

Dave Stoop :

Developed his boxing skills early

By John Hartsock

Dave Stoop brought Penn State University its first National Collegiate Athletic Association boxing title in 1932, but he got his indoctrination into the sport many years earlier.

During his schoolboy days at Garfield and Emerson Elementary, Roosevelt Junior School, and Altoona High School, the small but wiry Stoop was never one to back down from a fight.

And according to his younger brother, Joe, Dave Stoop was involved in many scraps -- all out of necessity.

"Dave was never a bully, and he always tried to avoid a fight if he could, but there were many times, because of his size, that kids used to pick on him at school, and he had to fight back," said Joe Stoop, 75, who retired as an employee with the United States government in 1977 and now resides in Hollidaysburg.

"He was forced to fight back, and that was one reason that he learned how to fight. He learned to fight in the alleys around Altoona. If there was a ruckus in our neighborhood, there was a good chance that Dave was involved in a fight with a kid twice his size," Joe laughed.

Yet there are two sides to Dave Stoop, 82, who is suffering with Alzheimer's Disease and has been confined to the Garvey Manor since 1987.

"He was feisty, but he was not the type of fellow who would go out looking for arguments," Joe Stoop said. "He wasn't a boisterous fellow. He was the congenial type."

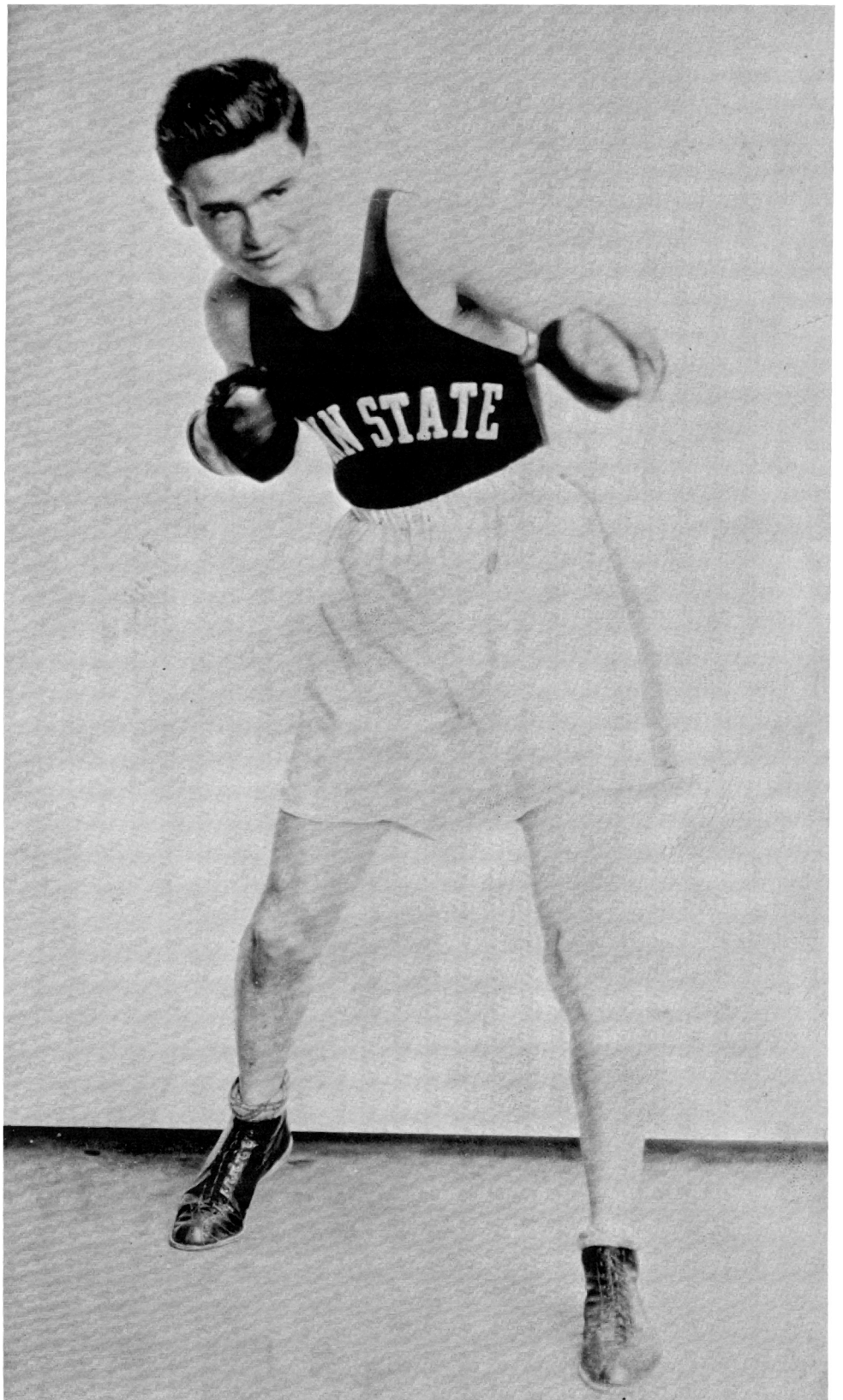
Nonetheless, Dave Stoop was all business in the boxing ring, 30-3-2 career record, two Eastern Intercollegiate Championships, and NCAA title would indicate.

"He had two good points," Joe Stoop said. "First, he was a good boxer, and he had the ability to avoid (opponents') punches. And second, when he hit, he hit hard. He could go in there and fight."

Accounts in the Altoona Mirror of Dave Stoop's three-round decision over Edward Marmel of Columbus University for the 118-pound, NCAA bantamweight championship on Saturday, April 9, 1932 in Penn State's Rec Hall, reflected Stoop's tenacity and aggressiveness in the ring.

According to the account, Stoop carried the first round with an impressive combination of rights and lefts, and "flooded Marmel for an eight-count with a right to the jaw in the third round, the decision went to Stoop.

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Dave was Penn State's first NCAA boxing champion.

The victory earned Stoop the right to try out for the United States Olympic team that July in San Francisco, but his bid for that accomplishment fell short.

Among the fighters who accompanied Stoop to California were Penn State teammate Al Lewis, who captured the 147-pound NCAA title in 1932. Others were Temple's D'Allessandro. Syracuse's Al Wertheimer, the University of Virginia's Goldstein, Loyola's Flynn, new Hampshire's Wageman, and Tulane's Hill.

Wertheimer was responsible for two of Stoop's three career losses, and was regarded by Stoop as the toughest opponent that he faced.

All three of Stoop's college losses came when he was fighting in the 125-pound featherweight class during his sophomore and junior seasons. Stoop was in his natural element in the bantamweight, or 115-pound, class, where he was undefeated throughout his college years.

But during Stoop's first two seasons, legendary Penn State boxing coach Leo Houck had a stalwart 115-pounder in Jules Epstein, and a vacancy at 125 -- where Epstein couldn't make weight. Houck felt that the scrappy, feisty Stoop had what it took to compete in the higher weight class.

Stoop didn't totally disprove the coach's theory, scoring a pair of knockouts in both his sophomore and junior seasons. His only losses in his sophomore year, however, were at the heavier weight class, to Syracuse's Wertheimer and Navy's Fitzgerald. He also lost the Eastern Intercollegiate title match to Wertheimer while fighting at 125 pounds in his junior year.

"Lighter fighters can't fight heavier men," Joe Stoop said. "Ten pounds is a lot to give up, and when they moved Dave up like that, he was fighting out of his class. He was able to survive because of his skill, but where he normally belonged was the 115-pound class, as he showed by his senior year performances."

With Epstein graduated, Dave Stoop settled into the 115-pound spot in his senior year, and logged a 7-0 record with three knockouts entering the NCAA tournament. He prefaced his championship verdict over Marmel with a semifinal-round decision over West Virginia's Puglia.

Dave Stoop, the son of Hyman and Anna Stoop, hails from a large family that includes brothers Joe, Samuel (who is 93 and now living in Arizona), and the late Jake Stoop, who died of cancer in 1958. All of Stoop's three sisters -- Rose, Molly, and Lee -- are

also deceased.

Stoop -- who was named to Houck's all-time Penn State boxing team in 1941 -- exhibited mental as well as physical toughness, working at a part-time job to finance his way through college during the Depression years and earning a degree in commerce and finance in 1936. He was a hard-nosed competitor who fought without the luxuries that today's boxers enjoy.

The sport has changed in many other ways since then, of course. Megabucks salaries and closed-circuit television have reduced the accessibility that boxing fans enjoyed early in the century, when a mere flick of the radio switch would bring them within mind's eye of their favorite fight.

Dave Stoop graduated from Penn State in 1932, but continued to tutor young fighters in the art of boxing at gymnasiums throughout the Altoona area.

He began working at his father's Altoona Iron & Metal Company, taking time off to serve with the army in World War II. When Hyman Stoop died in 1948, Dave took over the business, and continued in that capacity until Alzheimer's Disease struck tragically in 1986.

Best Wishes

DAVE STOOP