

Eddie Heizenger, the Tuckahoe Police Associates , and World War 2 Third in a Series of Articles on the Sporting Legacy of the Town

By

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During the nineteen thirties the sport of amateur boxing reached its zenith in the town of Eastchester. During the great depression Milt Gibbons and Charlie Marra founded the Tuckahoe Police Associates. This organization was started at first to help young boys in trouble with the law but as time passed, others in the town joined this local branch of the Police Athletic League. Over a twelve year span the Tuckahoe Police Associates produced over 50 Golden Glove and Diamond Belt Champions!!

Arguably the greatest boxer to come out of the Tuckahoe Police Associates was Eddie Heizenger. His exploits were legendary. Eddie was the oldest of seven children, 4 boys and 3 girls. He was a 9 letter man at Eastchester High School in football, basketball, track, and baseball. Bob Creamer, former Tuckahoe Village Historian and senior editor of *Sports Illustrated* di not know Eddie personally but did know something about him, "Eddie Heinzinger in my memory was a big powerful , good-looking guy with the sloping shoulders of a boxer, a very good boxer. But I remember him in a high school track meet when he scored one of the most amazing doubles ever achieved in a track meet anywhere. He won the shot put and the high jump, which even after all these years is amazing-that a big man as big and strong and powerful as he had the grace and agility to jump higher than everybody else at that meet."

But the sport that made him famous was boxing. Kids like Eddie who worked with Milt Gibbons and Charlie Marra In the gym in the basement of the Main Street School were not rushed but trained for a long time before they were allowed to compete in big shows like the Golden gloves or the Diamond Belt or boxing shows in Westchester County Center. But Eddie progressed faster than the others. Three years in a row he was a Golden Glove champion and he also won the Diamond Belt from the now defunct *Journal American*.

On February 2, 1940 while Eddie Heizenger was still a student at Eastchester High School, the Tuckahoe Police Associates had their finest moment. Eddie, his younger brother Ben, and 4 other Police Associate boxers took part in the Golden Gloves Tri-County Tournaments bouts at Eastchester High School. Advanced sale of tickets had already reached 500 and 1,200 were expected to attend. The *Tuckahoe Record* reported, "With Eddie Heinzenger's presence assured in the ring, his fellow students at Eastchester High School are expected to to come down in droves to root for their outstanding athlete. The Board of Education of Eastchester School District # 1 postponed its meeting to next week and most of the members are sure to be on hand." The Town Supervisor of Eastchester, the Mayor of Tuckahoe, and members of the high school faculty brought large numbers of tickets earlier in the week

The Tuckahoe Police Associates and the Eastchester Boxing Club would continue to produce great boxers. Jack Veccarelli out of Eastchester even before Eddie came on the scene learned his boxing at Eastchester High School, went off to Michigan State, and became a contender for the heavy weight title. There were other fighters of note that you can read about in the old newspapers: Paul Carafiellio, Fred Saunders, Fred Juliano, Johnny Rocco, Peter Beaton, and Vin Pellagrini.

But Pearl Harbor and World War 2 would put a sad end to this lost gone golden era of boxing. 78 of the boxers in the Tuckahoe Police Associates had gone off to the Army, Navy, and Marines. Milt Gibbons was forced to suspend all activities of his youth organization.

Eddie Heizenger along with his 3 brothers volunteered to fight. His brother Steve who still lives in town volunteered during his junior year to join his brother. Little did he know that three weeks later on November 13, 1942 his beloved older brother would be killed on the battleship USS Juneau. Out of the 650 on board only 10 survived. The five Sullivan brothers also were down of the Juneau that forced the US military to change its policy in regard to surviving children.

In a recent interview with Steve Heizinger the question was asked, "Why did you and your brothers volunteer to fight." His answer was instantaneous. "We were being attacked. It was the only thing to do." That generation from town that went off to war including the boxers in the Tuckahoe Youth Associates believed in their country, their community, and their faith. They were more than willing to put the skills that they learned in the ring against the fascist aggressors who had attacked us and were trying to take over the world.