

A Memoir

IT STARTED IN ST. LOUIS

BY BILL DEMPSEY YOUNG



Our Story

My name is Bill Dempsey Young, my father is referee Dick Young, and his father is Robert Anton Young who was the Missouri state amateur lightweight boxing champion. He taught all of his children how to box, even the girls. My dad remembers how his brother Mel and sister Kathleen would put the gloves on and go at it, he said she could really fight.

Robert Anton Young was also a fireman who rose to the rank of captain. He was known for his courage and heroism. He suffered severe injuries in an accident when the horse drawn rig he was responding on, turned over trapping him between the front of the wagon and the panicked horses which were laying on their sides uncontrollably kicking while trying to get up. He suffered injuries that would later take his life, breaking the hearts of his wife and six children with my father, nine year old Richard Orville Young (Dick Young) being one of them.

My dad never got over that loss but he was left with wonderful memories of his father. He remembers how his father would show up unannounced with the horse drawn fire wagon and give all the kids in the neighborhood rides around the block from time to time. I'm sure that had a lot

to do with my dad, Dick Young, becoming a fireman when he grew up. Also, I'm sure that his father having been a state boxing champion and all the boxing talk around their dinner table fostered an interest for my dad. That interest ultimately led him to become a referee in 1941.

He joined the Navy during World War II and did some boxing while serving, but he really longed to get back to refereeing. So that's what he did as soon as he got out of the service. He also wanted to live and work on a farm so he bought a farm and was happy and determined. He took his wife, three little kids (one more little kid will later be born), a dog and two ponies that he bought from Roy Rogers to a fixer-upper farm.

He outfitted the farm with all the equipment he needed. He also built up a drove of Hampshire hogs and raised Leghorn chickens, six horses and a herd of 100+ Black Angus cattle. He also planted crops. He had fields of corn, wheat, soy beans, oats and Lespedeza hay which was a one-growth hay that he would harvest into bales that we put into our hayloft and filled our silo which we used for winter feeding. We always had a large garden and a large strawberry patch. We also harvested a large growth of big juicy blackberries each year.

He upgraded our house by installing some electricity and installed some plumbing (which led to a ritual burning of the old outhouse). He built some ponds to hold the rainwater for watering our livestock. He did a great job

establishing our farm while maintaining his job in the city of St. Louis as a fireman, just like his dad. As a matter of fact, he worked out of the same fire station his father worked out of. I myself also had a career as a fireman/firefighter making me a third generation fire person. I retired as a captain.

Now back to the farm. I can't talk about our farm without speaking about a wonderful kind and loving man by the name of Bill Anheuser. Bill was the last remaining Anheuser of the Anheuser-Busch Budweiser beer fame. My dad and Bill were very close friends. Our farm was in Jonesburg, a small town in Missouri with a population of 437. Bill had a cattle ranch where he also raised black Angus cattle, but his cattle were from the outstanding Aberdeen Angus bloodline. Bill was a very generous and thoughtful man who actually loaned us his junior sire bull to join our herd for breeding all our heifers. This raised the quality of our offspring to prime beef. This was done out of the kindness of Bill's heart so no monies were involved.

Bill would stop by our farm to visit quite often and sometimes he would just show up and say "let's go see a movie." There was a drive-in theater about 30 miles down the road. I remember one year he took us to the Sedalia State Fair where the Clydesdale team was scheduled to be shown. Bill also had some of his own livestock being shown at the fair, but during the night there had been a horrible tornado that had come right through the fair and tore everything up. Bill came by and picked us all up anyway

and took us to the fair. It was a mess but none of Bill's animals or any of the Clydesdales had been badly injured. We enjoyed the fair in spite of the tattered condition of the surroundings because Bill remained pleasant and grateful that it wasn't worse than it was. Bill was always good to be around.

Going over to Bill's "Triple A Ranch" was one of our favorite things to do. He had a big, beautiful, hand-painted sign like a small billboard (*a real piece of art*) right on Highway 40 at the entrance to his ranch. It had an Angus bull straddling through three A's, meaning Anheuser's Aberdeen Angus. It was a token from the Budweiser eagle standing through the "A" logo. Bill told me Gussie Busch spotted that sign when he was driving down Highway 40 and that he and Bill talked about it. Gussie approved of the sign.

To us, going to the ranch was like going to a big amusement park, especially on one of his sale days. In his big barn he had a cooker where he would cook the grains for his cattle that he would feed prior to his big sale. When you walked into the barn you could smell that great odor of the food he was preparing for the cattle, and it was fun to eat some yourself. His sales were incredible. He raised and sold breeding stock and it was a big beautiful deal. He had a landing strip built for small planes. The festivities would start in the morning with the buyers having a chance to walk around seeing all the livestock while in the backdrop you could hear live music being played. Everywhere you

went there were cold drinks and of course, mixed drinks for the adults with plenty of beer, lots of great food and hors d'oeuvres being passed out.



Everybody then went to the sale area for the auction, and what an auction it was! It was the most incredible parade of bovine flesh you'd ever seen. There was screaming, whistling, cheering and the inevitable "going once, going twice (wooden mallet slams) sold!" And then the applause. After the sale, everyone would go to the big

barn (which had been all dressed up) to serve as a grand ballroom for an extremely opulent dinner and dance hall and a very large bottomless bar. I was a little kid mesmerized by all of the action in the barn. There was dancing, laughing, drinking, singing and I couldn't take my eyes off of the party.

Bill had a lot of interesting things, like his real gasoline pump, just like the filling stations had, that's how he fueled all of his equipment. Bill had a lake and some large ponds that he had stocked with fish that we could catch, and he had 2000 acres of land that we could hunt on. I remember the time Bill wanted to put my younger sister on my shoulders and then put me on his shoulders and walk around. I was really happy when my dad spoke up and said, "No let's not do that Bill, I don't think it's a good idea." I don't know why I like to tell that story but I think it's probably because, to me, it shows the playfulness of Bill.

Now let's go back in time a few years to my first recollection of being taught how to box. My dad taught me how to make a proper fist, hold my guard, keep my chin and elbows down, "bob and weave," throw a straight left jab bringing my fist right back to the guard position and throw a right hand straight to the target bringing that hand right back to the guard position. Most of the time he would have me throw three jabs followed by a straight right hand and just keep repeating that without stopping. He was able to teach me these things while sitting in his easy chair with his hand palm facing me held up in front of my chest as he

would move his hand from side to side up and down while watching a ball game on TV and listening to another game on the radio, the original multitasker. Believe it or not, these little drills were all I needed to prepare me with the bullies on the streets. I was almost never mad when I was fighting. I was just teaching the bad guy a "lesson." Pretty arrogant huh? Well I was just doing what my heroes, Roy Rogers, Gene Autry and Hopalong Cassidy were doing, fighting the bad guy. Actually I just couldn't stand the bully attitude, still can't. Dad would take me with him to a St. Louis boxing gym where a friend of his named "Chillin" Charlie Riley trained, and dad would get in the ring to hone his skills as a referee. I loved to be there. I loved the smell, the sounds, watching the training routines and especially the sparring sessions. I got so excited I couldn't wait to get home so I could jump around in the backyard knocking one imaginary opponent out right after the other. I would lay on my belly on the floor and draw pictures of my hero, heavyweight champ Joe Palooka and his trainer/manager Knobby Walsh. They were characters in the Sunday newspaper funnies. I never missed it.

Dad and mom would occasionally take us to the fights. I liked the bright lights in the ring. I liked the roar of the crowd every time a good punch landed. I liked the way the fighters skillfully and courageously battled. I wanted to do it. My big brother and I would get so excited, we would go behind the seats and box each other. I was around nine or ten years old. I watched kids my age boxing in these shows. I saw them boxing in the Jr. Golden Gloves at 95 pounds

and that was my weight, but my dad wouldn't let me fight. He was promoting amateur fights during that time but he wouldn't get me an opponent. He just kept telling me that I needed to be at a gym with other fighters to spar with but there wasn't a boxing gym within 75 miles of our farm. We had some old 6 ounce boxing gloves with no horse hair left over the knuckles, but we used them anyway. We had a speed bag in our basement and I hung my dad's duffel bag from a little tree behind the house and started hitting it. Life was going pretty smoothly when, first the locusts came and starting devouring our crops. Then some kind of beetle attacked. Then a drought started and it lasted four years and all the farmers were filing bankruptcy, but my dad refused to file because it was against his principles. I heard dad tell mom that he owed people money and he was going to find a way to pay it. He started selling everything we had, our furniture, our farm equipment, our vehicles and all of our livestock. My dad was bound and determined to pay every penny he owed. We were poor now because dad wouldn't file for bankruptcy, but we saw it through. He took some serious risks of going to prison, not because he was stealing but because he was determined to find a way to pay back everything he owed. One of the things he did was sell our herd of cattle, and then before they were picked up by the new owner, he took a loan out on the herd. As long as we made all the payments on time, the loan company would never know the cattle were gone.

We had to sneak out of town so we could not even say good-bye to our friends. My dad didn't tell Bill Anheuser what we were going through until right before we were leaving. Bill was dismayed and expressed his sadness at not having been given the opportunity to help us save our farm. My dad said, "That's why I didn't tell you, I knew that's how you would respond and I didn't want to take advantage of your kindness. The friendship we have is more important to me than taking the easy way out at your expense. I would rather say 'goodbye' here because I know our friendship will continue on and that's important to me." Their friendship did continue to grow all through the years. My dad told Bill we were going to be alright. Then Bill offered my dad the position of being the top person at the brewery in Van Nuys, California. Dad thanked Bill profusely, but turned the offer down because he didn't feel that the position was in his comfort zone. My dad was one of the most brilliant people I have ever known, though he only had an eighth grade education. When my dad passed on, I continued one of the most wonderful relationships of my life with Bill Anheuser until he passed at 98 years of age. I will always love and miss him.

Now back to the story: We left Missouri and limped all the way to California to try and start a new life. A new life without my bike. There wasn't room for it in the truck. I had begged for years to have a bike. Finally my mom and dad bought my 4H Club leader's childhood bike for \$5. He had disassembled it and put it in a cardboard box. Dad and I put it together. It was old but a great bike. I painted it blue

with one of those tiny little artist type paint brushes. I only got to have it for about 6 months, but it was a great 6 months.

We were in hiding as mom and dad struggled to pay every penny we owed. It took a number of years but they got it done and I saw what a wonderful man of principle my dad was...and what a wonderful woman of principle my mother was as she stood in full support of his decisions.

The first thing my dad did when we got to California was find a source of income. Then, he could start paying back the debts that built over the years of drought. Next, he set his sights on breaking into the Los Angeles boxing world. In the time he had been a boxing official in St. Louis, he had acquired a lot of respect and an excellent reputation which definitely helped him breach the wall and become accepted into the Los Angeles boxing world of officiating. He became a world renowned boxing official, officiating over 700 professional bouts with over 200 of those being championship bouts. And of those 200, a number of those were international bouts as he traveled the world. But the thing about my dad that I admired the most was the intensity he had. He worked the littlest fight with the same intensity he worked the biggest fight with. He is probably most well known for refereeing the Muhammad Ali vs. Ken Norton - 2 World Championship bout.

OK, let's go back to getting established in California. So we left the farm and moved to California and after we got settled in California, then I started badgering my dad again to let me go to a gym to box. But there were no gyms around Chatsworth. So I got involved in school sports, and even though I still wanted to box, I put it to the back of my mind. I kind of satisfied my desire by boxing with my older brother and some of my friends, the ones that showed a desire to express their toughness. And then of course there were the street bullies.

Finally I turn 18 and I'm driving a car and I tell my dad I'm going to box in the Golden Gloves tournament in February, and this was about mid January when I said this. So my dad takes me down to Johnny Flores' gym (behind his house) in Pacoima. I was surprised at how small it was but it had everything you needed. It had a heavy bag, a speed bag, a double end bag and a small bench against the wall where you could sit and wrap your hands. But the only thing I really cared about was the boxing ring. I couldn't wait to get in there. Oh yeah, there was one more thing in the gym and that was a great big guy at least 250 pounds, long sleeve gray sweats from neck to ankles walking around the ring slowly throwing an array of punches. Kind of spooky. Johnny says, "You can spar with big Phil here." I take a quick look around the gym to see if someone more my size has arrived. But no, big Phil or nobody. The bell rings "DING." I walk straight out to hit him with my powerful right hand, but he had other ideas as he threw a big wide left hook that landed with a wallop.

Johnny hollers, "Keep you right hand up!" I searched my memory bank, and I go back to me being a little kid in front of my dad's palm. I put my guard where it belongs and I start jabbing and throwing right hands, and it's working. I'm actually hitting big Phil. When I got close to him, I hit him to his left temple (probably 3 or 4 times) and all of a sudden he got easier to hit. I do a little bit of bobbing and weaving and I deliver some simple left/right flurries. I went three rounds with him and I'm still standing. In my mind, that makes me the winner. On the way home I am hoping to hear some positive comments from my dad, but no. He just says, "You need to work on your endurance. Knock off the sweets and do some road work."

We had the weigh-ins, and the physical exam, and we got our boxing license and signed up for the Golden Gloves tournament all at the same time and in the same place in downtown Los Angeles. My first fight in the tournament is also my actual boxing DEBUT. It's at the El Monte Legion Stadium. First round I come out and walk straight up to my opponent and shoot that same right hand that I was going to hit big Phil with. And guess what...this guy catches me with the same big left hook that big Phil hit me with....but this time I go down. I'm on all fours looking right at the canvas which looks real close! I think to myself, "I just got knocked down, that means I'm already way behind on points." I'm pissed! So I punch the canvas as hard as I could...Ouch! I immediately think, "I hope I didn't break my hand!" I jump up and go after this guy and it turns into a war. By the end of the first round I felt like I was

getting the best of him. We beat on each other for three rounds...and I mean beat on each other! The last round I've got him on the ropes. I'm exhausted but I make myself throw a right hand to his head. I can tell that he is badly hurt, which gives me a boost of energy. I feel like I have to knock him out to win so I just keep punching. He goes through the top two ropes, so I go after him leaning over the top rope and hitting him. The referee grabs my left arm and tries to pull me back, but I'm not having it. I gotta knock this guy out so I instinctively push the referee's arm away with my left hand as I keep attacking with my right. Then the referee gets a bear hug on me from behind, jerking me away and swinging me all the way around, stopping the fight and awarding me a TKO win.

The crowd showered us with coins. This was an amateur fight and they're throwing coins at us! Obviously the crowd was happy. I was happy too but the next day my jaw on both sides was so sore that I couldn't open my mouth or chew for a few days. I looked all beat up. I wondered if he looked as bad as me. I became the 1960 novice Light Heavy Weight Division Title Winner. I won a few more fights and then I was drafted into the army. While I was at Fort Ord in basic training, I had one heavyweight fight which I won by a first round KO. I was then stationed in Germany and I went straight to the gym and talked with the AR sergeant about getting on the boxing team. I got on the team and beat two ex-Bavarian champions. A German promoter contacted our team leader requesting permission for me to get a German boxing license, which

we did. He then got me on permanent TDY status assigned to the gym, so I was available to fight year round for the Germans and the United States. I really enjoyed that time of my life.

We have three sons and three daughters and all of them are very athletic. I coached them in every sport that they were interested in, including boxing. I supported every healthy thing my kids were interested in, but I never forced them to do anything. The boxing equipment was there, and when they pulled it out, I would be there to guide them. My oldest son, Willie, had a love for boxing and I supported him. I trained him and sparred with him and I was his corner man. We had a great time. He got to fight at the Olympic Auditorium a couple of times, and he got to fight in the Golden Gloves a couple of times. He fought at some very unique and interesting venues. When he became a Los Angeles County Sheriff Deputy, he joined their boxing team. While on that team, he assisted the department's training cadre by boxing their new sheriff's recruits on Boxing Day, which was a challenging risk. Willie was a very tough, good fighter. I was proud of the way he trained and I was proud of the way he fought. He had the courage and he had the heart.

Then my youngest son RC wanted to have some fights. I had a small stable of fighters at that time so he had some sparring available. RC learned the sport and he had all the tools. RC had his share of fights and he was tough. He could hit hard and he could take a punch. He was also a

fine boxer. We traveled to Canada a couple of times to fight where he won a nice Belt. RC was just getting started when he suffered a career ending injury. I really enjoyed working with him and I was always amazed by his power. I am very proud of him.

My middle son Drew wanted to have some fights but I felt compelled to discourage him a little bit. Not because I didn't think he had what it takes to handle himself in the ring, because I knew he did. In fact, I bought him everything he needed to be a boxer. But boxing is a young person's sport, and when he was at the right age, he was full bore music, and very successful. I didn't think Drew would have enough room in his life for both music and boxing. You can play music, but you can't play boxing. By the way, his contributions to the National Boxing Hall of Fame are endless. We could not do this without him. And he loves the boxing world, and he is getting to enjoy it at a whole different angle....especially through his filmmaking skills. But that's another story.

I want to say a few words about the girls in my family. My oldest daughter Wendy is a great ex-figure skater. For years now, she has been involved in the world of ice hockey. If you are a professional hockey fan, check her out at www.ColdRushHockey.com

Tarah, our middle daughter and Katie, our youngest are both multiple time National Dance Champions.

Linda is my wife and partner in business and in every breath I take...and by the way, Linda's father was in the army at the "Battle Of The Bulge" during World War II. He also boxed in the army while serving our country.

NOTE TO HEAVEN

I love you mom and dad.

