



Biography

He was born **Maximilian Adelbert Baer** in [Omaha, Nebraska](#), the son of [German](#) immigrant Jacob Baer ([1875-1938](#)), who had a [Jewish](#) father and a [Lutheran](#) mother, and Dora Bales ([1877-1938](#)). His older sister was Fanny Baer ([1905-1991](#)), and his younger sister and brother were Bernice Baer ([1911-1987](#)) and boxer-turned actor [Buddy Baer](#) ([1915-1986](#)).

His father was a butcher. The family moved to [Colorado](#) before Bernice and Buddy were born. In [1921](#), when Maxie was twelve, they moved to [Livermore, California](#), to engage in cattle ranching. He often credited working as a butcher boy and carrying heavy carcasses of meat for developing his powerful shoulders.

He turned professional in [1929](#), progressing steadily through the ranks. A ring tragedy little more than a year later almost caused him to drop out of boxing for good. Baer fought [Frankie Campbell](#) (brother of Brooklyn Dodgers Hall of Famer Adolph Camilli) on [August 25, 1930](#) in [San Francisco](#) and knocked him out. Campbell never regained consciousness. After lying on the canvas for nearly an hour, Campbell was finally transported by ambulance to a nearby hospital where he eventually died of extensive brain hemorrhages. An autopsy revealed that Baer's devastating blows had knocked Campbell's entire brain loose from the connective tissue holding it in place within his cranium. This profoundly affected Baer; according to his son, [Max Baer, Jr.](#), he cried and had nightmares over the incident for decades afterwards. He was charged with [manslaughter](#). Although he was eventually acquitted of all charges, the California State Boxing Commission still banned him from any in-ring activity within their state for the next year. He gave purses from succeeding bouts to Campbell's family, but lost four of his next six fights. He fared better when [Jack Dempsey](#) took him under his wing, and Baer put Campbell's children through college.

On June 13, 1935, at [Long Island City, New York](#), Baer fought [James J. Braddock](#). Braddock won the heavyweight championship of the world as the 10 to 1 underdog. Braddock took heavy hits from Baer but kept coming until he wore Baer down. At the end, the judges gave Braddock the title with a nearly unanimous decision.

Baer beat the likes of [Walter Cobb](#) and [Kingfish Levinsky](#).

In [1933](#), Baer boxed [Max Schmeling](#) (with a [Star of David](#) embroidered on his trunks [\[1\]](#), which he swore to wear in every bout thereafter) at [Yankee Stadium](#), dominating the rugged [German](#) fighter into the tenth round when the referee stopped the match. Because Baer defeated Schmeling, [Hitler's](#) favorite, and had a [Jewish](#) father, he became a hero to the [Jewish](#) people, although he was raised [Catholic](#) (his mother's faith).

His [motion picture](#) debut was in *[The Prizefighter and the Lady](#)* ([1933](#)) opposite [Myrna Loy](#) and [Walter Huston](#). In this [MGM](#) movie he played Steven "Steve" Morgan, a bartender that the Professor, played by Huston, begins training for the ring. Steve wins a fight, then marries Belle Mercer, played by Loy. He starts seriously training, but it turns out he has a big ego and an eye for the women. Featured were Baer's upcoming opponent, [Primo Carnera](#), as himself, who Steve challenges for the championship, and Jack Dempsey, as himself, former Heavyweight Champ, acting as the referee.

On [March 29, 1934](#), *The Prizefighter and the Lady* was officially banned from playing in [Germany](#) at the behest of [Joseph Goebbels](#), then Minister of Propaganda and Public Entertainment, even though it received favorable reviews in local newspapers as well as in the [Nazi publications](#).

When an official at the Ministry of Propaganda was asked, "Is the film barred because Max Baer is a Jew?" he snapped, "Ja." When contacted for comment at [Lake Tahoe](#), Baer said, "They didn't ban the picture because I have Jewish blood. They banned it because I knocked out Max Schmeling."

Baer was Heavyweight Champion of the World from [June 14, 1934](#), when he knocked out Primo Carnera, to [June 13, 1935](#), when he lost to [Jim Braddock](#) in [New York](#). The Braddock bout was depicted in the 2005 motion picture *[Cinderella Man](#)*; the portrayal of Baer in that film has been criticized.

He had two wives, actress [Dorothy Dunbar](#) (married [July 8, 1931](#)-divorced [1933](#)) and Mary Ellen Sullivan (married [June 29, 1935](#)-his death [1959](#)). With Sullivan, he had three children, actor [Max Baer, Jr.](#) (born [1937](#)), James Baer (born [1941](#)) and Maude Baer (born [1943](#)).

During a separation from his first wife, Max had an affair with [movie star Jean Harlow](#). He fought [Lou Nova](#) in the first televised heavyweight prizefight, on [June 1, 1939](#), on WNBT-TV in New York. His last match was another loss to Nova, in [1941](#). Baer and his brother, Buddy, both lost fights to [Joe Louis](#), Buddy's two losses to Louis coming in world title fights.

Max Baer boxed in eighty four professional fights from [1929](#) to [1941](#). In all, his record was 72-12-0 (53 knockouts), which makes him a member of the exclusive group of boxers to have won fifty or more bouts by knockout.

Baer was an actor in almost twenty movies, including "Africa Screams" with [Abbott and Costello](#), and made several [TV](#) guest appearances. A clown in and out of the ring, Baer also appeared in a [vaudeville](#) act and on his own TV [variety show](#). Baer appeared in Humphrey Bogart's final movie, [The Harder They Fall](#) (1956), opposite [Mike Lane](#) as Toro Moreno, a fictionalized version of [Primo Carnera](#), who Baer defeated for his heavyweight title. [Budd Schulberg](#), who wrote the book from which the movie was made, portrayed the Baer character, "Buddy Brannen", as somewhat bloodthirsty, and the (apparently unfounded) characterization made the leap to [Cinderella Man](#). Baer also worked as a [disc jockey](#) for a [Sacramento radio station](#) and was a [wrestler](#) for a while. He was also public relations director for a Sacramento automobile dealership and referee for boxing and wrestling matches.

Unfortunately, Max Baer never saw the TV and movie success of his son, [Max Baer, Jr.](#) In November [1959](#), he was scheduled to appear in some TV commercials, which he planned to do before returning to his home in Sacramento. After refereeing a boxing match in [Phoenix](#), he checked into the Roosevelt Hotel in [Hollywood](#). While shaving in the morning, he had a heart attack and the doctor was called. Baer hung on for a while, but then died in his room at age fifty. He is interred in Saint Mary's Mausoleum, Sacramento.

There is a park named for Max Baer in Livermore, California, which he considered his home town, even though he was born in Omaha.

He was inducted into the [Boxing Hall of Fame](#) in [1968](#), the [World Boxing Hall of Fame](#) in [1984](#) and the [International Boxing Hall of Fame](#) in [1995](#).

Max Baer once said, "I never had a fight out of the ring. I never harmed anyone outside the ring. I loved people."

[\[edit\]](#)

Record

- [Amateur boxing](#): unknown

[\[edit\]](#)

Career

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- World Heavyweight Champion

1929 May 16 Chief Caribou Stockton, Ca KO 2 Jun 6 Sailor Leeds Stockton, Ca KO 1 Jul 4 Tillie Taverna Stockton, Ca KO 1 Jul 18 Al Ledford Stockton, Ca KO 1 Jul 24 Benny Hill Oakland, Ca W 4 Jul 31 Benny Hill Oakland, Ca W 4 Aug 28 Al Ledford Oakland, Ca KO 2 Sep 4 Jack McCarthy Oakland, Ca LF 3 Sep 25 Frank Rujenski Oakland, Ca KO 3 Oct 2 George Carroll Oakland, Ca KO 1 Oct 16 Chief Caribou Oakland, Ca KO 1 Oct 30 Alex Rowe Oakland, Ca KO 1 Nov 6 Natie Brown Oakland, Ca W 6 Nov 20 Tillie Taverna Oakland, Ca KO 2 Dec 4 Chet Shandel Oakland, Ca KO 2 Dec 30 Tony Fuente Oakland, Ca KO 1

1930 Jan 15 Tiny Abbott Oakland, Ca LF 3 Jan 29 Tiny Abbott Oakland, Ca KO 6 Apr 9 Jack Stewart Oakland, Ca KO 2 Apr 22 Ernie Owens Los Angeles, Ca W 10 May 7 Tom Toner Oakland, Ca KO 6 May 28 Jack Linkhorn Oakland, Ca KO 1 Jun 11 Ora "Buck" Weaver Oakland, Ca KO 1 Jun 25 Ernie Owens Oakland, Ca TK 5 Jul 15 Les Kennedy Los Angeles, Ca L 10 Aug 11 Meyer "K.O." Christner Oakland, Ca KO 2 Aug 25 Frankie Campbell San Francisco, Ca KO 5 Dec 19 Ernie Schaaf New York, NY L 10

1931 Jan 16 Tom Heeney New York, NY KO 3 Feb 6 Tommy Loughran New York, NY L 10 Apr 7 Ernie Owens Portland, Or KO 2 May 5 Johnny Risko Cleveland, Oh L 10 Jul 4 Paolino Uzcudun Reno, Nv L 20 Sep 23 Jack van Noy Oakland, Ca TK 8 Oct 21 Jose Santa Oakland, Ca KO 10 Nov 9 Johnny Risko San Francisco, Ca W 10 Nov 23 Les Kennedy Oakland, Ca KO 3 Dec 30 Arthur DeKuh Oakland, Ca W 10

1932 Jan 29 King Levinsky New York, NY W 10 Feb 22 Tom Heeney San Francisco, Ca W 10 Apr 26 Paul Swiderski Los Angeles, Ca KO 7 May 11 Walter Cobb Oakland, Ca TK 4 Jul 4 King Levinsky Reno, Nv W 20 Aug 31 Ernie Schaaf Chicago, Il W 10 Sep 26 Gerald "Tuffy" Griffith Chicago, Il TK 7

-Weights: 204 - 188

1933 Apr 4 Sam Greer Denver, Co EX KO 2 Apr 4 "Wee" Willie Medivitch Denver, Co EX KO 1 May Harold "Millionaire" Murphy Kansas City, Mo EX 3 May Jacob "Buddy" Baer Kansas City, Mo EX 3 May Alvin "Babe" Hunt Kansas City, Mo EX 3

-The previous 3 bouts were held the same date

Jun 8 Max Schmeling New York, NY (1:51) TK 10

-Weights: 203 - 189 1/4

Jun 9 Pete Wistort Buffalo, NY EX 4 Jun 15 Cecil "Seal" Harris Pittsburgh, Pa EX 3 Jun 22 Cecil "Seal" Harris St. Paul, Mn EX 3 Jul 10 Alvin "Babe" Hunt Oklahoma City, Ok

EX 4 Jul 14 Billy Murdock Salt Lake City, Ut EX 2 Jul 14 Ed Sheppard Salt Lake City, Ut EX 2 Jul 14 Jack Dempsey Salt Lake City, Ut EX 1 Jul Jack Dempsey Salt Lake City, Ut EX 1 Jul Jack Dempsey Louisville, Ky EX 3

1934 Jun 14 Primo Carnera Long Island City, NY(2:16)TK 11

-Heavyweight Championship of the World;
Weights: 209 1/2 - 263 1/4

Dec 6 Johnny Miler Des Moines, Ia EX 4 Dec 14 Les Kennedy Kansas City, Mo EX 4
Dec 28 King Levinsky Chicago, Il EX KO 2

1935 Jan 4 Alvin "Babe" Hunt Detroit, Mi EX 4 Jan 7 Ernie Anderson Flint, Mi EX 4 Jan 9 Dick Madden Boston, Ma EX 4 Jan 21 Tony Cancela Tampa, Fl EX 4 Jan 28 Jim Maloney Miami Beach, Fl EX 4 Feb 15 Stanley Poreda San Francisco, Ca EX 4 Apr 10 Ed Wills Grand Rapids, Mi EX 4 Apr 17 Harold Anderson Flint, Mi EX 4 Apr 18 Hobo Little Kalamazoo, Mi EX 4 Apr 23 Eddie Simms Cleveland, Oh EX 4 Jun 13 Jim Braddock Long Island City, NY L 15

-Heavyweight Championship of the World;
Weights: 209 1/2 - 193 3/4

Sep 24 Joe Louis New York, NY (2:50) LK 4

1936 Jun 15 Tony Souza Salt Lake City, Ut W 6 Jun 17 Bob Frazier Boise, Id TK 2 Jun 19 Harold "Millionaire" Murphy Pocatello, Id W 6 Jun 23 George Brown Tyler, Tx KO 3 Jun 24 Wilson Dunn San Antonio, Tx KO 3 Jul 2 Alfred "Butch" Rogers Dallas, Tx KO 3

-Weights: 224 - 217

Jul 13 Jim Merriott Oklahoma City, Ok KO 2

-Weights: 215 - 214

Jul 16 Junior Munsell Tulsa, Ok KO 5 Jul 18 Cecil Smith Ada, Ok W 4 Jul 24 Bob Williams Ogden, Ut KO 1

-Weights: 217 - 225

Aug 19 James J. Walsh Vancouver, BC, Can KO 1 Aug 20 Nails Gorman Marshfield, Or TK 2 Aug 25 Cecil Myart Portland, Or W 6 Aug 29 Al Frankco Lewiston, Id KO 2 Aug 31 Don Baxter Coeur d'Alene, Id KO 1 Sep 2 Al Gaynor Twin Falls, Id KO 1 Sep 3 Eddie Franks Provo, Ut KO 3 Sep 8 Sammy Evans Casper, Wy KO 4 Sep 14 Ed "Bearcat" Wright Des Moines, Ia W 6 Sep 18 an unnamed opponent Cedar Rapids, Ia SCH

-This bout was scheduled; The outcome is not known

Sep 21 Andy "Kid" Miller Sheldon, Ia W 6 Sep Cyclone Bench Rock Springs, Wy KO
Sep 30 Babe Davis Keokuk, Ia W 6 Oct 6 Tim Charles Evansville, Il KO 4 Oct 8 Art
Oliver Platteville, Wi L 6

-Weights: 215 - 192

Oct 19 Dutch Weimer Toronto, Ont, Can KO 2

-Weights: 212 1/2 - 186 1/4

Nov 6 Maurice Strickland Chicago, Il

-This bout was scheduled but cancelled

1937 Apr 15 Tommy Farr London, Eng L 12

-Weights: 210 1/2 - 198

May 27 Ben Foord London, Eng TK 9

-Weights: 212 - 208

Jul 30 Al Rovay San Jose, Ca EX 4

-Weights: 215 - 195

Oct 6 Nash Garrison Oakland, Ca EX 4

1938 Mar 11 Tommy Farr New York, NY W 15

-Weights: 212 - 208 1/2

Oct 27 Ellsworth "Hank" Hankinson Honolulu, Hi KO 1

1939 Apr 6 Nash Garrison Oklahoma City, Ok EX 4 Jun 1 Lou Nova New York City,
NY (1:21) LT 11

-Weights: 210 1/2 - 202

Sep 4 Ed Murphy Silver Peak, Nv KO 1 Sep 18 Babe Ritchie Lubbock, Tx KO 2

1940 Jul 2 Tony Galento Jersey City, NJ TK 8

-Galento did not answer the bell for the eighth round;
Weights: 221 1/2 - 244 1/2

Sep 26 Pat Comiskey Jersey City, NJ (2:39) TK 1

-Weights: 223 1/2 - 207 1/2

1941 Apr 4 Lou Nova New York, NY (2:18) LT 8

-Weights: 220 3/4 - 202 3/4

[\[edit\]](#)

Selected Filmography

- "[The Prizefighter and the Lady](#)" (1933)
- "[The Harder They Fall](#)" (1956)

[\[edit\]](#)

TV guest appearances

- [Playhouse 90](#) (1956) (Screen Gems TV, CBS) ... Mike ... episode: *Requiem for a Heavyweight*
- [The Lone Ranger](#) (1957) (The Wrather Corp., ABC) ... Sampson, foreman (uncredited) ... episode: *The Law and Miss Aggie*
- [Sugarfoot](#) (1957) (Warner Bros. TV, ABC) episode: *Angel*
- [77 Sunset Strip](#) (1958) (Warner Bros. TV, ABC) ... Government Man ... episode: *Double Trouble*
- [77 Sunset Strip](#) (1958) (Warner Bros. TV, ABC) ... Billy Blackstone ... episode: *The Chrome Coffin*

[\[edit\]](#)

Sources

- [Los Angeles Times](#), [March 30, 1934](#), pg. 12, *Germany Bans Film Of Baer*

[\[edit\]](#)

See also

- [List of male boxers](#)

[\[edit\]](#)

External links

- [International Boxing Hall of Fame's article about Max Baer](#)
- [Max Baer](#) at the [Internet Movie Database](#)

- [Map to Max Baer Park](#)
- [Jewish.com article about Max Baer](#)

Forgotten Champions: Max Baer

By [Marty Mulcahey](#) (April 11, 2005)

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A ring death showed Max Baer how precious life is, and that life should be experienced to the fullest possible extent. The problem with Baer's epiphany was that enjoying life at a maximum pace prevented him from becoming an all-time great heavyweight champion since Baer refused to take his craft, or anything else for that matter, seriously.

Baer even joked at death's door. As he was in the midst of a life ending heart attack, he called the hotel operator, telling the young lady he was having a heart attack. The operator asked Baer if he wanted her to call for the hotel doctor. Baer replied, "No! I want a people doctor."

Baer is one of the ring's great 'Could have beens', with his physical skills dulled by long nights spent in nightclubs around America instead of gyms. Baer disdained training, and only did so sporadically under the eyes of his not so strict trainer Mike Cantwell – a personality trait Baer would take full advantage of as his career evolved. A shame really, since Baer was the most magnetic heavyweight boxing had seen since the retirement of Jack Dempsey. Instead of training, Baer hung out with friends like Al Jolson. He found new friends every night, telling jokes over drinks and flirting with the ladies. There are more pictures of Baer circulating with a pretty woman and a drink, than in a ring. Baer had too much fun to be great. But what should someone do when his skills lead him to a career that is not in line with his personality?

Baer was as exciting a heavyweight as you would wish to see - a huge puncher whose priority lay on the offensive side. Baer openly acknowledged his flaws, "My chin is as wide open as the Sahara desert. But so what? Nobody is tapping it. They are not conscious long enough to do that." Famed boxing writer Ed Schuyler ranked Baer at number six for his list of most exciting heavyweights,



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writing "Thirty years before Ali brought showmanship to boxing there was Baer, who fought hard and lived harder." A key for Baer was an exceedingly long reach that measured 81 inches (only matched by the mammoth Primo Carnera in his time), and a straight right hand which might well be the most powerful the heavyweight division has ever seen.

Baer's right hand was often of the looping variety, but when it landed the fight was seconds from ending. A 1993 *Boxing Illustrated* ranking of the hardest pound for pound punchers of all-time listed Baer at number two, only behind the freakishly powerful Jimmy Wilde. In 2004, *The Ring* magazine rated the best 100 punchers of all-time, and Baer came in at a respectable #22. *The Ring* commented "When he was in the mood to hurt a guy he was relentless. But a lot of the time he was happy enough to swap punches, have some laughs, collect his purse, then hit the clubs." On defense Baer was never great, but did manage to pick off many punches with his thick forearms. Like many punchers, Baer battled persistent hand problems, and like many punchers he sold out arenas at the mere mention that he would appear on a card.

Maximillian Adelbert Baer was born in Omaha, Nebraska on February 11, 1909, to German immigrant Jacob Baer. His father was a cattle dealer for Swift & Company who came to America with his French born wife in the late 1800's. When Max (his brother Buddy Baer was a heavyweight prospect as well) was four, the family moved to Durango, Colorado for a couple years before settling down in Livermore, California when Max was nine years old.

Max attended one year of high school, where he did well as a football player and competed in discus, javelin and shotput events. At age 16, Max left school to work on his father's ranch, and was already six feet tall and 190 pounds. The physical labor enabled his body to fill out handsomely. During his prime, Baer stood six foot two, and weighed 210 pounds. With broad shoulders and wavy jet black hair he had the look of a movie star and the physical prowess of an Olympian. Sports writers of the time referred to him as "Radiantly handsome, his body a sculptured masterpiece of solid muscle."

Two stories circulate as to how Baer came to boxing. One has Baer taking up boxing after having to defend the honor of a girl he was dating from a rude comment of a cowboy. The second has Baer being discovered by Ham Lorimer, the son of a rich industrialist who was enamored with boxing, as Baer was picking up iron rods with ease at an iron factory. After talking with Baer, he sent him to Harry Fine's gym in Oakland where Baer showed a natural aptitude for boxing. The second seems more plausible, since Lorimer was awarded a \$55,000 breach of contract settlement two years into Baer's career.

Lorimer knew he did not have the boxing savvy to take Baer to a world title, and found management help in the form of shrewd businessman Ancil Hoffman (who

made his fortune in the avocado business), who quickly dubbed his new charge the "Livermore Larruper". Hoffman had a love hate relationship with Baer, as he was continually frustrated by Baer's lack of discipline. He described Baer after the Braddock embarrassment: "Max is the most emotional athlete I ever saw. He breaks into tears over trivialities. But in a fight he 'wants' to win, he works himself into a terror! A wild man."

In 1929, Baer turned pro with a two round kayo of Chief Caribou. Baer said he sang at the top of his lungs in the dressing room so his opponent would not hear his teeth chatter from fear. His opponent's name sets a proper course for Baer's fun filled career. Baer knocked Chief down four times in the first round, and halted him in the second. After the win his nerves settled, and Baer became confident, if not arrogant, in his skills. By Baer's ninth fight, he was earning thousand dollar purses because of his popularity.

By his fourth fight, writers were paying attention to the big, hard punching heavyweight; "He can hit and absorb punishment and with a little seasoning, he should go far". Two fights after that declaration, Baer had his first setback when he was disqualified against Jack McCarthy. The Hayward Review wrote, "McCarthy draped on the ropes, didn't want to fight any more. Baer stepped aside and motioned him to come out. McCarthy refused the invitation. Thereupon, Max grabbed him around the waist and threw him forcefully to the floor." A second disqualification loss to undefeated Tiny Abbott was erased with a stoppage win over Abbott two weeks later.

Baer's first real test was against 52-14-19 Ernie Owens at The Olympic Auditorium in Los Angeles. Baer was 17-2, having won all but three fights via knockout. Baer won the fight on points over ten rounds, and duplicated the win via KO two months later. Baer was on his way to beating every heavyweight of worth on the West Coast. He did suffer one setback a month after the Owens wins, losing to Les Kennedy on points, but he avenged the loss by third round kayo a year later. The only threat to Baer's dominance on the West Coast was Frankie Campbell, who had scored 14 consecutive knockouts over the last two years, including one over Baer conqueror Les Kennedy. They were matched in August of 1930 at San Francisco's Recreation Park.

Promoter Jack Kearns and former heavyweight greats Jim Jeffries and Jack Dempsey traveled to San Francisco to evaluate the two talents. As 15,000 fans watched Baer pummel Campbell, none could know that several hours later Campbell would be dead from injuries sustained in the fight. Campbell was known for his body work, and went to work on Baer's body early and often. But things quickly went wrong for Campbell. He was knocked down in the first round by a hard blow in the back of the head while crouching low and leaning forward to deliver a jab to the belly. Campbell got up and boxed his way to the bell behind glassy eyes.

In the second, Campbell delivered a punch and tripped an off balance Baer at the same time. Believing he had scored a knockdown, Campbell turned his back and walked to a neutral corner. The referee had not scored the blow as a knockdown, and Baer quickly charged after Campbell (there was no mandatory eight count in those days anyhow) landing a hard blow just behind the ear of Campbell's relaxed head. Campbell was hurt, but managed to stay on his feet and hold after receiving two more blows to the head. Campbell survived, but told his cornermen between rounds that it felt like something had "snapped" in the back of his head.

Baer walked through the smaller Campbell for the rest of the fight, scoring solidly while Campbell persisted with his body attack. Baer trapped Campbell along the ropes in the fifth and stopped him with a left hook followed by a series of accurate combinations. Some reports have Baer landing 20 solid blows as Campbell's body was pinned against the ropes unable to sag to the canvas. It was obvious that Campbell was badly hurt, and a medical crew worked on him for 30 minutes before transferring him to Mission hospital. Campbell died in the hospital as Max Baer waited outside the room with Campbell's wife. Baer said he only found solace in the words of Campbell's wife that day, "It's all right. It might have been you. It wasn't your fault."

Baer was charged with manslaughter by the San Francisco court system, and had to post a \$10,000 bail. The city prosecutor dropped the charges before it could ever go to court when it was made clear to him that he had no chance of winning the case. Sportswriter Le Pacini succinctly evaluated the situation, "As for Baer, the 'killer' in him was replaced by the 'clown', and what might have been boxing's most vicious puncher lost that spark." In a moment of reflection, Baer stated, "I ask you not to forget the other man, the man they call 'murderer'. He needs your prayers too."

Baer was still suffering mental aftershocks from the Campbell bout when his management foolishly rushed him back into the ring. Only four months had passed, and Baer was put in against Ernie Schaaf at Madison Square Garden. It was a bad New York debut. The New York Times reported how Schaaf "battered the Coast invader as thoroughly as ever a boxer has been pounded, to win a decision in as exciting a heavyweight encounter as has been seen here for some time". Even with the loss, Baer had made his mark in 1930 and made his first entry into The Ring's annual boxing ratings at number 10. He would quickly fall out when he lost four fights within a year of the Campbell tragedy. The death of Campbell had obviously taken its toll on Baer.

In January of 1931, Baer scored a good knockout win over Tom Heeney, but it was nullified by a one-sided loss to master boxer Tommy Loughran. Baer couldn't do anything against Loughran, whose educated left jab kept Baer from setting up his right hand assaults while Loughran's feet danced circles around the awkward lunges of Baer. It would not be the last time a great left jab would cause

Baer problems. In the next two months, Baer lost to Johnny Risko and Paolino Uzcudun in succession. While the loss to Uzcudun was bad, it had the pleasurable effect of landing Jack Dempsey squarely in Baer's corner for the rest of his career. Dempsey said he was an admirer of Baer for his willingness to soak up punishment while trying to beat Uzcudun. Dempsey was also the promoter of that fight, and rightfully awarded the fight to Paolino. The ringside temperature reached 110 degrees, and the corner of Uzcudun taped the soles of his shoes and poured water on his feet after every round because of the heat emanating from the canvas.

In 1932, Baer turned the corner mentally after the loss to Uzcudun, going on a fifteen fight winning streak that would lead him to a world championship. Tom Heeney lost a rematch with Baer, King Levinsky was twice defeated, and Ernie Schaaf was also conquered in a rematch. So brutal was the beating of Schaaf that ring historians agree it was Baer's fists that caused Schaaf to die of head injuries six months later, even though a slapping punch from Primo Carnera was the last Schaaf would absorb. Witnesses say they had never seen a boxer take a more frightful pasting, even though Schaaf managed to finish on his feet against Baer.

In 1933, Baer only fought once, but it was undoubtedly the best performance of his career. For the first time ever, Baer took training seriously, and 53,000 New Yorkers were awed by the results of Baer's diligence. Baer was a 3-1 underdog, but comprehensively took Max Schmeling apart over ten one sided rounds. This was a battle

between two of the best right hands the division had ever seen. Boxing writer John Dimambro noted, "Baer stepped into the ring, he arrogantly threw his head back and slowly rolled the muscles in his neck which glistened with sweat. His eyes seemed to be on fire as he stared at Schmeling." As the end drew near, Baer asked referee Arthur Donovan to step in, not wanting a repeat of the Campbell fiasco. Donovan did step in minutes later after Schmeling took a nine count from a big right hand. Famed boxing writer Hype Igoe wrote of Baer's skills on that night as, "not seen since the best days of Jack Dempsey." Baer would never look as good again. On a side note, a politically motivated Baer wore the Star of David on his trunks (Baer's grandfather was Jewish) for the first time, and did so for every fight after.

The Schmeling win landed Baer on the May cover of *The Ring*, his first appearance there, hyping Baer's challenge of champion Primo Carnera. At the pre-fight weigh in, Baer was his comedic best, picking chest hairs from Carnera's massive frame saying "He loves me. He loves me not." It would be the only time anyone was laughing, as the fight turned into a massacre of horrendous proportions. 52,268 fans watched the brave Carnera pull himself off the canvas eleven times to accept further punishment. The poor Italian (who had been elevated to champion, unbeknownst to him, by the mafia through dives and payoffs) really thought he was unbeatable. It was a sickening sight to see the

fear filled eyes of Carnera as Baer tore into him. It became a clumsy bout with both men falling to the canvas as Carnera wrapped his huge arms and torso around Baer, helplessly clinging on to Baer to prevent further punishment. At one point, as the men were getting off the canvas, Baer could be heard joking to Carnera, "Last one up is a sissy." The knockdowns had started in the first round, and Carnera was still on his feet (even though he broke an ankle during one of the knockdowns) when the bout was mercifully stopped a minute into the eleventh round.

The clown prince of boxing had become its king. For a brief time, the boxing world seemed perfect with a young, heavy fisted, popular, and good looking champion at its helm. Still only 24, the future looked bright for Baer. Many thought this would be the start of a long and fun filled reign, but the two are opposing entities. Instead of training for his next fight, Baer starred in a movie. It was aptly titled 'The Prizefighter and The Lady', for which Baer got good reviews on his acting. Baer also had a radio show where he played a detective. Instead of fighting regularly (Baer's management reportedly turned down \$300,000 to rematch Schmeling in Europe), Baer fought exhibitions in places like Des Moines, Kansas City, Flint, Boston, Tampa Bay, Miami, Cleveland, and Kalamazoo. Baer was working hard at living up to his nickname of "Madcap Maxie".

When Baer did return to the ring, it was not surprising that he did not take his opponent seriously. It made for a short title reign, with Baer losing to Jim Braddock in his first defense. The fight would unfortunately define Baer. Braddock had strung together good victories over Corn Griffin, John Henry Lewis, and Art Lasky to earn a title shot, but was still a heavy underdog at 10-1. From round one Baer clowned, patting his chest and giving an overacting grimace whenever Braddock touched him. Baer looked into the crowd to wink to friends, more often than looking into his opponent's eyes.

The template for the fight was set in the opening moments of the second round. Baer threw a murderous right hand, Braddock ducked it and fired a quick combination that landed before pivoting out to safety. So it went for the next 13 rounds, with Braddock circling left to avoid Baer's big right hand. Braddock's legendary trainer, Whitey Bimstein, instructed his charge between rounds to pile up the points using his jab and occasional right hand, as Tommy Loughran had, so the judges could appreciate his offense - which they must have since punches of any kind were few and far between, giving credence to the claim that Baer broke his right hand early in the bout. The fight ranks as one of the most unexciting title fights of all time. For the last three rounds Baer followed Braddock around the ring trying to land a desperation punch. Baer even laughed openly in the ring at his inability to catch up with Braddock. The final scorecards read 11-4, 9-5-1, and 7-7-1 for Braddock.

After he lost his title Baer was not upset or disappointed, telling a radio reporter

he was happy for Braddock because he was a family man. Baer also caused a controversy by stating afterwards that, "He (Braddock) has five kids...I don't know how many I have,"

which was unheard of in those more morally correct times, where being sexually frank was not in vogue. In the end, Baer got one thing right, "I was so busy clowning that I guess I forgot to fight." After the fight, Baer's relationship with manager Ancil Hoffman suffered, and they were never close again. Baer's image suffered with the public as well, as they were fed up with Baer's inability to take anything seriously. The heavyweight crown was nearly sacred back then, and Baer had practically given it away.

The Braddock loss was followed by a humiliating defeat to young sensation Joe Louis three months later. Baer only took the fight because it represented the largest purse of his career at \$215,000. In the locker room, Baer was nervous and asked Jack Dempsey to call off the fight, saying that he was having chest pains. Dempsey could not let Baer walk away with a million dollar gate on hand. It looked like things would turn out O.K. for Baer when he hit Louis with an excellent left right combination in the opening minute. Baer looked shocked when Louis retaliated with his own combination that shook him and forced Baer into the corner, where Louis almost stopped him. Between rounds, Jack Dempsey told Baer, "You are doing great kid. He hasn't hit you." The quick witted Baer replied, "Then you better keep an eye on the referee because somebody in there is beating the hell out of me."

88,150 fans watched Baer suffer the first knockdown of his career in the third round, but he got up, only to be floored by two left hooks before the bell saved him from Louis. Nothing could save Baer in round four, when Baer was counted out on his knees. It looked as if Baer could get up, but even in his worst defeat Baer found humor. When asked why he did not get up again, "The fans paid to see a fight, not a murder." Baer was only 26, but his career was already over.

After the Louis loss, Baer began to barnstorm America, beating twenty three opponents in twenty three cities over a four month period. Baer's best post Louis wins were a one round destruction of prospect Pat Comiskey, and a win over Tony Galento (The Marquis of Queensbury rules were thrown out for the Galento bout, dubbed by fans of the time as 'The battle of the bums'). During the Comiskey bout, Baer wanted the referee to stop the fight, asking, "Well what else do you want me to do to him?"

Baer traveled to England as well, facing fancy boxing Tommy Farr. Baer staged a late rally behind a left eye that was swollen shut, to make it a close loss. Baer lost twice to Lou Nova as well. The New York Times described Baer's suffering in the first Nova fight: "The left side of his face battered out of shape after ten rounds of the most excruciating fighting he had ever undergone, Baer was bleeding so severely from a severe laceration of the lower lip he could hardly breathe".

Baer retired at age 32, and went into the Air Force at the start of World War II. After returning to civilian life Baer naturally opened his own nightclub. He also acted in several slapstick westerns, such as "Skipalong Cassidy" with fellow boxer-actor Maxie Rosenbloom. The duo was soon crisscrossing the country as a successful comedy team, appearing in nightclubs. Baer also dabbled in the used car business.

Baer was lucky to find love when he met Mary Ellen Sullivan (a nurse who worked in Buffalo), whom he married and stayed devoted to until his death. One of his three sons, Max Baer, Jr., found fame laying the role of Jethro Bodine on the television series "The Beverly Hillbillies."

During the 1950's, Baer grew large with his consumption of fun, food and alcohol. He tried to return to boxing through refereeing, often blowing kisses to the crowd and upstaging the boxers in the ring through his charm. He would die at age 50 in 1959. Famed writer Jimmy Cannon eulogized Baer best, "Baer was shaped to be a great pug, but his heart did not belong in that immense and thrilling body. It was a clown's heart. A heart that must have been hurt by terror and fear in the years Baer was forced to pretend he was a fighter. I'm positive Baer disliked punching another man."

Chronological Reminders Of The Past

Ardmore Army Air Field 1942-46 and the Southern Oklahoma Area

Sgt. Max Baer and S/Sgt. Buddy Baer of civilian professional boxing fame visited AAAFld. They were pictured visiting with Col. Donald W. Eisenhart in "Bombs-Away" January 15, 1944 issue. Among the 4019 professional boxers in the US Armed Forces are Gene Tunney, Jim Braddock, Max and Buddy Baer, Lou Ambers, Freddy Apostoli,

Billy Soose, Benny Leonard, Midget Smith, Augie Ratner, Joe Louis, Jack Dempsey, Billy Conn, Henry Armstrong and Barney Ross. The Edward J. Neil Memorial Award, given each year by the New York Boxing Writers Association to the man who had done most for boxing has been awarded to the 4019 boxers serving their country instead of one individual as normally done. Eddie J. Neil was a war correspondent killed in reporting the Spanish Revolution. Eighteen boxers have been killed in action, seven are missing in action and 25 have been wounded. Note: "Bombs-Away" was the four-page weekly (Saturday) newspaper of Ardmore Army Air Field. The paper was printed by the Daily Ardmoreite. Regretably, no one had the foresite to keep the bound copies for future generations.

This I Remember...

Personal Recollections

Of Some Who Served At

Ardmore Army Air Field (1942-46)

Ardmore Air Force Base (1953-59)

**Relatives or Others Remembering Events
Relating To The Base**

I have two pictures relating to the base, one of Lt. Colonel James R. Luper with Sgt. Max Baer, World Heavyweight Champion and his brother, S/Sgt. Buddy Baer, professional prize fighter. The other is of Operations Room A-2, Headquarters, 46th Bombardment Operational Training Wing. They will be mailed to you. I am not aware of what might have happened to Lt. Colonel Luper after his service at Ardmore.

Chronological Reminders Of The Past

Ardmore Army Air Field 1942-46 and the Southern Oklahoma Area

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