

APPRECIATION

BETTY FRANCES THOME

My father is sitting at the breakfast table, his left hand raises by degrees a cup of coffee to his lips, his right hand firmly grips the most important part of his morning meal—the newspaper. Suddenly, the left hand goes sharply down, making the china cup click as it hits the saucer, the sports' page is enlightening this morning.

"By God, Galento's going to try it again! Tonight at 8:30!" My father issues this announcement as fervently as a revival preacher heralds the end of the world.

"Who is Galento?" says my mother very innocently from her side of the table. The sports' page is now dropped! My father's eyebrows make question marks, and he sits up, pompous and worldly-wise, saying in a deep voice,

"Now Beth, you know *who* Galento is!"

"No, I do *not*!" My naive mama insists.

"Well, how can you live and breathe without hearing about Galento? He's the guy Joe beat before! Now he's got the nerve to challenge the Brown Bomber again!"

My mama now sits up, alert and awake. She knows *who* "Joe" is.

"Well," she resigns herself, "when is the fight?"

"Tonight, 8:30," repeats Pop, adding "WIRE."

Fight night begins for father to be exact at 6 a. m., when he first sees the notice in the paper. He then leaves for work, whistling at 7 a. m.! The boys down at the office are more sympathetic toward fight night. They know who Galento is! They are ready to lay money on the line that Joe will "do" it in no less than three rounds this time!

At 6 p. m. my father returns, and before he removes his coat, he rattles through

the "Times" until he finds the radio page. Can't be too sure about a matter like this! Why if you didn't know the exact station, you might even miss the first two minutes of the first round! At 7:30 father begins to read carefully the "story." It seems that Joe has had a quiet week-end at camp, but his weight is down to 200. Tony is still drinking beer and boasting.

"Sometimes I wish we took a Chicago paper," my father mumbles from the green chair by the radio. "They cover "things" more completely."

"What "things?" my indulging Mama inquires.

"The *Fights*, Beth," my father replies, struggling to maintain his patience.

At 8:30 we are "silenced" or asked to take a walk around the block, maybe two blocks if Joe is slower tonight. WIRE is located, and my Father listens with great interest for the millionth time to the referee. This man, I have been told, always repeats in husky tones, "A clean fight, boys; shake hands, boys; into "yer" corners, boys; come out fightin', boys!"

The bell clangs and my father is no longer with us. He is seated like a king in a ringside seat at Madison Square Gardens. He can reach out and touch the ring if he wants to. My dad watches intently as Joe leads with a right or a left (or something) to the jaw. With one hand it is always harder. I can't remember which one in Joe's case. My father leans forward, his hands firmly planted on his knees. His eyes are peering up at the spot-lighted ring and the two dynamic figures who are pushing each other around. Joe slips to the canvas (but it is *always* an accident when dad tells it later). At this occurrence, my father starts to rise, but Joe gets up, and

dad sinks back. Well, they go on "lefting and righting," for some time. Often it is to the head, sometimes to the jaw or the nose. Eventually Galento totters, and my father smiles with smug satisfaction. You see, Joe has done it again!

"May I turn it off now," my mother ventures cautiously.

"Yes Beth. That was a damn good

fight. Joe used *real* strategy there in the second round. Can't keep him at the ropes long, can you?"

"No, I guess not," my mother sweetly agrees, wondering how the play was over WFBM.

"No, you *sure* can't," I pipe up enthusiastically. Pop is proud of me when I seem to bend "intellectually" toward prize fights.

MUNITIONS WORKER

a little lesson in love and virtue
a discourse between god and saint peter
pertaining to the soul of a munitions maker.

BOB HARRIS

pete. i have a problem sir
god. indeed
pete. it is a very puzzling one sir
god. so
pete. if it weren't i wouldn't have called you
god. yes
pete. i have here sir a soul
god. a soul? where
pete. here sir in my hand
god. ah yes i see it now
pete. it is a very small soul sir—a soul that
ordinarily i wouldn't pass but never-
theless it is a soul sir—a very puzzling
and to say the least annoying soul
god. and what may i ask seems to be the
trouble
pete. i don't know sir whether i should pass
him or not
god. how many times must i tell you peter
you have absolute control over these
matters.
pete. no wait sir! this is an unusual case
god. yes go on. what is it
pete. this soul is from a place called earth
god. yes go on
pete. he conducted a business there sir—a
er—well—a—uh—a not very reputable
business. he was—
god. yes yes go on. what was his business

peter
pete. he was a munitions maker
god. a what
pete. a munitions maker, sir. he made bul-
lets for guns
god. why
pete. so he could sell them
god. to whom
pete. to the czechoslovakians
god. and why did he sell them to the—why
did he sell them to them
pete. to kill the germans
god. oh and why should he want to kill the
germans
pete. he didn't the czechoslovakians did
god. very well peter. why did the—why
did they want to kill the germans
pete. because the germans were a very war-
like people
god. but who were selling the germans their
bullets
pete. the munitions maker sir
god. i see
pete. he wasn't showing any partiality. he
wasn't taking sides sir. he was neutral
wasn't he sir? what should i do
god. you take that soul over to the gutter
—the one that runs to hell peter
pete. yes sir and then—
god. peter drop him in