

*My dad told this story about a prize-fight that he went to see between his daddy and another man at Cromwell, Ohio County, Kentucky, when my dad was about six years old. My grandfather had told me this same story before, himself, so I'll write both versions:*

## **The Prize Fight**

“I remember one time. Ya’ll don’t know this, but my father was kindly a prize fighter in his younger days. He was much of a man. I will say that for him. He was much of a man. I mean physically. But he took boxing in the army and he was pretty rough, I guess. He was working in Broadway Mines, at the time.

“At any rate, a guy come through the country. They had them in them days. \$10 to anybody that would stay with him five rounds. Fifteen minutes...three minute rounds. Well, everybody there talked about it, see, and they had big posters up down at the store. And so my daddy talked to mama about it and he told her he was going to get that \$10. He said, “When that old boy gets here, I’m going to get that \$10.” Said, “There ain’t nobody else wants him. So I’m going to take him on.”

“Mama just...they talked about it...talked about that every night at supper for two or three nights! And finally, they just rowed about it. And he told her, “No, I need that \$10 and I’m going to get it.

“And of course, all the miners, you know, were all ganged up around there. And half of them drunk. And boy, he liked to have not got that \$10. (Laughing.) I was a little bitty boy, and I thought he was going to kill my daddy.

(At this point, I asked daddy, “Did you watch the fight?” “Yeah,” he said, I went to see the fight. When I asked him if grandmother watched it too, he said, “No-o! There wasn’t anybody but men there.” At this point the tape ended.)

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*Same story, told to me when I taped Granddaddy’s life story, and he had thought of another story he wanted to tell me about learning to box:*

“I learned to box while I was in the army. A man named Hackett from Boston, Massachusetts, who was our cook, taught me a lot about boxing. And I got to be pretty good, too. One time after I was out of the army, the brother of one of the boys in McHenry came to visit him. He had just gotten out of the Navy. Well, he started boasting around town that he sure wished he could find somebody to box a round with him. But nobody would. Finally, I told a friend of mine that if he kept on boasting what a good boxer he was that I was just going to take him on. Well, that word got back to the Navy man, and so they rigged up a match for us to box each other in the Odd Fellows Hall for a percentage of the sales. Neither one of us got knocked out, but people who were watching said I got in the most licks. We got very little money for boxing. We wore regular boxing gloves, but not like the ones we have now. These were a lot thinner.”

*Grandmother had sat quietly while he was telling this story. I asked her if she went to watch it, and she replied, emphatically:*

“No mam, I did not! I was so outdone with him for making that match that I didn’t go watch, and I told him I didn’t care if he got whipped real good.” *She chuckled to herself.* “But I helped nurse his bruises when he got home that night.”