

c) Ray Arcel: 2 boxes - The illustrious life of Ray Arcel began in Terre Haute, Indiana, on August 30, 1899, where he was born to Russian-Jewish immigrants David and Rosa. His mother passed away when he was only four years old, prompting his father to move the family to New York City, first to the Lower East Side before settling in East Harlem. As a student at Stuyvesant High School, located in lower Manhattan, young Ray rode his bicycle every day the five miles each way, establishing early on the strict regiment of physical activity he would follow unflinchingly throughout his long life. It was at Stuyvesant where Ray's interests in becoming a physician shifted towards boxing after a few weekend amateur bouts.

As the self-proclaimed "only Jew in Harlem," Ray found himself getting into a lot of fights during his youth, which undoubtedly helped steer him in the direction of the squared circle. It was at Grupp's Gymnasium on 116th Street and 8th Avenue where Ray Arcel first trained to be a boxer and found himself under the tutelage of trainers Dai Dolling, an ex-bare-knuckle boxer, and Frank "Doc" Bagley. From Dolling, Arcel learned that each fighter was an individual who must be trained accordingly, while "Doc" schooled him on the fine art of being a cutman.

Ray Arcel began training boxers at Stillman's Gym, also known as "The University of Eighth Avenue," an establishment often referred to as both "The Center of the Boxing Universe" and "a dump just spitting distance from The Garden." It was here that he trained the first of his nineteen (19) world champions, flyweight Frankie Genaro, in 1923. Two years later, in 1925, Ray Arcel joined forces with fellow trainer Whitey Bernstein, forming one of the most successful training pairs in boxing history.

During the illustrious reign of Joe Louis, Ray Arcel was dubbed "The Meat Wagon" by cartoonist Willard Mullins because of his role in serving up and hauling away most of the almost monthly challengers to Louis' throne as Heavyweight Champion between December 16, 1940 (Al McCoy) and March 27, 1942 (Abe Simon). Despite their worthiness as challengers to Louis' crown, they were simply and glaringly overmatched in the ring ("As soon as the bell rang," Arcel once said, "they folded like tulips"), which led to their unfair dubbing as "The Bum of The Month" Club.

However, on September 27, 1950, Arcel had the last laugh when his pupil Ezzard Charles defeated Louis by decision after a 15-round bout for the World Heavyweight Championship. Perhaps the victory was not as sweet as it would have been ten years earlier, since Louis came out of retirement to attempt a comeback in light of the debts to the IRS that had plagued the Brown Bomber at the time, despite the obvious fact that he was no longer the same fighter that was world champion for eleven (11) years and ten (10) months, a record which still stands, exquisite and unrivaled. Incidentally, as well as poetically, Ray Arcel was in James J. Braddock ("The Cinderella Man")'s corner when Joe Louis first won the Heavyweight Title on June 22, 1937.

During the early 1950's, Ray Arcel's attentions became more focused on his newest role as matchmaker/promoter for Saturday Night Fights on the ABC Network. Unfortunately for Arcel, SNF was in direct competition with the newly-formed IBC (International Boxing Club) Fight Night, which was run by long-time promoter James Norris and Frankie Carbo, a New York mobster and soldier for the Lucchese crime family, as well as a gunman for the infamous Murder, Inc. Ray Arcel became a marked man as soon as SNF's existence started taking money out of their pockets. On September 19, 1953, while standing outside of his hotel in Boston, where most of his Saturday Night Fights took place, Ray Arcel was violently assaulted from behind with a lead pipe. The severe slugging resulted in a fractured cranium and several lacerations of the scalp. When questioned about why anyone would want to bring him harm, Ray maintained stoically that the attack on him was random and that he was without enemies. Not only was SNF off the air within a couple of months of the attack, despite its success, but Arcel paid \$13,000 for advertising in the IBC's magazine, despite being on bad terms with them.

In light of such filthy and despicable occurrences, Ray Arcel officially retired from boxing in 1954. For the next sixteen (16) years, he made his living as a successful purchasing agent for Meehanite Metal Corporation in New York City. However, his love of the sport to which he returned in 1970 never wavered during his absence. Having been asked to help Panamanian light welterweight Alfonso "Peppermint" Frazier train for the world title fight, Ray Arcel accepted and picked up right where he left off, as Frazier became his seventeenth world champion.

In 1972, while still in Panama, Arcel began to train Roberto Duran as a favor to longtime friend Carlos Erata; a favor because Duran's Panamanian trainers were unable to handle his volatile personality. In time, Arcel, along with friend Freddie Brown, gently molded Duran into one of the best and most cunning fighters in the history of boxing. Arcel was in Duran's corner when he beat Sugar Ray Leonard for the WBC Welterweight Championship, as well as during the infamous "No Mas!" rematch five months later. Despite the shock and hurt that Arcel felt in light of Duran's unexplained surrender, he was the only one to stand up for him when the purse from that match was called into question and threatened to be withheld. When asked why, Arcel simply responded, "Because he's my fighter."

Ray remained ringside for another couple of years in WBC Heavyweight Champion Larry Holmes' corner, alongside old friend and fellow trainer, Eddie Futch. His final match was the much-anticipated and hyped affair versus Gerry Cooney on June 11, 1982, in which Holmes defended his throne successfully with a 13th-round KO.

In the years following his second, and final, retirement, Ray Arcel had remained in the peripherals of the sport, lending it some of that class and professionalism that he had been known and admired for throughout the sixty-five (65) years of his life that he had graciously given to it.

Regarded and often called “The World’s Greatest Trainer,” as well as a “true trainer’s trainer,” Ray Arcel had handled over two-thousand (2,000) fighters and trained nineteen (19) world champions, from flyweight Frankie Genaro (1923) to heavyweight Larry Holmes in 1982. Furthermore, he has trained and seconded world champions in every weight division except featherweight. The complete list, in no particular order is: Ezzard Charles, Jim Braddock, Bob Olin, Tony Zale, Barney Ross, Billy Soose, Ceferino Garcia, Lou Brouillard, Teddy Yarosz, Freddie Steele, Jackie (Kid) Berg, Alfonso (Peppermint) Frazer, Abe Goldstein, Frankie Genaro, Sixto Escobar, Charley Phil Rosenberg, Roberto Duran, Larry Holmes and Benny Leonard.

Despite having life-long ties to an industry known for its double-dealings, dishonesty and disrespect towards its fighters, Ray Arcel maintained an air of truth, class and care throughout. As the late WC Heinz summed it up many years ago, “Ray Arcel worked with nineteen world champions, and as one of the most gentle, kind, and refined of men, was concerned more about the fighter as a person more than anyone else I ever knew. To him, I would have entrusted a son.” Ray Arcel away passed on March 7, 1994, and with him a wealth of compassion and knowledge lost to boxing and to the world.