

Armstrong didn't throw combinations as much as he threw punches all the time. When the bell rang, he got in Sanchez's face and banged away non-stop from every angle. It wasn't just bang! He was like a machine gun. Bang-bang-bang-bang-bang-bang! I started explaining to the TV audience all the subtle things that Henry was doing. He was keeping his chin close to his chest, so Sanchez couldn't hit him cleanly. He had a way of getting his elbows back against his body so, when he got inside, Sanchez couldn't tie him up. And his arms never got out to where Sanchez could clinch with him.

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When the fight was over, Dunphy patted me on the shoulder and said, "You did just fine."

Jack Dempsey is fighting Rocky Marciano at the old Madison Square Garden in six weeks. I'm signed to work with Dunphy again on that one. Do you know how excited I am about that?

I was talking with A. J. Liebling the other day and told him I'd always dreamed of something like this. That night, Liebling gave me a poem by Robert Browning. There's a line in it that reads, "A man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's a heaven for?"

Anyway; tell everybody you talk with that I appreciate all the nice things they've said about me. I can't believe Aretha Franklin sang at my memorial service.

Tell Wladimir that he'll do just fine without me.

Tell Lennox that I smile whenever I think of him.

Tommy Hearns was my first big star. Make sure he knows how much that meant to me.

Hilmer Kenty, Milton McCrory, Michael Moorer, all the champions I had; if you run into them, let them how much joy working with them brought me.

And the same goes for all the fighters I worked with who never made it beyond six-round club fights but were champions at heart.

I was blessed with an extraordinary group of friends and lived my life the way I wanted to live it.

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Warm wishes,

Emanuel

Thomas Hauser can be reached by email at thouser@rcn.com. His most recent book (And the New: An Inside Look at Another Year in Boxing) was published by the University of Arkansas Press.

[Comment on this article](#)

brownsugar says:

If there were such a place... "Boxers Heaven", then Manny Steward would certainly belong there, wearing a robe and crown.

Radam G says:

Wow! Always and forever, life goes on. Talking about "The theatre of unexpected," I convinced that the great boxing guru Manny Steward live on. Holla!

Carmine Cas says:

Very nice

fightscorecollector says:

This is the best article ive read this year. Thomas Hauser is the best boxing writer about.

Jesus...that Joe Frazier bit, the hair on my neck stood up...so true

DaveB says:

Wow! Reading that brought a smile to my face and warmed my heart. After having so much tragedy in much life this year, that felt real good.

Real Talk says:

Great write up. Man I'm going to miss the Old gang. Manny Stew, Jim Lamp and Larry

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Merchant. I know he would've loved the Pacquiao KO. Emmanuel loved KO's. Too bad he never got to see the Mayweather vs. Pacquiao scrap. Then again he was there for Sugar Ray vs. Tommy Hearn and so many fights that would probably be better than that one. R.I.P. until that day. Dueces

Bernie Campbell says:

I hear that Curtis Jackson's breath smells like stale horseradish!

amayseng says:

earlier this week i rewatched some mayweather vs cotto highlights and more enjoyable than the fight was listening to Emanuel's commentary, the man was born to be in the boxing game...

its awful he is no longer around to reward us with such knowledge and entertainment...