

Boxing's Good Book

When you look at the whole body of what he did, it's tremendous

Director of IBRO Dan Cuoco

boxing

by don cogswell

In the January 10, 1942 edition of the west coast boxing weekly, *The Knockout*, Lester Bromberg wrote:

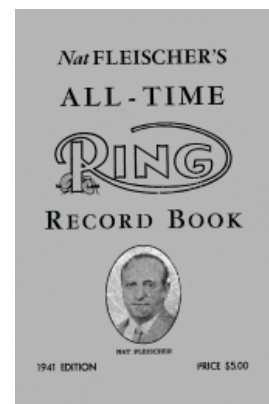
A very little man has finished a very big job- and the result is Nat Fleischer's All-Time Ring Record Book. The midget savant of sock is boxing's No. 1 historian and his paper-bound blue-covered 544-page volume represents months of work by the editor and a staff of seven.

The price is \$5 but this is definitely not a commercial plug, because of the total press run of 1500, only a comparative few remain to be sold.

The Ring Magazine editor wants this book to be a collector's item. To choke off any temptation to go into mass production, Fleischer has destroyed all plates of the book. Next year he may put out a smaller, cheaper book to cover only current fighters. But this limited first edition is his master work.

Ever since he started work on the book he was aware that it would be a sure loss, but Nat says: 'I did this for the writers. I know what it means to them.

Fleischer's initial press run was 1,000 copies, and as Bromberg noted, paper-bound. By late 1941 Fleischer's various publishing enterprises, anchored by *Ring Magazine*, were bereft of his initial partners and underwriters. Among Fleischer's early partners in Ring, Frank Coultry, secretary treasurer of Madison Square Garden, and I.C. Brenner of Golfer's Magazine, had dropped out within six months of the magazine's 1922 debut. Those who stayed aboard were Ike Dorgan and Tex Rickard.



courtesy Dan Cuoco

It's Out at Last!

NAT FLEISCHER'S RING RECORD BOOK

"The Encyclopedia of Boxing"—Almost 600 pages of historic Boxing data and Complete records from 1719 to 1941.

For a long while the editor hesitated at the infinite labor involved. Finally, urged by newspapermen and boxing devotees, seeing the need for such a record book, he decided to undertake the task—a most difficult and gigantic one.

Now Ready—

The private records of THE RING Magazine made available to the public, plus hundreds of additional records and data—

NAT FLEISCHER'S RING RECORD BOOK
Here are just a few of the unusual features included. Do YOU know:

- 1—The measurements of heavyweights from Sullivan to Louis?
- 2—Has a champion ever regained his title which once he had?
- 3—Boxing's big gates?
- 4—Who refereed heavyweight matches?
- 5—The longest fights on record; the shortest fights?
- 6—Joe Louis' earnings?
- 7—The record number of knock-downs?

That's only a sample of the rich store of data you'll find in

NAT FLEISCHER'S RING RECORD BOOK
It's more than a record book—it's an encyclopedia!

Adopted as the official guide by the National Boxing Association. The bible of boxing managers and promoters.

NAT FLEISCHER'S RING RECORD BOOK

No superfluous reading matter, no pictures, no advertisements. Just solid records and historic data.

GET IT NOW!

WERE SOH—
The demand has been so overwhelming that 1000 copies of the record book have been sold before the book was even off the press. To meet the demand we are printing 500 more. But increased cost of printing and paper and the fact that the book now has 500 pages instead of the original 300 printed, and has 500 additional records, makes it necessary for us to charge \$5.00. An effort can be accepted now for less than \$3.00.

Better get that order in now—Only 500 more printed—

Courtesy Harry Shaffer

Dorgan, who once managed Frank Moran, was the brother of Tad Dorgan, the writer and cartoonist. Ike would remain with Ring until his retirement in 1930. Rickard, preferring to remain the silent financier of the operation, continued in that capacity until his death in January 1929. Nat himself continued investing in Ring, working as sports editor of first the New York Press, and following the newspaper's merger, with the New York Sun Press. It wasn't until 1929 that Fleischer could afford to end his double duty of serving the Sun Press and building the Ring.

By 1940 Fleischer had steered Ring Magazine, and a number of his own boxing tracts, into a self-sufficient publishing house. Fiscal prudence and business promotion would remain bedrock characteristics of Fleischer's career. The 1,000 copy, frugally paper-bound first editions, and the hokum of the destroyed plates, are typical of his self-made-man style of ownership. They would be present, and effective, throughout Fleischer's lengthy boxing publishing career. A promotional misstep on the magnitude of the record book expenditure- because of its cost Fleischer was selling it for \$5 when weekly wages were under 40 bucks and competing annuals were going for a quarter- could easily bring his house down.

Following the enthusiastic response to the first thousand, a relieved Fleischer printed another 500 copies. That brought the total to Bromberg's 1,500. But Fleischer wasn't done.

The New York Writers' Association annual banquet featured a giveaway to each member in attendance. It was decided 1942's gift would be Fleischer's brand new record book. After a bit of coy posing; Blomberg reported that Fleischer, "fought like a bull-dogged steer to balk the suggestion", the deal was done. Nat printed a special, 150 copy edition, now cloth-bound, with NYWA embossed on the cover.

Fleischer never underestimated the power of the press, New York's in particular, to boost his publications. Not surprising coming from an old newspaper man. Fleischer was 34 years of age when Ring was launched in 1922. He was 53 for the first record book in '41 and he knew what promotional buttons he would most like to push.

Harry Shaffer, historian and dean of boxing memorabilia, commenting on the promotional efforts behind the start of *Ring Magazine*, illustrated the press access made possible having Tex Rickard and Madison Square Garden in Fleischer's corner.

A little pamphlet was put together with a dozen contributions from the city's top sports writers, among them Damon Runyon, Charlie Mathison, Hype Igoe and George Sand. They showed the pamphlet around and got an encouraging response (not surprisingly with that stellar card) for their proposed magazine.

Nineteen years later, pushing his first record book, Fleischer hadn't forgotten a thing. Doc Almy wistfully wrote in his *Ring* column:

The custom (of giving away for free record books by promoters) has been dropped. Mike Jacobs (Tex Rickard's successor) is the lone promoter in the world who has stuck it out- the gift-handing of copies of the Fleischer book to leading sports writers, from the time it first appeared on the market.

Mike Jacobs was no stranger to working both ends of boxing's print establishment. To Fleischer, and those writers with a complimentary record book at hand, it was just another day at the Beach.



Courtesy Harry Shaffer

Fleischer took great pains to make the contents of his record book radio and writer friendly. He included air-time and column-filling anecdotes and tidbits under a variety of titles: Facts Worth Knowing, Measurements of Heavyweights and Giants of the Roped Square, Joe Louis' Ring Earnings, Statistics of Johnson/Jeffries, Ages of Which Heavyweight Titles Were Won, Boxing's Big Gates and Odds On Heavyweight Championship Fights. All marvelous stuff to read and which were used immediately and repeatedly by ringside radio and the working press. Nat would be explicit in its use in subsequent volumes while adding further embellishments.

The author has included new data of tremendous interest to all boxing followers *and of great value to those who write about boxing and radio commentators.*

Special dope on knockouts, a complete list of double knockouts, a compilation of especially quick knockouts and double knockdowns, all help to make this edition (in this case, the 1943) more colorful, *more authentic*, more complete.

Mining boxing's midway was a favorite promotional tool of Fleischer's, as ubiquitous as his self-authenticating Barnum-like bombast.

Nat Fleischer's record books were protected by copyright under his own name, *Nat Fleischer*, not *Ring Magazine* or Ring publications. This was the case with the other publications of Fleischer's which preceded the record books, such as the *Black Dynamite* series, although that work and others were dually promoted as part of the Ring Athletic Library, all of which were numbered. (The first volume of *Black Dynamite* was #14.) Copyright generally falls under a publishing house's purview, not an author's. The sole-proprietor copyright choice of Fleischer's was consistent with the personal footprint he stamped on all of the work that flowed from the offices of Ring.

Fleischer freely mixed and matched aspects of his various publishing departments in his attempt to maximize their cross-promotional potential. The early editions of the record book feature the Ring logo on its cover while proclaiming it to be Fleischer's book. A further refinement several editions later, while retaining the ever-present Fleischer authorship, altered the original title from the *All-Time Ring Record Book* to *The Ring Record Book*, a revealing bit of misdirection which served to tighten the promotional embrace of the record book and the magazine.

In time, as the success, acceptance and annual sales of the record books became assured, Fleischer tightened his grip on its ownership. In the 1946 edition, five years into the series, he issued the following warning:

The publisher wishes to make it clear that this series of All-Time Ring Record Books must not be pirated. All the data contained in the five editions are the exclusive results of his labors, and his property.

In the 1950 edition he extended his warning to once eagerly-courted radio.

No material in this book may be used in radio programs or otherwise without permission.

By 1952 the warning included pernicious television.

It is published for the private use, instruction and entertainment of the reader and must not be used for radio and television programs without the written permission from the publisher.

This accompanied Fleischer's increasingly strident claim of statistical ownership of boxing results.

The compiler and publisher of this book, Nat Fleischer, editor and publisher of the Ring Magazine, the world's foremost publication devoted to boxing, warns that he is prepared to adopt a sterner policy toward those who deliberately pirate the material herein published, compiled exclusively by himself and his staff.

The results of public sporting contests have never been subject to copyright. They are in the public domain. That includes baseball scores, horse racing results and the outcome of boxing matches. Compiling of records, massaging the data; the efforts put into those types of presentation can be copyrighted. In that respect, *if the compiling of the records found in the books were the work of Fleischer*, then he had a case for ownership. The work, that is, of Nat and his unnamed staff.

In Lester Bromberg's piece introducing his readers to the new record book, Bromberg mentions that staff.

The midget savant of sock is boxing's No. 1 historian and his paper-bound blue-covered 544-page volume represents months of work by the editor and a staff of seven.

The maiden 1941 record book is the one time those seven are acknowledged by Fleischer.

The Editor acknowledges his appreciation to his staff- Joan Phillips Fleischer, Alice Sloan, William Schulkin, Meyer Ackerman, Eddie Borden, George T. Pardy and Daniel M. Daniel for their aid.

Joan Fleischer was Nat's daughter, whom he would live with for many years following the early death of his wife. Her husband would be Nat Loubet. Alice Sloan may have been Nat's personal secretary. In his typical Victorian style, Fleischer lists the ladies first. Eddie Borden, George Pardy and Daniel M. Daniel were all longtime boxing writers, with Borden holding down a *Ring* column, *A Corner in the Fistic Market*, for years and Daniel going back to the *Ring's* founding in 1922. Meyer Ackerman was a younger *Ring* staffer and during the war became George Patton's public relations officer. Like his flamboyant boss, Ackerman would die in a postwar jeep traffic accident in Germany. That leaves Willie Schulkin, the first male listed in Fleischer's carefully arranged acknowledgments. Schulkin may have been listed first for a reason. In that there is a tale to tell.

Willie Schulkin, a New York guy, a New York character. Hank Kaplan knew Willie. Knew him well.

The Editor acknowledges his appreciation to his staff—Joan Phillips Fleischer, Alice Sloan, William Schulkin, Meyer Ackerman, Eddie Borden, George T. Pardy and Daniel M. Daniel for their aid.

Nat Fleischer's All-Time Ring Record Book

3

courtesy Dan Cuoco

The guy was a sweetheart of a guy, loved boxing. He went around the countryside, New England, around New York, New Jersey, catching the fights. He was a stringer. He used to write them up for Nat. You'll see his stuff in *Ring*, in the late 30s and early 40s.

Schulkin augmented his meager *Ring* earnings with his boxing acumen.

He was a gambler type, used to bet on fights. He'd bet two bucks on a fight, that was big money then. He would come away winning because he knew fighters, he knew all the managers. Like a poolroom shark, he'd go to New England and who the hell made the matches but his buddies down at Stillman's. So he'd go there and bet the locals. A sweetheart of a guy, a very mellow guy, a pussycat.

Although both were in New York, Hank didn't know Willie yet. He would meet him down in Miami where they had both migrated to.

I met him afterward, at Chris Dundee's early shows, 1958-59. We'd go to the fights together. He wasn't doing anything then, just driving a cab. He used to come to the fights with a friend that used to be stationed in Hawaii with him during the war.

We were very good friends, became very close.

One of those ringside conversations was about the first record book of Fleischer's.

What he told me, and he talked about it like it was yesterday, was that he went to Fleischer, and he said, "Look, Nat, I've got this idea. I want to put a big record book together".

Fleischer said, "Hold it, hold it. It's a good idea. Hold up and you can do it but let me do it with you".

"We'll do it together".

So what they did was to take the record books that existed at the time. Probably some Andrews, probably some Post, maybe George Winn. He had a record book for a couple three years, '37, '38, '39. I knew George Winn. He managed Vinny Vines and a few other fighters from upstate New York.



WILLIAM SCHULKIN

courtesy Hank Kaplan

A real gentleman, George Winn. These guys (at Ring) used these record books by tearing the pages out, the front and the back. He'd get two of each, the damn things cost only a dime in those days. He pasted them up and they put this record book together.

When the record book came out, Willie Schulkin got pride of place at the head of the line of male contributors, after the women, at the bottom of the page, under Fleischer's acknowledgments. That was it. On the cover, in the preface, under the copyright, it was all Nat Fleischer's.

By the time of the '43 record book, Willie was in the service. I don't think he had anything more to do with it. Fleischer really picked up after that first one. "Don't pirate these records, they all belong to me". Fleischer was the biggest pirate in history. Somehow Willie didn't get credit as being an editor. Whether Fleischer bought these guys out or what, I don't know. They were sarcastic about it when they told me.

Schulkin's boxing record experience that preceded his Fleischer collaboration pointed him towards the big record book, the ultimate conclusion to both the work Willie had been doing and the long line of boxing record books that stretched back to 1895. That was the year that Nelse Innes, of the Boston Herald, and Dan Saunders, of the Boston Globe, sports editor and writer respectively, published the first record book that approximated its modern form. Doc Almy wrote in his *Around the Ring* column:

From Boston these annual booklets, known as *Innes' Ring Records*, were sent out to all parts of the country and world where the sport was known. When death came to Innes the annual passed out with him. In 1903, Tom Andrews of Milwaukee put his shoulder to the wheel and from the foregoing date until a few years ago, his annual record book was the fistic Bible for sports writers and followers everywhere.

Tom did not have the field entirely to himself as along in 1907 the *Police Gazette* swung back into action and from that period until 1918- when a disastrous fire destroyed its New York quarters and invaluable contents- it continued to click. Andrews countered with his two large volumes, *The Ring Battles of Centuries*, in which he set forth fistic records dating from Jem Figg of England in 1719, to the modern Queensberry period of 1924- a tremendous task. In 1922, four years after the Gazette record book ceased to be, the Everlast Company, New York, came into the field, and continued in it until 1936. By that time the Post Sports Record Company, New York, had come to the fore- a rival until 1936- when it stepped aside for the *Boxing News Record* to function, which it did up to its 1939 printing.

The Everlast Boxing Record, an annual record book, was published up to 1935 by the Everlast Sports Publishing Company. The 1936 edition was edited by George Winn, under the Everlast title, but was now published by the Boxing News Inc. *The Boxing News* was George Winn's monthly boxing magazine. Willie Schulkin was a regular contributor.

By 1939 the Everlast annual was kaput. Eddie Borden had published and edited the 1937 edition, Maurice Waxman the 1938. George Winn published instead the *Boxing News Record*. The contents of Winn's book was the Ring Records of Active Boxers, a Managers Directory, Articles and Comments by Leading Sportswriters, Ring Ratings, The New York State Boxing Rules and Regulations and Wrestling Ratings.



Chicago boxing historian JJ Johnston places Winn's work near the top.

George Winn put out the *Boxing News Record*, George Winn of the *Boxing News*. It came out from '37 to '39. Beautiful, looks like Everlast, but it was on even better paper. They had a lot of great authors contributing. It was even better than Everlast.



PETER VACCARE

courtesy Hank Kaplan

Enter Peter Vaccare, another New York character. Another guy nuts about doing record books.

Vaccare called himself the Ringside Sports Weekly. He's the guy that used to do the little programs for the local club shows. In the inside front cover, Vaccare says, 'Sold exclusively at the following clubs: NY Coliseum, Broadway Arena, Grotto Auditorium, Scranton Armory, Columbia Park, Queensboro Arena, Dexter Park, Coney Island Velodrome, Pelton Stadium and many other Clubs along the Eastern Coast'. So he used to go around and sell these little programs. Make them up and sell them for a dime apiece. And he had another little business where he'd sell photographs. 'Photos. Order today. Send money order, check or cash.' And he had all the photos listed. 'Six for \$2'. 8x10 glossy prints. (Hank Kaplan)

Peter Vaccare and Willie Schulkin decided together to put out a boxing record book. It would be called the *Ringside Boxing Record of 1940*. Published by Peter Vaccare, 1587 Broadway, NY.

An opening page, To Our Readers, states its purpose:

The *Ringside Record Book* is the only book informing the public of the amount of bouts, results, and rounds, of boxers actively engaged today. And we regret to state that because of the conflict raging across the pond, we have been unable to gather data on foreign pugilists and thereby must omit

their records.

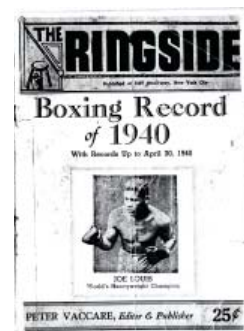
Each individual record has been carefully checked and verified and our success depends on the accuracy in which this list was compiled. We sincerely hope that our conscientious efforts will meet with your approval.

The *Ringside Record Book of 1940* consists of boxers' records of 1939 and up to April 30, 1940. For record of former years, refer to previous record books. The publishers will be glad to furnish information on individual cases upon receipt of self-addressed stamped envelopes.

Peter Vaccare, Editor

Hank Kaplan described the layout:

It's about 6" high and about 5" wide. With Joe Louis' picture on the red and black front cover. Index in the back. 80 pages. The last few pages is a listing of boxing managers and their stables and addresses. In some cases phone numbers. Managers' Listings he calls it. Begins on page 75. So actually he has 74 pages of records. Up front, apparently Peter Vaccare was the editor. I knew him. The opening page is divided into two pictures. One is Peter Vaccare and the other is Willie Schulkin, 'who has been an invaluable help in compiling the records for this book'. In other words, Willie probably did it all and Peter was the business guy.



courtesy Hank Kaplan

There is a little editorial. They have a story in there, on page 4, by Freddie Eisenstadt.

Benny Leonard did a story on the next page, then it goes into the records. They're not alphabetical. They're in two columns. You have to use the index. Irish Eddy Dunne's record is typical. It shows all of 1939 and the beginning of 1941. No other information on his record. The back they sold to Mike Jacobs, who put his picture on it.

HEAVYWEIGHTS - RINGSIDE BOXING RECORD



KNOX, BUDDY—193
DAYTON, OHIO

1939			
1-4	Yg. Harry White	Chico	W 1F
1-12	Clara Brown	MEX	W 1F
2-10	Al McCoy	How	L 10
3-2	Nathan Mann	MEX	L 10
4-18	George Pitch	N Haven	L 10
5-8	George Pitch	Indy, O.	W 10
6-12	Sam Swick	Cal. St. Kn.	L
7-2	Larry Hansen	Indy, O.	Kn. 2
1-24	Al McCoy	Newark	W 1F
2-1	Ray Lester	Dayton	W 1F
8-21	Ray Lester	Newark	W 1F
20	Dave Clark	Indy	L 10
9-18	Frankie Polonski	N Haven	W 10
10-4	Dave Clark	Dayton	W 10
11-4	Paul Pinner	Clare	Kn. 2
12-1	Willie Muldane	Clare	W 10
13	Henry Cooper	Newark	L 10
1940			
1-16	Dan Merrill	CVine	W 8
1-29	Henry Wacker	Chi	W 10
2-29	Jorge Drexler	Clare	W 10
3-18	Arne Anderson	St Paul	W 10
4-27	Bob Dow	Clare	Kn. 8
4-18	Tom Minton	Miami	D 28
1-8	Henry Cooper	Clare	W 10

Typical Entry, courtesy Hank Kaplan

He sold it around New York, or wherever else he could, for a quarter. He put in all the fighters he could find. Little Dado is in there, Little Poncho. He kept his own records. Maybe he depended on managers sending him records. If they were right or wrong, he didn't give a damn, they were records. On every page he would throw in a little shot, photos. Maybe the managers paid for that. What I'm pretty sure is that Willie put it together and Vaccare bankrolled it and incorporated it in his Ringside Sports Weekly business.

Boxing was awash with annual record books and flush with the guys who knew how to make them. The time was ripe for something more comprehensive. Willie Schulkin was set to go. Working from that milieu, Willie got in touch with the only boxing entity with the financial means to publish it, Nat Fleischer.

Let's do a big record book.

And as Fleischer said:



courtesy Hank Kaplan

Hold it, hold it. It's a good idea. Hold up and you can do it but let me do it with you.

We'll do it together.

The rest they say, is history. After the ladies, and before the gents.

I get butterflies in my belly when I think of Willie. I would say he was pretty young when he died. In those days I had a wife, a couple of young kids, a home, I had a job. Who the hell could keep track of these guys. I couldn't do it. I have his personal card. It says, 'Central Taxi Service, Reasonable Rates to the Airport', and this was in the days when they didn't have the first three numbers, "JE 1-3411, the best in transportation". On the back he gave me his address: 1050 6th Street, Miami Beach. (Hank Kaplan)

Fleischer went on to publish the Ring record books every year, without a break, until his death in 1972. *That was his major contribution to boxing record keeping.* Staying the course, despite the errors, the voluntary omissions, the hucksterism and his habitual hubris.

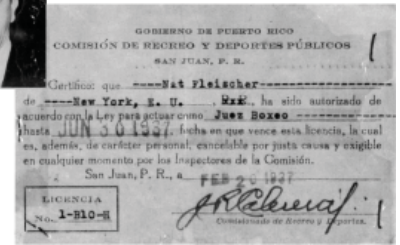
He was a businessman, alright. His ratings, for example. If his market reached out to Argentina, if he was sending them 1500 magazines, he's make sure he had an Argentine in the ratings. Stories I heard about Fleischer was that he was a pretty cocky guy. At times these pseudo-racketeers that came up to his office and told him they wanted so-and-so rated, or on the cover, he'd throw them out. I don't know if that was mythology or true or what the hell it was. He was a politician. After a while he did well on these trips. He'd be invited to referee a fight on one of the islands, or be a guest, and he'd make sure he'd send his magazine as well. He built quite an estate for himself. He did all those little books. I think as a writer he was a hack. But he was the first guy, and the only guy, for years and years. He had the respect even of the columnists, from all over the country. (Hank Kaplan)

I asked Hank if he had met Fleischer.

I met him numerous times. When I was a kid I thought he was a god. I was a very timid sort of a kid, as far as older people were concerned. I had a lot of respect for older people and people with reputations. So when I met him, I was probably trembling. I was in such awe of the guy I was afraid to talk. I think I did manage to say, "Mr. Fleischer, did so and so..." Asked him a little bit of a question. I was in his company many times because I would sneak into that Ring magazine office repeatedly. I thought he was a guy that was short with people but I considered maybe he was a very busy man. But at the same time he used to answer mail. If you wrote to him he'd take your letter, put it in his typewriter, he'd type out a little answer for you, a short answer, and send it back. I may have been the recipient of that as well because I used to write occasionally. Maybe three or four times in my life I wrote to various newspapers. I'd read something and have something to say or something to add. I lost those fears when I could do it through the mails, when I didn't have to face somebody. Later on I lost that, thank goodness. Even in the sixties when I met Fleischer I was in awe of the guy.



Fleischer's June 1937 boxing official's license for Puerto Rico.
Courtesy JJ Johnston



Philadelphia's longtime premier promoter, Russell Peltz, as a youthful boxing enthusiast, was the recipient of Ring's generous open door policy, a policy that hadn't changed since Hank's visit.

My mother was going to New York to go shopping. This was when the Garden was on Eighth Avenue and the Ring magazine was on the second floor. She took me there and dropped me off for the day. She went shopping and picked me up when she was done. I was 14 years old. I just walked around. It was a small office. Nobody bothered me. I sat there and read stuff. I was probably there five hours. I probably could have stayed five or six days. Fleischer was editing a Ring record book and I remember him yelling at people. They were doing paste-ups.

They had a little bookstore inside, like a little library with all the books they sold. I had just finished reading Barney Nagler's *Jim Norris and the Decline of Boxing* and I went up to Fleischer and asked, "are all the things in this book true?"

He said, "there's some truth to some of them".

That was the extent of my conversation, in my lifetime, with Nat Fleischer. For a kid who was fascinated by boxing, it was like heaven.

Hap Navarro, legendary matchmaker, used the Ring record books in his work at the Hollywood Legion Stadium.

I did something that no other matchmaker did to my knowledge. I would sit there, when I had nothing to do, and just go through the damn thing. Go through it, go through it. Say I had a lightweight main event coming up in two weeks. Then I'd go all through the lightweights for the hell of it. If I heard of an upset I'd go to the Record Book and see what this guy's done before. What Nat did was just tremendous.

Harry Shaffer weighed-in with telling points along the arc of Fleischer's work.

Fleischer made a lot of contributions to the sport but he was not the most accurate writer. For one thing he would never write anything derogatory about fighters. He just skipped over all that. I think he was very Victorian. A Victorian in the 20th century.

With backers like the greatest promoter of his time, Tex Rickard, and an office located in the premier venue for boxing, Madison Square Garden, Fleischer was not in an environment conducive to writing swing-from-the-heels exposés. Those were definitely outside the business plan.

I read Fleischer's book about Young Griffo and if you look at Griffo's ring record, there's a period of time missing with no explanation. He was in jail for sodomizing a child. He never mentions it at all. I just happened upon a small article in *Police News* about Young Griffo and his trial. It was real vague what it was about. So I started reading backwards and forwards and finally figured out that he had done this with some young guy about 12 years old. They even named the boy. Griffo ended up in jail for a few months. Fleischer made no mention of that. It's like a skip in a record. He had a tendency to do that with everyone he wrote about. I have a couple of unfinished manuscripts of Fleischer's and one of them is on Robert Fitzsimmons. I started reading it and I thought this sounds really familiar. It had whole passages lifted out of the book *Ruby Robert*. (Harry Shaffer)

In the Foreword to Fleischer's first record book, Nat writes:

In making up this record book, I had at my command the most extensive library, set of old manuscripts and lists of performances available anywhere in the world. Including the only existing complete files of the *Police Gazette*, as well as *Police News and Illustrated Record*, this vast accumulation of data comprises the reference library of *The Ring Magazine*.

When the *Police Gazette* went bankrupt, Fleischer bought it.

Fleischer bought the contents and the rights, which I think were very vague. That confused a lot of issues, including the photo library. Things became

blended together. (Shaffer)

That's not to say Nat didn't have the goods. When he wasn't inventing awards, he was collecting boxing's most prestigious trophies whenever the opportunity arose, often given to him by aging members of boxing's fraternity. For decades Ring's collection was boxing's de-facto Hall of Fame. After Fleischer's death, with the exception of his extensive home library, the collection was all but looted.

He had an incredible collection of material. The collection which he put together was remarkable and it is a terrible shame the way it was handled. There is some material (in the current Ring offices) but very little. Ring is now part of a larger syndicate. Someone told me they actually have an office in the basement of a building in Pennsylvania. Mainly what they have is an extensive photo file. There are some pieces of memorabilia left but very little. There were a number of organizations that essentially preceded IBRO (the International Boxing Research Organization). In one of them was an article by a member who took his family to the Ring museum. This is when Bert Sugar was there. Getting on a freight elevator and going to this room and the things were all over the floor, broken glass, and people walking on them. It was just trashed. That's when it fell apart. During a time when Dave Debusschere and other people owned it and Sugar was hired to manage it. When Stanley Weston acquired it upwards of 60% of it was gone. Lots of belts and things that just never surfaced anywhere in any inventory that I ever saw. I have pictures of things I've never seen anywhere else. After Debusschere and those people defaulted, Nat Loubet, who had sold it to them intact, had to come back. Not long after that the scandal broke, with Johnny Ort and Don King padding the record books. When Loubet found out he was humiliated but he had nothing to do with it. The magazine had lost its credibility. What had started out as the Hall of Fame museum was gone, trashed, it was just a mess. (Harry Shaffer)

Nat Fleischer worked practically to the end of his life. It hardly needs saying that it was all for the good he didn't end up separated from the Ring, due to failing health, forced to witness the horrors inflicted on his life-long enterprise at the hands of small men.

When Nat Fleischer died, that was the end of boxing as an organized sport. Fleischer is what held it together. Boxing would have never been what it was. They talk about having a commissioner for boxing. That's really what he was. He was the one they all went to. He was an honest broker, a situation which boxing has never had again. (Shaffer)

Nat Fleischer was a man who held on to his creation with the tenacity of a great champion defending his title. Everything that entity known generically as the Ring produced had the Fleischer persona stamped on it, from the record books and their permutations over time, to the string of often outrageously inaccurate and often purloined specialty books he authored, to the monthly Bible of Boxing, the formidable *Ring Magazine*, which Harry Shaffer rightly calls *the depository for all the history of boxing in this country*.

Russell Peltz concurs.

I have a complete set of the *Ring Magazine* bound. I don't think there's a dozen in the world.

And on boxing's good book?

I have three complete collections of the record book. You hate to give them up. I have a house in Philly with a collection. A collection in my office. I have a collection in my house in Atlantic City. Problem is, I just bought a house in Florida. I may have to buy a fourth set. I can't have a house without them.

In a sport dominated by free agents, self-promoters, entrepreneurs, and the most individualized contests of skill in all of sports, Fleischer, the self-made man, the invented construct, Bromberg's midget savant of sock, stood on ground of his choosing, a place in which boxing could clinch when it was about to fall. It wouldn't be the same without him.

Nat Fleischer had no corporate veil to hide behind and shield his humanity.

As Russell Peltz said when discussing Fleischer's shortcomings, "Listen, he was a *man*".

A perfect fit for the sweet science.

The 1942 Ring Record Book. Was there one? There's a stubborn resistance around this question that I haven't resolved. Lester Bromberg announced the first, 1941 edition, in January 1942. The next edition was the New York Writers' Association limited edition, which Russell Peltz has told me contains a few pages of addendum, at the back. The 1942 edition was advertised in Ring magazine as being available on January 20 1943. It's touted to contain 500 hundred additional records not found in the 1941. These are especially hard to find.

Russell Peltz has one in his collection It has 1942 on the cover but not on the binding. It is an original cloth cover, the first. The NYBW edition was a cloth cover wrapped around the original paper cardstock cover. The 1942 reads "Records of current fighters in this issue are up to December 1941." There are again four pages of extra records, including a couple of corrections from the '41 book, at the back. These appear to be the same corrections found in the NYBW's edition. A typical correction is "In the record of Mike McTigue of October 1924 the opponent should be Frank Carpenter and not Frank Carpentier."

The confusion continues, however, in the next year's 1943 edition. Fleischer's opening statement in About This Book reads "This is the *second edition* of the All Time record of boxing performance and achievement." It should have been the third if '42 truly stood alone.

The 1942 receives special attention in Hartley's excellent boxing bibliography, *History of Boxing Books*. His in-house catalog system lists both the 1941 and 1942 editions as #700. The 1943 is #701, the 1944 #702, the '45 #703, etc. Only the '41 and the '42 are cobbled together as one entry. If, and it remains an open question, Fleischer, having lost a disgruntled Schulkin to the service, was a bit befuddled on compiling the second book, it would ring true for an editor not yet the *master* of boxing's records that he so often claimed to be.