

# RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORY

Ramsey County Historical Society

Cattlemen and Capitalists—  
And the Founding of  
New Brighton

Volume 22  
Number 2



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ON THE COVER: *The Cattlemen's Hotel, later known as the Exchange Building, was a plush and ultra-modern establishment that came with the stockyards development in the late 1890s. In the last sixty years it has been the home of Beisswenger's Appliance and Hardware Store. The Marston Block (small photo) stood at the southeast corner of Brighton's main street intersection -- downtown New Brighton around the time of World War I.*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: *The photographs with the story on New Brighton are used with the permission of their owners, the following residents and organizations of New Brighton: page 16, Larry Vanden Plas for the New Brighton Area Historical Society; pages 21 and 41, Stella Flygard; page 29, the New Brighton Bulletin; page 49, Julie Beisswenger. The photograph on page 15 is from the files of R.C. Blumberg, general manager of Zimmerman Realty and a grandson of Moses Zimmerman. The photographs on pages 16-22 are from the Minnesota Historical Society collections from the following sources: Minneapolis Star and Tribune. (page 17); the St. Paul Pioneer Press (page 20).*

# Boxing in Minnesota in the Postwar Era

## The Fighting Flanagans

By Scott Wright

On October 18, 1946, a 19-year-old Irishman from St. Paul made his debut as a professional boxer on a fight card held across the river in the Minneapolis Auditorium. Glen Flanagan, weighing 128 pounds and only recently discharged from the United States Navy, was to go on to a highly successful career as a professional fighter. Along with his younger brother, Del, the Flanagan brothers became dominant figures on the local fight scene in the years following the Second World War. In addition, their careers spanned a transitional phase in the development of the sport, and offer an interesting case study in the changes which occurred in it during this same period.

Boxing in Minnesota in the years immediately following World War II paralleled the state of the sport generally in the pre-war era. Although the professional fight card on which Glen Flanagan participated in October of 1946 was the first in four months in the Minneapolis Auditorium, professional boxing was a regular part of the local sports scene. Following the October card, professional promotions occurred in Minneapolis on November 1 and 19 and on close to a monthly basis through the following year. St. Paul had regular professional boxing, sometimes as often as two cards per month during this same period, and smaller cities around the state, Duluth and Rochester, for example, also had frequent professional promotions.<sup>1</sup>

The sport also flourished at the amateur level, and local and state Golden Gloves tournaments held in January and February each year drew large crowds and extensive press coverage. While local boxing cards occasionally featured big names, such as Austin, Minnesota's featherweight Jackie Graves, winner of a national Golden Gloves title in 1942 and by 1946, a ranking professional contender, more often cards were made up of local fighters engaging in intra- or inter-city rivalries, often with a strong ethnic favor, or in matches against the members of traveling fight "stables" fighting under the auspices of a particular

manager or agent. While the late 1940s and early 1950s were to see a significant shift in this pattern with the effects produced by television, the immediate post-war pattern of the sport was similar to what it had been during the three decades or so preceding the war.

THE BEGINNING of the older Flanagan's career, then, followed a fairly traditional form. Born in St. Paul on November 16, 1928, the oldest of the eight children born to Daniel and Mary Flanagan, Glen's early years were spent on the move as the family attempted to cope with the problems of the Depression. After moving to Duluth within a year or two of his birth, the family proceeded to California in the early 1930s, then returned to Minnesota where they settled successively in Moose Lake, Blaine, and finally, by the early 1940s, in Minneapolis. Growing up in the era of James J. Braddock, Joe Louis, and other pugilistic heroes of the 1930s and early 1940s, Glen Flanagan early developed an interest in boxing, and by 1943 was spending his spare time at Pott's Gymnasium in Minneapolis watching the training sessions of then-amateur star Jackie Graves. After entering the Minneapolis Golden Gloves tournament in 1944 and losing in the semi-finals, he enlisted in the navy where he remained active in amateur boxing, running up an unbeaten streak of forty-four consecutive victories. At approximately this same time, the Flanagan family moved back to St. Paul where Daniel and Mary Flanagan opened a small statuary business, and it was to the new home -- at 1813 St. Anthony Avenue -- that Glen returned in 1946, ready to try his luck in the professional prize ring.<sup>2</sup>

THE BOUT which launched Glen Flanagan's professional career provides insights into both the older Flanagan's style as a fighter as well as the prevailing pattern of local boxing. Appearing in a four-round preliminary bout in the featherweight (126 pounds) class on the undercard of a main event featuring local favorite Jackie Burke and Charley Hunter of Cleveland, Glen won by a decision over fellow St. Paulite, Emmett Yanez, a boxer of Mexican-American background. Describing the fight the following morning, the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* called it "one of the better preliminaries," with the *Minneapolis Morning*

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Glen Flanagan, left, losing by decision to Jackie Graves in their first fight in October, 1949.

*Tribune* adding that Flanagan "had his foe on the deck in every round."<sup>3</sup> Throughout his career Flanagan was known as an aggressive fighter, willing to take punishment in order to inflict damage on his opponent.

For a match such as the Yanez fight, boxers traditionally received anywhere from \$50 to \$200. Factoring in a one-third cut for a manager, this meant that one could make a decent living at the sport only if one remained active.<sup>4</sup> Following the Yanez fight, appearing chiefly in his hometown and in Minneapolis, Glen went on to run up a record of twenty-one wins in twenty-five fights with twelve knockouts by January of 1948. During this time he was managed by Andy Skaff, a boxing manager and promoter headquartered in LaCrosse, Wisconsin, but with strong connections in the Twin Cities area. Another characteristic of Glen's career would be persistent managerial problems, but at this time the relationship with Skaff, his first manager, seems to have been a productive one.<sup>5</sup>

BY JANUARY OF 1948, Glen Flanagan had moved up to main event status, fighting his first main event in St. Paul on January 15 against Norman Mastrian of Minneapolis. Mastrian, who would gain considerable notoriety in later years for his involvement in the Carol Thompson murder case in St. Paul, had far less experience than Flanagan but possessed enough of a local reputation so that the match was billed as a "grudge fight," with both fighters exchanging taunts and jibes in the pre-fight publicity. Both also hoped to use the bout as a stepping-stone to a match with Jackie Graves, by then the state featherweight champion and a nationally-ranked fighter. The bout itself was close to a free-for-all, with numerous low blows, kidney punches and other illegal tactics. In the fourth round both fighters were out of the ring for a count of eight, and according to the *Pioneer Press* report, continued fighting "on the ring boards and on

the ropes." Altogether, Mastrian was down a total of eleven times before the bout was finally stopped in Flanagan's favor in the seventh round. In the dressing room after the bout a battered Mastrian announced his retirement from boxing.<sup>6</sup>

Achieving main event status meant that a fighter was entitled to a percentage of the gate, usually 25 percent, and could earn a lot more money in the sport.<sup>7</sup> Following the victory over Mastrian, Glen, apparently still under Skaff's management, left the state for a series of bouts on the West Coast which further contributed to his reputation.

IN THE MEANTIME, Glen's younger brother, Del, had also turned professional. Born in Duluth, on November 8, 1928, Del attended St. Boniface Elementary School and Sheridan Junior High in Minneapolis, before moving on to Wilson Senior High in St. Paul after the family moved back to that city. Imbued early with an interest in boxing, Del, unlike his older brother had extensive amateur experience in the Golden Gloves, winning city and regional titles in 1945 and 1946 and going to the national tournament in New York as an alternate in the latter year.<sup>8</sup>

In April of 1947, under the management of his amateur trainer, Earl Kane of Minneapolis, he made his pro debut in the lightweight division (135 pounds), scoring a fourth-round technical knockout on a fight card in St. Paul. Following this, Del also fought frequently for the remainder of the year, running up an unbeaten streak of twenty-two victories, fourteen by knockout, by March of 1948. In March of 1948, Del also fought his first main event, scoring an eight-round decision in St. Paul over Herman Mills who the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* described as "a worthy Chicago trial horse."<sup>9</sup> By the spring of 1948, Del was attracting considerable local attention as a result of two fights with a boxer named Del Cockayne of Des Moines, Iowa.

Cockayne had appeared earlier in St. Paul in losing a controversial split decision to Howard Bleyhl of Madison, Minnesota, on the Glen Flanagan-Norman Mastrian fight card. He had established a sizable local following, and the prospective matchup with the younger Flanagan brother in April of 1948 was referred to in pre-fight coverage in the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* as "St. Paul's top fistic event since prewar years." The fight, which saw Flanagan winning by a seventh round technical knockout when Cockayne suffered an eye cut, set the scene for a rematch. The second Flanagan-Cockayne bout occurred in June and resulted in Flanagan winning a split decision.<sup>10</sup> With both Flanagans firmly established on the local fight scene, their respective careers now moved in somewhat different directions.

GLEN, RETURNING TO ACTION locally after his trip to the West Coast where he had won all five of his fights, seems to have been campaigning chiefly for a bout with local rival Jackie Graves. In the process, he also came to a parting of the ways with manager Skaff and began the attempt to manage himself, which was to persist for the next several years.<sup>11</sup> He won consistently, however, and capped 1948 by fighting a draw in Minneapolis against nationally-ranked Miguel Acevedo. Del, on the other hand, continuing his unbeaten record through the year, signed a contract in December with nationally-known fight manager, Lou Viscusi, of Hartford, Connecticut, and Tampa.<sup>12</sup>

Glen's pursuit of the Graves bout finally came to fruition in the fall of 1949. Although the same age as Glen, Graves had been a ranking featherweight nationally for nearly five years. During that time he had fought a total of sixty-nine fights, winning sixty-four, while Flanagan had had a total of thirty-seven fights with thirty victories, two defeats and five draws. The match, which was held in Minneapolis in October, and drew a gate of over \$25,000, saw Graves utilizing his greater experience to win a unanimous decision.<sup>13</sup> The fight was close enough, however, to warrant a rematch, and in the second fight, held in November, Glen knocked out the "Austin Atom" in the third round. By year's end, Glen was ranked ninth among the world's featherweights by *Ring Magazine*.<sup>14</sup> During this same time Del's career was also developing steadily, if less spectacularly, under the guidance of Viscusi. By the end of 1949, he had extended his unbeaten streak to thirty-seven.

THE CAREERS of both fighters continued along their respective paths through most of 1950 -- Glen still attempting to manage himself and putting together a mixed record of seven wins, three losses and a draw, Del continuing to win all of his fights, save for a draw against Johnny DeFazio in New York on St. Patrick's Day. (He later defeated DeFazio in a rematch held in Minneapolis in October.) In December, however, a new dimension entered the careers of both fighters when each gained the chance to fight on national television. The advent of TV was to have a significant effect on both of their careers, as well as on the future of the sport itself.

Boxing entered television in the earliest days of the medium in the late 1940s. The sport's confined area of action made it easy to cover with fixed camera settings and its neat division into three-minute rounds with one-minute rest periods allowed for regularly-spaced commercial breaks. By the early 1950s, boxing was a regular staple of network TV, with 1954 seeing a record number of 209 live boxing telecasts

emanating from five weekly shows (two on ABC, and one each on CBS, NBC and the old DuMont network).<sup>15</sup> The effects of television on the sport were enormous. First, it took away audiences from local cards and in the long run all but eliminated boxing from the local sports scene in many areas; secondly, it gave even mediocre fighters tremendous national exposure and in the process increased their earning potential. While the big money, closed-circuit bouts, were still in the future,<sup>16</sup> the stage was being set for a virtual revolution in the character of the sport.

THE INITIAL EXPERIENCE of the two brothers with the new medium in December of 1950, serves to demonstrate both the larger effects of television on the sport as well as its specific influence on their respective careers. Del's opportunity came on December 6 when he was given the chance to fight featherweight champion Sandy Saddler in an over-the-weight, non-title bout in Detroit. Fighting out of the same stable as former champion Willie Pep, from whom Saddler had taken the title the previous September, the younger Flanagan had the benefit of more than 150 rounds of sparring with the former champion. The results were clearly evident in the outcome, with Flanagan winning a majority, ten-round decision.

Following the fight there was talk of a lightweight title shot for the St. Paul boxer in January. Glen's first television opportunity, on December 15 in New York, was a distinctly different affair. Taking the bout on short notice after having injured his right hand in a bout two weeks before, Glen lost a ten-round decision to European featherweight champion Ray Famechon of France. Glen's lackluster performance failed to impress the New York fight community, and the bout itself was bumped from network TV at the last minute because of a speech by President Truman.<sup>17</sup>

Although the projected title shot failed to materialize for Del, he went on to parlay his victory over Saddler into a pair of highly-popular local bouts, scoring his own knockout over Jackie Graves in a bout in Minneapolis on December 28 and winning by decision over former lightweight champion Beau Jack, in the same city, in January.<sup>18</sup> In this sense, the initial exposure to television actually served to enhance his local following. Continued exposure would lead, in the late 1950s, to a series of big money local fights against opponents who themselves had gained a kind of celebrity status fighting on television, in effect, the last blossoming of the sport on the local scene. For Glen, on the other hand, television, with one major exception, never quite seemed to pay off, either nationally or locally. His poor showing in New York and the

last minute failure of the bout to be broadcast certainly did little to enhance his local reputation in 1950. Although he was to appear numerous times on television in the years ahead, he was already in retirement by the time of his brother's big-money local fights in the last years of the decade.

IT IS NOT TELEVISION itself, however, which accounts for the differences in the two brothers' careers. Del's career from the very beginning had the benefit of superior management and timing, and in this sense is more clearly transitional in terms of the larger changes which came into boxing in the postwar era. Glen's career, on the other hand, in its more colorful and erratic course, is more typical of the sport in its earlier, pre-war days. Two examples drawn from Glen's later career serve to highlight this distinction. The first occurred in the summer following the Famechon fight and is one of the more unusual events in local post-war boxing history.

In the summer of 1951, Del, still unbeaten as a professional, was matched against a veteran lightweight, Tommy Campbell, in a bout in St. Paul. Disappointed perhaps over the cancellation of a July bout with popular contender Art Aragon of California, Del lost to Campbell by decision, his first loss in fifty-three fights. In a surprise development following the bout, Glen, although a full-weight class lighter than Campbell, issued a challenge to the victor, claiming that he had the style to beat him. The bout took place the week after his brother's loss. Glen likewise went down to defeat by a ten-round decision in a fight which saw him waging a gallant effort and getting off the canvas twice from knockdowns in the second round.<sup>19</sup> This event serves to display as well as any the gutsy and courageous character of the older Flanagan. It is not, however, the action of a well-managed professional attempting to develop his career in the most rational and expedient manner. Related to this is the distinct upturn which occurred in Glen's fortunes in 1952 when he did come under more competent management.

SOMETIME IN LATE 1951 and/or early 1952 Glen signed on with P. L. "Pinkie" George, a fight manager operating out of Des Moines, Iowa, but with strong connections around the country. By April of 1952, he had won eight straight bouts, and had earned another opportunity to fight on national television. The bout was against Gene Smith of Washington, D.C., an unbeaten boxer who was said to be in line for a title shot with featherweight champion Sandy Saddler. Although Glen lost by decision to Smith and had to climb off the canvas twice in the fifth round, he came back in the later rounds to keep the bout close.

Doing well again after the loss, he gained a rematch with Smith in another TV bout in July. This time he won a unanimous decision, crediting the fight plan devised by manager George and trainer Lou Gross for the victory. The Smith victory earned him an August bout with Tommy Collins of Boston for what was billed as the "U. S. Interim Featherweight Championship," established to fill the void left by champion Sandy Saddler's induction into the army. The winner was to go on to a bout with Ray Famechon for interim recognition as world champion.<sup>20</sup> Although Glen lost to Collins in a fifteen-round decision it was probably the high point of his career, and would have been unobtainable without the connections and guidance of a first-rate manager, leading to speculation as to what his fortunes might have been if he had made such a move several years earlier.

Glen's career continued for another four years after the Collins fight. He fought a number of times on national television during this period, interspersed with periodic appearances on the local scene, including a pair of bouts with Minneapolis boxer Danny Davis for the state lightweight championship in 1953 and 1955 which attracted a fair amount of local attention. By 1955, however, having moved up permanently to the lightweight division, he was losing with increasing frequency, and had become largely a trial horse for younger, up-and-coming fighters. The following year -- 1956 -- was his last as a pro, and he retired at the end of the year with a career record of 115 professional fights, winning eighty, losing twenty-three and fighting twelve draws. Despite some severe beatings, especially late in his career, he never was knocked out as a professional.

AS GLEN PASSED from the boxing scene, Del was moving into the big money years of his career. The years between his first appearance on television in December of 1950 and the year of his first big money fights in St. Paul -- 1957 -- had seen Del gradually moving up into the welterweight (147 pounds) division and establishing himself as a contender there. Following the loss to Tommy Campbell in the summer of 1951 his previously-unbeaten record had become marked by periodic defeats,<sup>21</sup> but he also had won some big fights. Among them was a decision over then-third-ranked (and later welterweight champion) Johnny Saxton in a nationally-televised bout from Minneapolis in December of 1953 and a ninth-round technical knockout of former welterweight champion Johnny Bratton in a St. Paul fight in March of 1955. He also had appeared with some regularity on national television, and in 1955 was ranked seventh among the world's welterweights by *Ring Magazine*.<sup>22</sup> Following

a rather mediocre year in 1956, Del was ready by 1957 to launch an all-out campaign for a title shot.

The year also saw Del under new management. Lou Viscusi, who had directed his career since 1949, was to Del's mind too protective of his fighters, and to chart a more aggressive course in his pursuit of the title shot he signed on with Bernie Glickman of Chicago. Glickman's message to Del was to abandon his fancy-boxing style and to work to achieve greater power in his punches.<sup>23</sup>

St. Paul's boxing promoter in 1957 was Somerset, Wisconsin, restaurant-owner Jack Raleigh,<sup>24</sup> the most successful Minnesota promoter of the post-war period. Raleigh began Del's local campaign for the title by matching him against two popular local fighters, St. Paul's own Jim Hegerle and Joe Schmolze of Minneapolis. Although both Hegerle and Schmolze were actually middleweights, at 160 pounds, Del had little trouble disposing of both, Hegerle by a ten-round decision in January and Schmolze by a first-round knockout in February. Both fights drew well, the Hegerle fight in particular drawing a crowd of 5,396 and a gate of more than \$12,000. To stimulate local interest, public workouts were held for both fights in the Ryan Hotel on Sixth and Robert Streets in downtown St. Paul.<sup>25</sup>

DEL'S NEXT FIGHT, also in St. Paul, was against eighth-ranked welterweight contender Ramon Fuentes of Los Angeles. Fuentes, who was well-known to local fight fans as a result of his exposure on television, was clearly a stepping-stone toward Del's shot at a title. The March fight drew a local crowd of 6,953 who paid \$27,478.92 to see Del score what the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* called a "one-sided decision."<sup>26</sup> The victory over Fuentes, in turn, set the scene for a match with popular former champion Kid Gavilan in April.

The Gavilan fight was held on April 24. A crowd of 9,424 turned out for the bout and the gate receipts of \$43,653.77 established a new state record, surpassing the previous record set in the Mike Gibbons-Mike O'Dowd fight of November 21, 1919. Gavilan, of course, was one of the most popular television fighters of the early 1950s, and the fight clearly reflects the favorable initial effect of television on the local fight scene. Although Gavilan, at 31, was slightly past his prime as a boxer, Del's unanimous decision victory over the former champion propelled him to a number six rating among the welterweights and the strong likelihood of a shot at the welterweight title.<sup>27</sup>

At this point, however, personal difficulties intervened. Throughout their careers, both of the Flanagans had gained something of a reputation as hell-raisers, and on the morning of May 7 both Del

and Glen were arrested on a disorderly conduct charge in Minneapolis.<sup>28</sup> The incident resulted in a ninety-day workhouse sentence for Del and a severe setback to his career. Although he only served twenty-seven days of the sentence, the National Boxing Association dropped him from their ratings and he did not fight again until July. Rather ironically, the *Pioneer Press*, on the day following the sentencing, carried a front page story announcing that Del's manager had accepted an offer for him to fight champion Carmen Basilio at the Minnesota State Fairgrounds in August.<sup>29</sup>

FOLLOWING HIS RELEASE from the workhouse, Del signed for a match with Gil Turner, another well-known television fighter to whom Del had suffered a ten-round decision loss in 1952. The bout was slated for Midway Stadium on July 25, and the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, preparatory to the bout, carried a picture of Del doing roadwork with his son. An accompanying article spoke of his need "to prove to family, friends and fans that his recent difficulties were all a part of a nightmare which won't occur again." The outcome of the bout was disappointing, however. Del, weighing a heavy 152<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> and showing the effects of the lay-off, lost a unanimous decision in what he called "the worst wallop I've ever taken." Manager Glickman added that he "just blew a \$100,000 shot." The only good news was the gate, which saw a crowd of 6,966 paying \$29,292 to witness the fight.<sup>30</sup>

Del got back on the winning track in August in the State Fair Hippodrome where instead of fighting Carmen Basilio for the title he fought TV-favorite Ralph "Tiger" Jones. Jones, ranked eighth among the middleweights, was a popular fighter and a crowd of 4,649 paid \$20,440 to see Del, at an even heavier 155, win convincingly by decision. In the aftermath of the Jones fight there was once again talk of a title bout with Basilio or with highly-ranked welterweight contender Tony DeMarco. Instead, Del fought on television in October, losing a ten-round decision to middleweight Yama Bahama in Chicago in what was described as a "dull" fight.<sup>31</sup>

Following tune-up fights in December and January, Del returned to St. Paul to fight on a St. Patrick's Day card in March of 1958. His opponent was Clarence Cook, a fighter to whom he had lost twice by decision back in 1956. This time Del was a clear-cut winner, having Cook on the canvas in the sixth round when he was barely saved by the bell and winning by a technical knockout in the ninth. Following the Cook fight Del defeated Walter Byars, a clever boxer who had lost close decisions to several top-ranking welterweights the previous year, and then in

September gained the opportunity to fight newly-crowned welterweight champion Virgil Akins in a non-title fight in St. Paul. The bout, which took place on September 18, 1958, saw Del winning by decision over the champion and once again in line for a shot at the title. To remain in shape and to solidify his position as a top contender, Del signed for a third bout with Gil Turner in November and this time defeated the popular welterweight decisively. The title bout with Akins now seemed a certainty, most likely for Winter Carnival week in St. Paul.<sup>32</sup> Unfortunately, Akins, in the meantime, signed for another defense in December and lost the title in an upset. With a rematch between Akins and the new champion scheduled for April, Del's title shot once again evaporated.

INSTEAD OF FIGHTING for the title, Del fought another ranked fighter, Ralph Dupas of New Orleans, on the Winter Carnival card. The bout, which was televised nationally, saw Del winning a controversial decision. Although the victory allowed him to maintain his position as a top welterweight contender, the failure to get an opportunity to fight for the title, as well as an increasing difficulty in making the weight limit of the division, seems to have disillusioned Del at this point in his career.<sup>33</sup> He fought again in St. Paul in April, and then in June of 1959 suffered a devastating first-round knockout at the hands of middleweight Joey Giardello. The fight marked the first time in 111 pro fights that Del had ever been counted out,<sup>34</sup> and although he continued to fight for another five years after the Giardello bout, the loss marked the end of his quest for a title shot.

The five years that followed saw Del fighting sporadically and clearly in the twilight of his career. Interestingly, the fortunes of local boxing in Minnesota in large part faded with him. Undercut ultimately by television and the arrival of major league baseball and football in the state in the early 1960s, local boxing promotions languished. Between May of 1960, when Del launched something of a local comeback in St. Paul, and January of 1961, when he again appeared on a local fight card there, there were no professional boxing cards in the capital city. The total gate for another local promotion on which Del appeared in April of 1962 was a miniscule \$2,605.<sup>35</sup>

Del's last local bout was a fifth round knockout by a Chatfield, Minnesota, boxer, Duane Horseman, for the state middleweight championship in Rochester on January 29, 1964.<sup>36</sup> He fought once more, in Glace Bay, Nova Scotia, in June of that year, again losing by knockout, and then hung up his gloves for good. His overall record as a professional, after eighteen years in the sport, was a highly-respectable 104 wins



*Del Flanagan doing road work with his son in July, 1957.*

in 129 fights, with twenty-two losses, two draws and one no contest. His early winning streak of fifty-two straight fights bears interesting comparison with the contemporary state of the sport where fighters often fight for championships with twenty victories or less.

BOTH FLANAGANS remained close to the sport in retirement. Both were involved in the career of Rochester middleweight Pat O'Connor, who made a brief appearance on the local boxing scene in the early 1970s, and Glen, by then quite successful in the local insurance business, briefly tried his hand at fight promotion in St. Paul in 1972.<sup>37</sup> On January 29, 1979, the older Flanagan, who had suffered from heart problems for several years, died suddenly of a heart attack while vacationing in Mexico. Commenting on Glen's death in his column in the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, sportswriter Don Riley wrote: "He'll be remembered as the little man who used every gram of his abilities and then, when they weren't enough, reached for an unending reserve of gameness. His likes may never be seen again, inside or outside of a ring." Del, active in a number of business ventures since his retirement from the ring, currently raises Arabian horses on a ranch in Scottsdale, Arizona.<sup>38</sup>

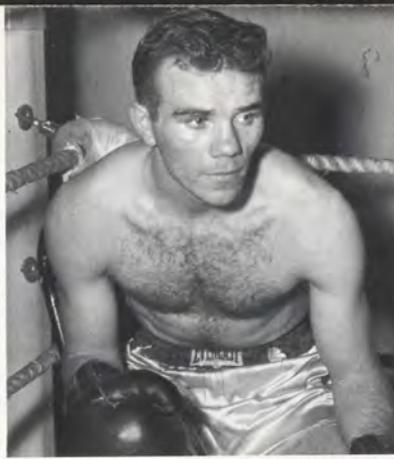
The careers of the "Fighting Flanagans" spanned a transitional period in the history of boxing, and each in his own way reflects aspects of that transition. Although neither was a world title nor saw the big television paydays of later years, their careers must certainly be termed successful, and in the course of pursuing them they occupy a unique and interesting place in Minnesota sports history.

## FOOTNOTES

1. *Minneapolis Star and Journal*, October 18, 1946, p. 25; also, records of Glen and Del in *The Ring Record Book and Boxing Encyclopedia* (New York: The Ring Book Shop), 1957 and 1965 editions respectively.
2. Information from city directories and interview with Del Flanagan, July 3, 1985; notes in author's possession. For Glen in Golden Gloves see *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, February 15, 1944, p. 11; for bouts in Navy, see *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, October 18, 1946, p. 19.
3. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, October 19, 1946, p. 13; *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, October 19, 1946, p. 11.
4. Interview with Del Flanagan, July 24, 1986; notes in author's possession.
5. Interview with Del Flanagan, July 3, 1985; see also Don Riley column, *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, January 30, 1979, p. 15.
6. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, January 16, 1948, p. 15.
7. Interview with Del Flanagan, July 24, 1986. For his bout in Minneapolis later on that year against nationally-ranked Miguel Acevedo, Glen, for example, received \$3,200 (*St. Paul Pioneer Press*, December 31, 1948, p. 12).
8. Interview with Del Flanagan, July 3, 1985. For Del's Golden Gloves record see: *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, February 1, 1945, p. 13 (wins Minneapolis Golden Gloves title as a featherweight); February 20, 1945, p. 11 (wins Northwest Regional title); February 27, 1945, p. 11 (loses in Chicago); January 26, 1946, p. 9 (repeats as city featherweight championship); February 12, 1947, p. 16 (drops out of Northwest Regional tournament. Article also mentions his going to the finals in Chicago the previous year and his trip to New York as an alternate). Both Glen and Del were members of the De La Salle boxing team in the Golden Gloves, although neither attended that school.
9. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, March 18, 1948, p. 21.
10. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, April 16, 1948, p. 23; April 17, 1948, p. 12; June 30, 1948, p. 16. The April 16th article also states that more money had been bet on the Flanagan-Cockayne fight than on any local fight since the My Sullivan-Billy Light battles of the 1930s, and that the match had a good chance of surpassing the \$14,000 gate of the Fred Lenhart-John Henry Lewis bout held in St. Paul in 1938.
11. An article in the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, October 20, 1948, p. 21, states that Glen's purse was held up by the state boxing commission following a bout because of a contractual dispute with manager Skaff. The article further relates that Del, who appeared on the same card, also had his purse held back due to a pending \$5,000 assault suit, evidence of the kind of personal difficulties which would later cost him a shot at a world title (see 28 below).
12. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, December 31, 1948, p. 12.
13. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, October 13, 1949, p. 23; October 13, 1949, p. 21. Gate figure is taken from an article in the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, April 24, 1957, p. 18.
14. *The Ring 1981 Record Book and Boxing Encyclopedia* (New York: Atheneum, 1981), p. [867].
15. *The Ring*, November, 1985, p. 22.
16. For one of his early television bouts, in 1952, Del received a purse of \$3,000 (*St. Paul Pioneer Press*, April 12, 1952, p. 10).
17. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, December 6, 1950, p. 23; December 7, 1950, p. 29; December 15, 1950, p. 27; December 16, 1950, *Press*, December 2, 1950, p. 13.
18. The Graves fight drew a gate of \$28,931.80 (*St. Paul Pioneer Press*, April 24, 1957, p. 18).
19. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, June 21, 1951, p. 16; June 22, 1951, p. 19; June 29, 1951, p. 17. *Pioneer Press* sports writer Don Riley also mentions this fight in a column devoted to Glen at the time of his death (*St. Paul Pioneer Press*, January 30, 1979, p. 15).
20. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, April 3, 1952, p. 17; July 3, 1952, p. 11; August 13, 1952, p. 19. The Collins fight is also discussed in Don Riley's obituary column on Glen (see above).
21. One of the most controversial of the losses occurred in a non-title bout with then-lightweight champion Jimmy Carter in Minneapolis, shortly after the Campbell fight. The bout found Del, leading after six rounds, failing to come out for the seventh because of an injured shoulder. The sudden ending set off a wave of controversy and received considerable press coverage (see, for example, *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, August 3, 1951, p. 16; August 4, 1951, p. 8) Although the loss to Carter went into the records as seventh-round knockout, Del was not actually knocked out in a fight until the Giardello fight in June of 1959.
22. *The Ring 1981 Record Book and Boxing Encyclopedia*, p. [873].
23. Interview with Del Flanagan, July 3, 1985; see also *St. Paul Sunday Pioneer Press*, July 21, 1957, p. 1 (Sports Section) for further discussion of Glickman's influence on Del's style.
24. Jack Raleigh began his career as a boxing promoter in St. Paul in 1950 (see *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, April 28, 1950, p. 19) and remained active in the sport into the 1970s. He died on February 3, 1984.
25. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, January 11, 1957, p. 12; January 7, 1957, p. 29; February 3, 1957.
26. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, March 12, 1957, p. 16.
27. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, April 25, 1957, p. 29; April 24, 1957, p. 18; June 13, 1957, p. 23. Del also received the largest single payday of his career for the Gavilan fight, 25 percent of the gate -- or \$9,412 (*St. Paul Pioneer Press*, April 25, 1957, p. 29).
28. The initial account of the incident in the newspaper had a rather humorous tone, stating at one point that Glen Flanagan "came out of his boxing retirement to battle his brother, Del, in the wee hours of the morning in a bar, a taxicab and on the public streets of Minneapolis" (*St. Paul Pioneer Press*, May 8, 1957, p. 3). In reality, the event was somewhat more serious than that, involving, among other things, the assault of a police officer. This, along with Del's past record of brushes with the law, resulted in the workhouse sentence (*St. Paul Pioneer Dispatch*, May 8, 1957, p. 1).
29. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, June 7, 1957, p. 16; June 13, 1957, p. 23; May 9, 1957, p. 1.
30. *St. Paul Sunday Pioneer Press*, July 21, 1957, p. 1 (Sports Section); *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, July 26, 1957, p. 14.
31. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, August 21, 1957, p. 16; *St. Paul Sunday Pioneer Press*, August 25, 1957, p. 1 (Sports Section); *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, October 3, 1957, p. 26.
32. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, March 18, 1958, p. 14; April 11, 1958, p. 14; November 21, 1958, p. 16. Akins, the champion, was no stranger to Del. They had competed against each other in the amateurs, and Akins had actually served as Del's sparring partner for several of his fights in the early 1950s (see *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, January 15, 1951, p. 27). In 1958, however, he was on a hot streak, having knocked out five straight opponents, including Vince Martinez, for the title the previous June.
33. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, February 4, 1959, p. 14; February 5, 1959, p. 20.
34. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, June 17, 1959, p. 16.
35. *St. Paul Sunday Pioneer Press*, January 15, 1961, p. 4 (Sports Section); *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, April 28, 1962, p. 14.
36. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, January 30, 1964, p. 22.
37. Interview with Del Flanagan, July 3, 1985; Glen's principal promotion was the Brian Kelly-Pat O'Connor fight in St. Paul on May 16, 1972 (*St. Paul Pioneer Press*, May 17, 1972, p. 19).
38. *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, January 30, 1979, p. 15; interview with Del Flanagan, July 3, 1985.

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Mose Zimmerman with wide-backed mare. See pages 13-15.



Glen Flanagan.  
See pages 16-22.



Glen Flanagan with Jackie Graves.



Bulwer Junction depot, New Brighton.  
See pages 3-12.

The Gibbs Farm Museum, owned by the Ramsey County Historical Society, at Cleveland and Larpenteur in Falcon Heights.



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