

Hugh Fraser - Boxer in Vancouver

Hugh Fraser, 14 Gravir, being interviewed by Kenneth Maciver, Broadcaster from Back Tape Recording in Vancouver, Canada in 1986

"I was an apprentice in Glasgow with Alexander Stephen Shipyard, Linthouse, Glasgow. They promoted boxing matches between the apprentice boys in order to keep the boys physically fit, and therefore I was with the other boys boxing in fun. They had a boxing club and I was champion of the industries in Glasgow for all Glasgow. After that I was in the Cadets, and I was champion of the Cadets as well. After that I was in the Reserve peacetime branch of the Army and I was champion up to Scottish Command. After that there was an amateur championship. Scotland was divided into West and East, and I was the 1922-1923 lightweight amateur champion of Western Scotland. There were many boxing clubs in Glasgow at that time. I was naturally hardy. We trained a lot, did not smoke or drink, training in boxing clubs, skipping, sparring etc."

"How often?"

"Once or twice a week. When you work all day you may train too much. You fight often. On occasion I fought four times in the one day, and won all four."

"Did you go fast?"

"I was both fast and hard with heavy blows. That is why I always won knocking opponents out."

"You left Glasgow?"

"I left Glasgow in 1923 with the harvest excursion when a lot of the young men and women came over to Canada. As soon as I got to Toronto, Canada I began to box again. I went in the finals of the Canadian Championship against the Canadian Champion. He won on points. I was never knocked out in all the 10 years I was boxing in the ring. I paid my fare to Canada because I had plenty of money. I came over along with the emigrants in 1924. It cost £15. Because I paid my fare before I left I got £3 back when I landed in Quebec, therefore it only cost me £12. I did not have to go to the farms."

"What was the first work you had?"

"I worked on cars in Toronto at Willies Overland sending cars to France, until harvest excursion to Manitoba to Dollins. I went back to Winnipeg and started boxing in a higher classification than I was in Glasgow - welterweight. I won Manitoba Championship 1926 and 1927, boxing 3 times a day at times. Then I went to Vancouver - I was selected in Winnipeg to represent the Dominion Championship in 1926 in Vancouver. After that was over I went in two classes - middleweight class and welterweight class. I hurt my finger on my right hand and I lost two boxing matches. After that I turned professional because of lack of work and I felt boxing was the best way to earn my living. In that way I was earning enough to look after myself. For one fight I got 50 dollars for six 3-minute rounds (18minutes). I paid 8 dollars a week for room and board. I was fighting twice a week earning 100 dollars a week."

"Did you always win?"

"Of 100 fights I only lost 10 times. It's a sport. People look at sport for pastime."

"Were you training more as a professional than when you were as an amateur?"

"Well I was in good form because I never smoked or drank alcohol or done things that were bad for my body. Practising was needful to become hardy. I am thankful to the Lord that He saved me when I was 27 years old. He came into my heart and He gave me wisdom to hang up the gloves after that."

"The Bible says 'You shall love the Lord with all thine heart and all thy thoughts and your neighbour like yourself.'"

"Now when you love your neighbour you are not going to hit him and do damage to him. Some people think it is a sport but I say that although it is a sport you go in there to knock the other out and hurt him as much as possible."

"The Bible says, 'Commit your way to the Lord'."

"You started boxing at 17 years, now you're aged 27. That's 10 years boxing. Is it a time of your life that you think of often?"

"Yes, I think of it and thank God that He came into my heart and that He directed me on to a better path. Many of the boys who were boxing with me are now dead because they stayed in boxing too long. The body can only take so many blows before it breaks down. If they knew God they would not be boxing at all. I was a sparring partner to the junior lightweight champion of the World in Vancouver, Todd Morgan. He retired and later came back to boxing, and died very young at about 45. He could not keep up a conversation. I was heavier. He chose me because I was a good boxer."

"Can you remember any particular fight you had?"

"Up Britannia Mine there was a boxer who always knocked out his opponents and they brought me up to box him. He was so sure he was going to win as he always won, but I knocked him out in the 5th round, and they said he was not good in boxing after that."

"Is it the bouts you won that you remember and not the ones you lost?"

"Oh no, you sometimes lose on points. I nearly knocked out one of the boxers to whom I lost on points, and the people were amazed when the referee gave the other boxer the fight. I was doing it because that is what I was interested in, and I did not know or have knowledge of the Lord. When we don't know the Lord, we go in darkness. Yes, I made my livelihood out of it and it kept me in good shape. It was my way of life at that time."