

FINGER LAKES TIMES

THURSDAY, NOV. 8, 2012



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SECTION B

Area boxers remember Basilio

Ciancaglini considers legend a role model

By **JOSHUA DeSAIN**

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GENEVA — Nowadays, sports provide us with a number of role models for our youth.

Back in the 1950s, Geneva native and former middleweight boxer Ray Ciancaglini had two from which to pick: New York Yankees centerfielder Mickey Mantle and professional boxer Carmen Basilio.

Ciancaglini chose Basilio.

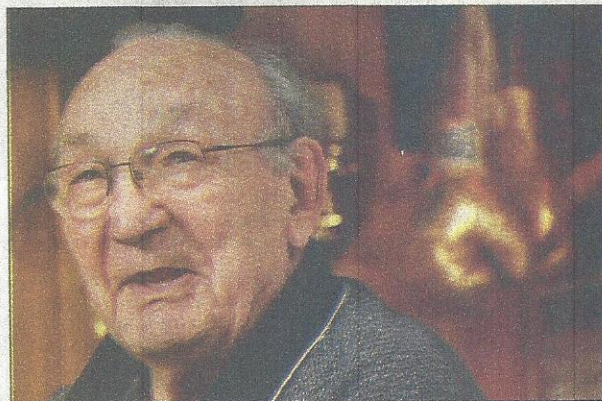
As a result, the Geneva High graduate followed a man who helped set a positive standard for so many to live by.

Boxing fans and inspired individuals alike lost that great role model when Basilio died Wednesday at the age of 85.

“The man, inside and outside the ring, is the guy I set my standards by my whole life,” Ciancaglini said. “He meant so much to so many kids because he was the perfect role model. He was a war veteran, he donated money to catholic youth organizations and as big a name as he was, he always was a regular guy. He had time for everybody.”

“Everybody got that playful hit to the ribs. We just became good friends through the years. The structure that he instilled in me, I’ll never go wrong. I always ask, ‘What would Carmen do?’ He’s somebody that touched my life. I’m going to miss him terrible.”

Geneva native and former pro boxer



The Associated Press

Carmen Basilio is shown in his Irondequoit home in this 2007 photo. Basilio died Wednesday at the age of 85.

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The Associated Press

In this 1957 file photo, new world middleweight boxing champion Carmen Basilio is hoisted by his trainer Angelo Dundee, second from left, and co-manager John DeJohn, after Basilio won a split decision over Sugar Ray Robinson at Yankee Stadium in New York.

BASILIO

Fratto recalls boxing veteran as fierce competitor

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Rocky Fratto also admired the attributes that Basilio possessed.

"He was a great person," said Fratto, who won the North American Championship and fought for the WBA Junior Middleweight crown in 1981. "I knew Carmen since I was 12 or 13 years old and I spent a lot of time around him. He was a great role model. Extremely disciplined and hard working."

The Canastota native was a former welterweight and middleweight boxing champion. Basilio, who started his professional boxing career in 1948, won welterweight championships in 1955 and 1956. He claimed the middleweight title in 1957 when he defeated Sugar Ray Robinson.

"In boxing the object is to kill the will, kill the will power," Fratto commented. "If (your opponent) is tested right away, they're going from, 'I'm going to beat this guy up' to, 'I want to survive.' He had the will power to make you just want to survive."

Basilio, who retired from boxing in 1981, is a member of both the International Boxing Hall of Fame and Rochester Boxing Hall of Fame. He finished with a record of 56-16-7 with 27 knockouts.

Ciancaglini, a fellow Rochester Boxing

Hall of Fame member, became a fan of Basilio in 1957 while at his grandparents restaurant on Exchange Street in Geneva.

"The Gillette Friday Night Fights were on and we were trying to get a better picture with the rabbit ears and guys were yelling to get the picture better because Carmen was fighting," Ciancaglini said. "The roar after every punch he threw, I was so inspired after the fight that I filled up an old laundry bag with dish towels and made a punching bag. My grandmother came in and said, 'Raymond, what are you doing,' and I said, 'I'm Carmen Basilio.' My grandmother said, 'There is only one Carmen Basilio,' and that's how I got started."

Ciancaglini later met Basilio during a main event fight he was competing in at the age of 17 and the two later became friends.

"I tried to emulate his style," Ciancaglini noted. "In my eyes and in many eyes, he was the greatest fighter pound for pound of all time."

"He was remarkable with his heart. He trained harder than anybody. He was very generous with his money when it came to charities. My grandmother was right, there is only one Carmen Basilio and there will never be another one."