

# Dempsey by Jack Dempsey (1977)

His family was from the Hatfields of West Virginia. His parents converted to Mormonism & moved to Manassa, CO. His dad was a dreamer & egotist; his mom was a realist & giver. William Harrison Dempsey was born 24Jun1895. They moved around to find work. 1905 his mom opened a restaurant for the Gunnison Tunnel workers. His brother, Bernie, worked in mining [\$3/day] & boxing; he soon followed after graduating from 8<sup>th</sup> grade. He took on the name 'Jack' [JD] from an old Irish boxer.

He would walk into a gym or saloon & challenge anyone just to get a start. He was paid 75 cents/day to be a sparring partner. He needed a manager; his 1<sup>st</sup> was Otto Floto. Robbers took his 1<sup>st</sup> prize money; later to see them in a restaurant & beat them up to get it back. Some promoters & managers took advantage of him. John Reisler [JR] told him his friend signed JD over to John, who arranged fights way out of his league. Jack left NYC.

JD married Maxine, but she only wanted money & he was broke. She left. He worked as a lumber jack, in shipyards & mining to survive. He didn't like bullies. 1918 he helped a little guy who was out-numbered in a bar fight, later to find out it was Jack Kearns [his next manager] and they were on their way. Kearns [JK] was a salesman, but always looked out for himself. JK was extravagant & usually in debt. JK spent his share [or more] & JD sent his money home. JR later came forward to say JD was under contract to JR [but would never show the contract]. He was paid off.

JD knocked a guy out so fast that a spectator quickly went outside & scalped his ticket to others waiting to get in. JD didn't go to WWI, but raised money for Red Cross & US bonds. They did vaudeville shows to earn more money & reputation [staged fights]. Tex Rickard [TR] started promoting his fights [TR was good to him]. The big fight came on 4Jul1919 when JD [187 lb] won against Jess Willard [245 lb] to become the heavyweight champion [& earned \$27,500]. Wyatt Earp collected guns at the gate that day.

JD appeared in several films [Daredevil Jack, All Good Marines, Big Fight, etc]. He knew a lot of big names [including Babe Ruth]. The Dempsey-Carpenter fight was the 1<sup>st</sup> million gate & higher class people were coming. He bought hotels & apartment complexes. A cub reporter launched his career by boxing a round with JD & writing about it. JD set up a trust fund to keep JK from spending it.

JD married actress Estelle Taylor [later divorced]. JK didn't like her & JD got a new manager. JK made it difficult after that. Estelle bought a dog that did \$10,000 damages before he got rid of it. He was sick before the Gene Tunney fight & lost [JD hadn't fought in 3 yrs]. Dempsey-Sharkey was the 1<sup>st</sup> \$1M non-champion fight. JD lost the Tunney rematch when he didn't go to a neutral corner so the ref could start the count.

JD became promoting partners with TR. Then JR died. 1929 JD bought stocks on margin & lost big. He did some exhibition matches for cash, but by 1932 he was done fighting. He married Hannah Williams [later divorced] & had two girls. He was on the road most of the time. They moved to NYC. JD started a restaurant in NYC.

When WWII broke out he joined the coast guard & was in charge of the fitness program. FDR was the 1<sup>st</sup> president to be on TV. He always took time to sign autographs. He spoke at a prison & made an impact on the men. 1956 he was on *This is your life*. JD married Deanna. He was voted the best boxer between 1900 & 1950.

Quotes: "If the truth should ever stand in your way that will mean you're heading the wrong way." "When you find stumbling blocks in your way, use them as stepping stones." (Hyrum Dempsey)

"A quitter never wins & a winner never quits." The rich get their ice in the summer & the poor in the winter. The defender has nothing to gain & the contender has nothing to lose. People don't give a hoot about what you're saying. Most are just waiting for you to pause so they can talk about themselves. Men of few words are generally more respected than those who talk too much.

Note: Prohibition 1920-1933

Books: Babe Ruth (Bob Considine)