'The Black Shadow'

By E. B. (Ric) Roberts

To Modern America, of course, the fabulous multi-million dollar career of Muhammad Ali, two-times world heavyweight boxing champion, relegates all the never-to-be-equaled sagas of the "Golden Age" of sports, 1919-1930, to ragamuffin privation. By comparison, the previous most monied total gross by one sports figure (Jack Dempsey's reported $10,568,114) limps at least by the sum of $35-million shekals, behind Ali's incomparable accumulation.

Money, however, can never replace the vicissitudes and-or the dynamics of human involvement, as the creative sources of deathless literature. Indeed, the most compelling sports saga of the century centers in the therapeutic mission of the combustive Dempsey, as restorer of the self-esteem and confidence of the Caucasian millions, who idolized Jack as a symbol of lilywhite invincibility, 1919-1926; the legally disinherited black minority which boisterously celebrated Joe Louis' messianic 1935-1949 destruction of all reasonable presumptions or black hirtec inferiority.

Any time Louis and Dempsey appear together, in person or on a group photograph, as herewith presented in this page, the diverse impressions each provided for 'the Education of America,' the bluster and roar of their exciting and staggered careers, recall the thirty cataclysmic years between 1919 and 1949.

It was Dempsey's lot to prove to white America, beyond a reasonable doubt, that the misgivings of 1900-1915 (when blacks dominated U.S. boxing) were without basis. White masculine vanity was outraged because four black insuperables (featherweight king Joe Walcott, 1901-1906; lightweight champion Joe Gans (The Old Master), 1902-1908; heavyweight king Jack Johnson, 1908-1915, and uncrowned light-heavyweight marvel Sam Langford (the Boston Tarbaby) cast a 'black shadow' across the boxing world.

Convinced that those four black sons of the freedmen were really (Homo Pictor) or subman specimens, unable to think and reason at parity with their white (Homo Sapiens) betters, the America of seven decades past planned and plotted to rid the boxing world of such devastating primitives.

A plaintive hue and cry for a 'White Hope' conqueror of Jack Johnson amounted to a sustained anvil chorus, coast to coast! The original Walcott, a 5-1-145 acrobat, kayoed heavyweight Joe Choyinski in 7 rounds, but was held to a 20-round draw by Gans.

Johnson decisioned Langford in 1907, following a 5-count trip to the floor; would never fight Sam again! Nat Fleischer (late editor of Ring Magazine) rated Gans, Walcott and Johnson as all-time choices in their divisions.

Following kayo wins over Stanley Ketchel in 1909, and over the fabled Jim Jeffries at Reno, Nevada, in 1910, Johnson became the only 'lionized' black person in the annals of celebrity-studded Gotham cafe society.

A typical Police Gazette feature reported the following: 'The big moment at Marshall's Cafe, 53rd near 7th Avenue, or at the Hotel Navarre bar, was the arrival of Johnson and the automatic announcement, "Champagne for everyone."

That was how Johnson met, wooed, wowed, won and was wed to Mrs. Etta Duryear, blueblood wife of the millionaire manufacturer of the then popular Stevens-Duryear automobile. She gifted the 'champ' with a yellow $9,000 Stutz Bearcat and he reciprocated with a $3,000 'sparkler' on her tiny engagement finger.

First step in white fistic rehabilitation had already occurred at Havana, Cuba, April 5, 1915, when 37-year-old Johnson was the reported kayo victim of mastodonic Jess Willard, 33, of Kansas.

Dempsey's new manager, Jack Kearns, set sights on the title; taking his protegee in hand after John Lester Johnson, a black heavyweight, had fractured two of Dempsey's ribs in a 1916 bout of 10 rounds. However, it was staged under the Frawley Law of 1911-1919, that limited all N.Y. bouts to ND (no decision) status. Kearns set the pace, joined Rickard's 'No Negro' wheeze.

Scoring twelve one-round kayoes, including a one-punch demise of Carl Morris (the original 'White Hope'), in 11 seconds, Dempsey trained like a madman for the July 4, 1919, bid for Willard's crown.

The canny Kearns knew the 6-6-254 Willard was never in basic physical condition. Before the 19,650 Cleveland fans found seats for round-one, Willard had been floored seven times. Dempsey's punching power strangely waned in rounds two and three. Willard quit.

Newsmen went mad. The 15-year difference in age, favoring the Manassa Mauler, was ignored in the idolatrous ascent of the sun-tanned new king of fistiania. Poets and poems defined Dempsey, as the new 'Apotheosis of Fighting Fury,' There was not a single reigning black fistic

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Johnson, however, soon tired of Etta . . . time and again making the rounds with at least one daring, 'darling' pink (ofay) femme dangling on one of his bulging biceps. The nation gasped in shared outrage. The 61st U.S. Congress passed the Mann Act, in 1911, aimed at curbing white-slavery. Johnson became indicted, broke bond and escaped to Paris, France, and 1912-1914 exile.

The saturation point had been reached in white America, and a counter discharge of energy was bound to ensue. It was the career of Jack Dempsey that took root in the sharply increased disadvantages that lowered the boom on blacks, following World War I.

(Photo by Milton Williams)

World heavyweight champions, from left, Muhammed Ali, (2-25-64—3-8-71 and 10-30-74 to present); Floyd Patterson, (11-30-56—6-26-59), first man to regain his title (6-20-60—7-22-63); Jack Dempsey (7-4-19—9-23-26); Joe Louis (6-22-37—9-27-50); Joe Frazier (2-16-70—1-22-73); and Jersey Joe Walcott (7-18-51—9-23-52). Dates are when they won and lost the championship.

DAWN
Travel Notes

By Virginia Radcliffe

There are two excellent ways to enjoy Jamaica. One is to luxuriate in the hotels, shops, theatre and night life, beaches and other outdoor diversions.

The other way is to discover the traditional Jamaica through its village and country people. Fortunately, the second doesn't deprive one of the first: just go for a drive on a Saturday morning.

In small towns and villages all over the country, Saturday is Market Day (sometimes Friday is, too). The tradition has changed very little in three centuries. A typical Saturday market in a small Jamaican town is noisy, sometimes cacaphonous when an altercation between higglers (vendors) reaches an emotional pitch. It also offers a bewildering display of exotic merchandise.

A stranger isn't going to learn about the Jamaican people by paying one visit to a country street market, but it is a fascinating beginning.

The island's long north coast, where most of the hotels and vacation villas are, also has numerous small towns along the main coast road. In many of these — Falmouth for example — a permanent open shed with a corrugated iron roof has been built in the town square.

Crowded under it on Saturdays in what looks like utter confusion are the vendors, mostly women in from the hill farms. Despite the apparent chaos, each has a permanent location for the display of anything from shoes to kerosene lamp chimneys.

Food, of course, is the main reason for the market and here is the place to find Jamaica's own fruits and vegetables: oranges, ortaniques, limes, yams, breadfruit, ackees, mangoes, papayas (or paw-paw), avocados (called pear), pineapples, bananas, plantain and such unfamiliar delicacies as star-apples and sweet-sops.

Usually there is a smoky fire going somewhere in the shed to roast corn, the hot and pungent kind that farmers sell along the mountain roadsides. In some markets one can buy Jamaica's favorite delicacy, jerked pork.

The cooking method probably goes back to the buccaneers who roasted their meat on boucans, or wooden racks. And everybody eats spicy Jamaican meat patties, which are meat baked in pastry dough. At Highgate, a charming town perched in the hills above Port Maria, there is a patty shop across the street from the market that opens at noon. By 12:30, its supply is sold out.

Market Day in Jamaica is best time to meet the Island's villagers

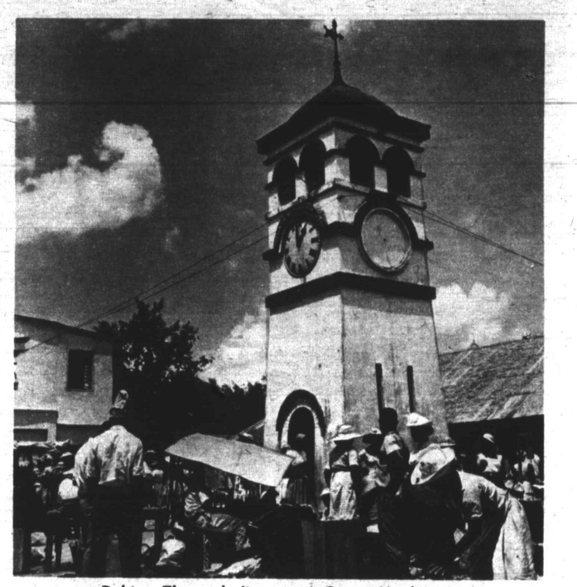
If possible, go marketing with a guide who knows the ins and outs, can identify the strange foods and may be acquainted with some of the regulars. Villa vacationers are fortunate that they can go with their cook, who probably does most of her shopping there, anyway.

And although it will be a temptation to take a camera, it is best to resist it, unless it's a model that develops pictures on the spot. If you start photographing, you will be swamped with requests for instant portraits, but you will also get to know people you would never otherwise meet.

Among the north coast market towns are Lucea, Falmouth, St. Ann's Bay, Port Maria, Annotto Bay, Buff Bay and Highgate. Going through the mountains to the south coast is the town made famous by the song, "Linstead Market" — "Me carry me ackee a Linstead Market,-not a quattie was there" (She took her merchandise all the way to Linstead but nobody would pay even a quarter for it).

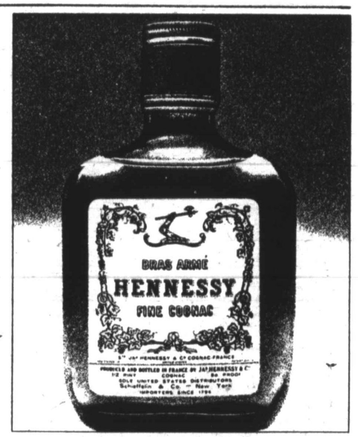
At Spanish Town, Jamaica's first capital, the market is probably as old as the fascinating historic architecture, while at Old Harbour and Savanna-la-Mar — both south coast fishing ports, 11 o' clock any morning is the time to be on hand for the fresh catch brought in by fishermen who have been out on the banks since before dawn.

All of which should be more fun than shopping in a supermarket, although Jamaica has plenty of those, too.



Poking Through Jamaica's Street Market

Hennessy presents ...



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