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SHADOW BOXERS  
SWEAT, SACRIFICE & THE WILL TO SURVIVE IN AMERICAN BOXING GYMS

Photographs by Jim Lommasson

Foreword by Joe Frazier

Introduction by Bert Sugar

Essays by Katherine Dunn, Carlo Rotella, Kate Sekules, Lucius Shepard,  
Robert Anasi, Ralph Wiley, Loïc Wacquant, F. X. Toole, Joe Rein,  
Rene Denfeld, Timothy Taylor, and Mark Kram, Jr.

You probably don't know the boxers in this book. Few if any have danced under the lights of Madison Square Garden or Caesars Palace. They are the underdogs, the journeymen, the rank and file of the fight game who toil in busted-out boxing gyms far from the television cameras.

At one time there was a boxing gym in every sizable town in America. Today, they are found mostly in big cities, tucked away in shabby lofts and basements in the tough parts of town. Those that survive are the repositories of a centuries-old tradition of pugilistic knowledge that encompasses not only the physical mechanics of the sport but a code of respect and discipline that, at its best, transforms raw aggression into "sweet science."

In SHADOW BOXERS: SWEAT, SACRIFICE & THE WILL TO SURVIVE IN AMERICAN BOXING GYMS, photographer Jim Lommasson chronicles the tough – and surprisingly tender – world of America's boxing gyms and the community of fighters, trainers, and hangers-on who inhabit them. What he reveals to us is that boxing gyms are more than training facilities. They are sanctuaries in bad neighborhoods, lifelines for troubled kids, and shrines to the traditions of the sport.

In addition to the photographs are more than 20 essays by a team of veteran boxing writers: **Katherine Dunn**, best known for her novel GEEK LOVE, discusses the role of boxing gyms in tough urban communities and takes a poignant look at a kid's first boxing lesson. **Lucius Shepard**, author of VIATOR and A HANDBOOK OF AMERICAN PRAYER,

explains how the rhythms and rituals of the gym transform a young street fighter into a boxer. **F. X. Toole**, author of *ROPE BURNS*, a collection of short stories on which the movie *MILLION DOLLAR BABY* is based, reflects on the magic and drama of the boxing ring. **Kate Sekules**, a pioneering woman boxer and author of *THE BOXER'S HEART*, explores the subject of female aggression and reports on the travails of getting ahead in a male-dominated sport. **Carlo Rotella**, author of *CUT TIME: AN EDUCATION AT THE FIGHTS*, discusses how boxers learn their craft merely by watching other fighters. Sociologist **Loïc Wacquant**, author of *BODY & SOUL: NOTEBOOKS OF AN APPRENTICE BOXER*, summons the sounds and pungent smells of the gym and the sense of camaraderie and shared sacrifice that binds fighters together into a community. **Robert Anasi**, a former Golden Gloves boxer and author of *THE GLOVES*, writes about the personal demons that drove him to the gym. **Joe Rein**, a boxing writer and editor of *Fightworld.us*, advises the Smithsonian Institution to snatch up one of the few remaining old-fashioned gyms and put it in a museum before the last of these American institutions vanishes. The late **Ralph Wiley**, a senior writer for *SPORTS ILLUSTRATED* and an ESPN commentator before his death in 2004, recalls a visit to an Oakland gym, where he learned about the fundamentals of boxing from a couple of old-time trainers. And sportswriter **Mark Kram, Jr.**, talks to a promising young fighter about his thoughts and feelings before a bout at the legendary Blue Horizon in Philadelphia.

An introduction by acclaimed boxing writer **Bert Sugar** (who will be inducted into the Boxing Hall of Fame in June) traces the history of boxing gyms. In the foreword, former world heavyweight champion **Joe Frazier** recalls his early days in a scruffy PAL gym in Philadelphia and talks about the principles that guide his own gym today.

Jim Lommasson and Katherine Dunn were awarded the 2004 **Dorothea Lange–Paul Taylor Prize** by The Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University for their collaboration on this book.