



'Jewish Jolter' survived New Rochelle's Valentine's Day Massacre in 1977

By John Mitek

He was last known to be looking out at "The Jewish Jolter," "The Kasher Kisser" and the "The Basher Boy" for Ronnie Cohen, born Ron Coward, was a survivor of the gruesome St. Valentine's Day Massacre in New Rochelle in 1977.

Cohen, a native of New Rochelle, passed away last weekend in Florida following a stroke.

Feb. 14, 1977—150 St. Paul cultists and former mayor Frederick W. Coward stormed into Neptune Hotel Walk Meeting Co. (now a Home Depot in New Rochelle) with five guns on his body as he celebrated a day of industry that opened the course of two hours, sixty years ago.

In the process Coward shot to death two co-workers and a policeman, wounded five other people, then would proceed to kill himself.

Cohen, a co-employee of Coward's, was unusual worker prior to the incident by Cohen that if anything was going to happen for him to stay away. Cohen was the only Jew that Coward had come a liking to.

Cohen ran out of the building building for light. Cohen was yelled at by Coward during the Massacre as he ran and got out of the building. Cohen did not read that was opened.

In recounting the story in ten years after the incident, Cohen recalled himself just looking down and walking through bottles as a Nazi gave him an opportunity to see another day.

"Valentine's Day for the rest of Cohen's life would be a day that would often serve as a reminder as one that would be a day where a criminal madness existed to kill."

Cohen's manager Al "Boop" Gallitelli recalled taking Cohen under his wing in the 1950's. Gallitelli noted that Cohen had always been in street fights, but he was potential in the quick time that Cohen possessed.

"When he was 13, I told him to come to the gym and I would teach him how to box," said Gallitelli. "I wanted to teach him a real game with his hands."

Gallitelli's brother moment of his prized pupil was a fight on Feb. 14, 1946 where Cohen defeated Jimmy Arthur via TKO in the seventh round.

"After he was the 13 favorite and Ronnie knocked him out in the five round," Gallitelli recalled. "When he

got paid, I gave him his money and I never had a nickel out of it and he got to me that for those money from the purse at the end."

Cohen had a "heart of gold" according to David Julius of Julius's Casino in New Rochelle. Cohen had been an employee at the catering hall for 15 years up until a year ago. Julius is a former boxer remember Cohen as being a member of the family.

"We all know he was a boxer in his day but he had a heart of gold," said Julius. "I never met anyone like him in my whole life. He was a person who would do anything for you and never ever look for anything in return."

The evening hall was a place that Cohen called home and Julius said the entire staff missed him terribly. It was over a year ago that David and his brother John started to see Cohen differently. Cohen didn't have the ability to get the job done any longer, but the brothers decided to keep him on the payroll anyway.

"We knew that his coming here was an investment in time," said Julius. "This was his life for 21 years and this was a place he could call home."

Cohen had no known family members, although his family one was being researched by Gallitelli at this point in time trying to locate the rest of his. He was a bachelor his whole life.

"The Julius brothers looked after Cohen before it was decided that the best place for him would be a residence at a nursing home."

"We had to find a place for him to stay after he couldn't take care of himself anymore," said Julius. "He wasn't a sheltering being. There wasn't any other way. He just didn't like the restriction of his freedom. If we were to have let him stay in the apartment near the street, he wouldn't have survived."

Gallitelli had the opportunity to take Cohen out of the nursing home for a few hours one day about a year ago. The two had the opportunity to catch up on an era that once had forgotten, but for their boxing talks were influenced upon as if they had

just happened yesterday.

"Ronnie had a great heart because he always helped others before he helped himself," said Gallitelli, who had Cohen's remains flown back to New York.

Getting Cohen matches at Madison Square Garden was at first a difficulty for Gallitelli but as soon as he began to lose

an impressive 8-3-2 record, he got his first falling in the world's most famous arena. His defeated Donald Foreman on Oct. 25, 1959 in the first of three Garden fights. He would compile a record of 28-11-2 before hanging up the gloves in 1961.

"After I was here for good a fighter for me, I was being bothered by every promoter trying to get him to fight on their cards," said Gallitelli. "They would keep asking me if he was available and I'd have to check his calendar and see if he was in shape. I looked after him like he was a member of the family."

The reason pay for Gallitelli in making was getting Cohen to the gym the fastest from was trying to keep him away from the girls prior to the fight for 1961.

"He was a very likable young man that always had the ladies around him," said Gallitelli.

Gallitelli remembered Cohen's ring performance and being told to knock out his opponent. Cohen's fears might not have been put into every punch.

"He was so nice that I don't think he ever tried to hurt anyone," said Gallitelli. "He was just so nice, maybe he shouldn't have been a fighter."

Every time both fight, Gallitelli would often promise him ice cream for a week after a fight. It became common that after a fight, while other fighters and managers would visit the team, Cohen and Gallitelli would often go for a scoop or two.

"I told him I would give him all the ice cream he could eat for a week if he could put up a good fight," said Gallitelli. "Somebody would tell me that he'd knock his opponent out so that if that's all it took to have some ice cream."

Gallitelli is working donations to



Boxer Ronnie Cohen had a "heart of gold" according to friends. A heart that opened his the 20 years ago when one would have assumed he would have been gray in the 2007 St. Valentine's Day Massacre in New Rochelle.

give Cohen a proper burial with a headstone. His accounting donation is one of the Ronnie Cohen, 51 Brook Ave., New Rochelle, NY 10801 or by calling (914) 235-5830.

Cohen's last battle in the squared circle was in May 2000 when he along with other former fighters were introduced to a crowd at a pro wrestling show produced by Paul Scerifello held in New Rochelle High School.

As he shadow boxed inside of the ring alongside Galitelli, it was as if the two were back to business as one final time as all of the attention was focused on them.

Ronnie Cohen was a survivor of the St. Valentine's Day Massacre by being a likable kind of guy. He was like that in life and in the ring.