



## NOFI VACCARO

NOFI VACCARO first became interested in boxing at the tender age of 11 years, while working as a shoeshine boy in the shop of Myroslaw Gelfand on Main St. on the southeast of New Rochelle. Myroslaw was my dad, and a great and understanding human being. It was in the back of his own store that young Nofi set up a makeshift punching bag onto the rafters, and between the times he would peddle in some boots his boy would box. The rest of his training chores took place in the shed next to the Palumbo Country Club, where he boxed many seasons against the likes of such local fighters as Joe Calenda, Frank La Para, "Red" Thomas, "Poker" Hayes, Harry Rollins, and Al Bironzo—all who outweighed Nofi by at least 30 pounds. Later in his career, losing Young High School became his loss of reputation. His first two recorded bouts (both in the same night) at the age of 18 took place at the now defunct E. or C. on Center Ave. in New Rochelle, N.Y. here is an excerpt from the then evening sports reporter Tom Hickey: "The boxing card at the E. or C. last night consisted of 11 sporting bouts, but it remained for a youth hardly out of swaddling clothes, Nofi Vaccaro of this city to carry off the palm and bring the plaudits of the fans in his 118 lb. bouts. This boy Nofi, rather short of stature, black curly locks and the face of an uncomplicated school boy, boxed two bigger opponents about the ring in the opening, to take the crowd by storm. His gameness and his punching, which had a young challenger however labeled it, was fine the two combats, which was his second appearance ever in a ring. In the first bout he stopped Steve Tetter in the second round with a hard right to the liver. In the final bout he allowed Al D'Amico in the third round, and in this final bout that Vaccaro showed his stuff, and placed himself on a ranking corner in the list of Westchester fighters.

His very next bout was against A.A.U. and metropolitan champ Leo Solito, who up to this bout had over 100 contests under his belt. Mind you, this was only Nofi's third ring bout, and against the very best in the country. Needless to say, Nofi received a sound shelling, with the referee stopping the bout in the third hour, with Nofi still on his feet. To know what a tremendous fighter Solito was, less than six months after this bout, he went on to win the world's bantamweight title. Lack of ring experience was Nofi's downfall in this bout, he was over matched. Nofi's only other loss came at the hands of Carlo De Jesus on a substitute. This was a heavy blow, because Nofi was winning as he pleased, with only 75 seconds remaining of the bout. This was in the second final of the golden gloves and if you would have projected him into the finals—and the championship, it must be noted that previous to this bout, Nofi had just come over a bout with typhoid fever, which would have in the event that he had a raised weakness in the legs during every ring battle. During his long sick days, the one person who visited him every day, and looked after the man on the road back, was the late Red Thomas, another local Nofi associate. Nofi's punch-in corner was still in evidence, with benchmen near Milton Davalos and Tony Corallo, both in the second round. He went on to stop Al Biron in one hour, then captured a double from former Westchester County champion Pete D'Amico. On the 11th Annual New Rochelle Police Benefit Show at New Rochelle High School field which was witnessed by over 7,000 fans, Nofi won two bouts in one night, stopping Ray Guffy in one round, and beating out Tom Manning in three.

At the end of a very successful boxing career, which was curtailed on advice from his doctor, due to the disease inflicted by his bout with typhoid fever. In a career that encompassed 57 bouts, he came out the winner 55 times, while scoring 48 knockouts — a very impressive record in any league. Nofi loved boxing, and often felt that no one in the world could defeat him. He never lost this love for the sport, fighting youngsters in the art of bar-raffing, at the Southside Box Club and at the Banquet Club, both in New Rochelle. He was instrumental in launching your writer's first career, and can safely say that anything I have become in boxing, as well as anything I have accomplished in the sport — I owe it all to Nofi Vaccaro.

He held the Westchester County bantamweight title for 8 years—never losing it in the ring. With all his successes—he never obtained his lifelong dream—that of becoming champion of the world. But he has obtained an even higher goal—that of being a champion to his true family, as well as to all who know him.

Compiled by SCODD GALLERLO...NYBA President