

George Andrew Kochan  
1921-1995  
Akron, Ohio  
Professional Boxer

Munroe Falls Historical Society

83 Munroe Falls Avenue

Munroe Falls, Ohio 44262

# George Kochan: “Champ!”

George Kochan was born August 25, 1921 to Peter Kochan and Katarina Punda Kochan, both of whom were born in Austria, Hungary. George had four brothers: Steve, Joseph, John, and Pete, and a sister.

The Kochan kids grew up on Mustill Street, in Akron, Ohio, although their street became known as “Muscle Street” in the tough immigrant neighborhood between the banks of the Ohio & Erie Canal and the Little Cuyahoga River in Akron.

George, a 5’10.5” fighter, was Croatian. His neighbors, Pete and Steve Ramnytz were Romanian. The neighborhood boys were good at fist-fighting and skipping school, although only George was able to make some money at fighting.



GEORGE KOCHAN

# George Kochan—Champ!



**George's debut in boxing was on October 14, 1941. He earned his Global ID# 11789 (BoxRec)**

**His first fight was against Mickey Janoski of Canton, Ohio, and George won.**

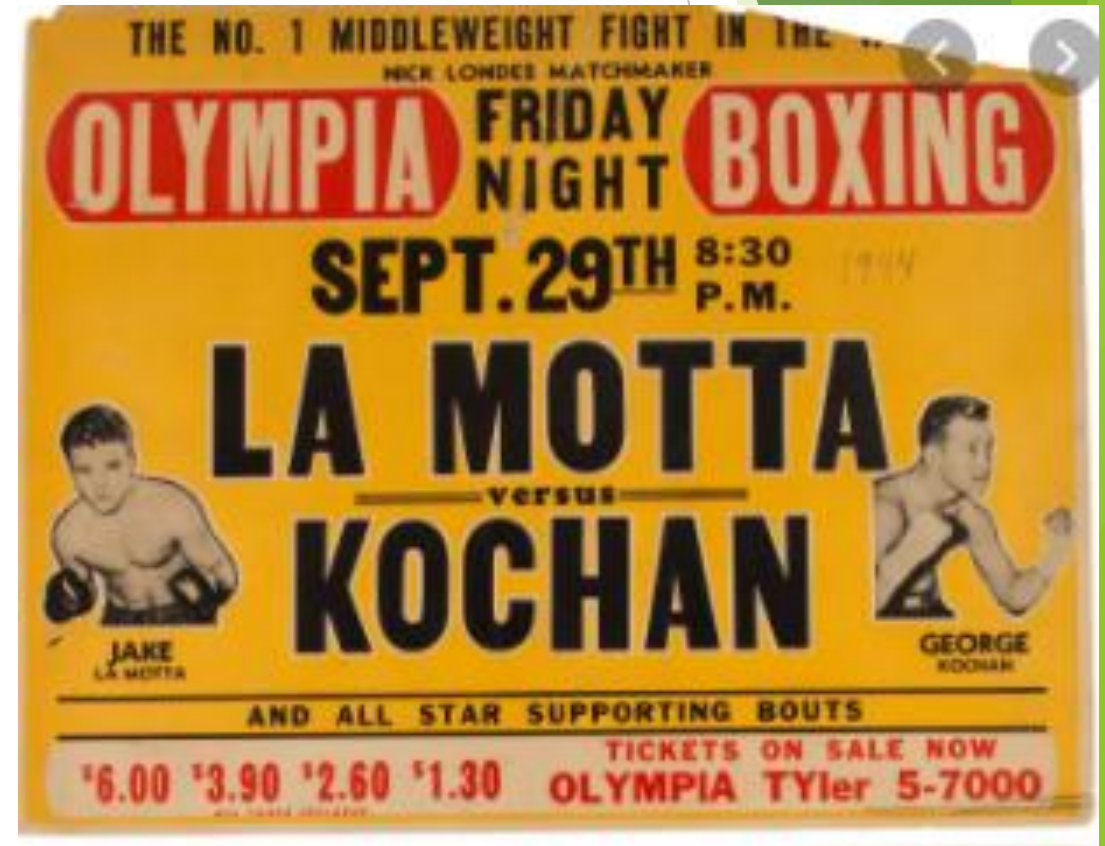
**Of George's fights which he won, 33% were won with knockouts!**

**He fought both middleweight and light-heavyweight.**

# Champ's Most Notable Fights

Jake LaMotta 9-29-1944 and 11-3-1944 at the Olympia Stadium in Detroit, Michigan, where LaMotta scrambled him up pretty badly. In the opening scene of the movie "Raging Bull" there is film footage clips of LaMotta vs Kochan, in Detroit, 1944.

Payment: \$1000.00 and 3 round trip plane tickets.



# CONTRACT

(Boxing)

THIS AGREEMENT made and entered into this 2nd day of October, 1944,  
by and between Olympia, Inc. PROMOTER of

Michigan, duly licensed under the laws of the State of Michigan, party of the first  
part, and Jake LaBotta of the City of Bronx,  
State of New York, a duly licensed BOXER (No. \_\_\_\_\_) under the laws of the State of

Michigan, party of the second part:

WITNESSETH, That said BOXER hereby agrees to enter into a boxing contest for said PROMOTER at the  
Olympia in the City of Detroit, on

the 2rd day of November, 1944 at 10 o'clock to a  
contest, with George Kosman of the City of Akron

State of Ohio, as his opponent, at a weight not over 165 lbs. pounds, said weight to  
be ascertained at 12:30 P. M. at Moore Gymnasium 24 Moore Street

The PROMOTER hereby agrees to pay, after said contest, and the BOXER hereby agrees to accept, as in full for his  
slashes and demands for and as account of the performance by him of this contract, the sum of 350

\*\*\*\*\* Dollars, or \*\*\*\*\* per centum of the gross receipts of said contest,

less all taxes and compensation paid ring officials, also expenses as follows:

Three first class round trip tickets from New York, N.Y.

\$174.78

It is understood and agreed that said contest shall be conducted in all respects in conformity with the laws of the State  
of Michigan and the rules and regulations adopted by the Michigan State Athletic Board of Control, which are hereby made  
a part of this agreement. The referee and other officials for said contest shall be persons duly licensed to act as such and  
assigned by the Michigan State Athletic Board of Control. If said officials or a representative of the Michigan State Athletic  
Board of Control shall decide that the BOXER did not enter into this contract in good faith, or is not honestly competing,  
or did not knowingly accept, or is guilty of an act detrimental to the interests of boxing, it is understood and agreed that the  
competence of the BOXER shall be turned over to the Michigan State Athletic Board of Control pending a hearing, and  
further the decision thereof of said Board shall be final and conclusive.

The BOXER hereby agrees to deposit with the Michigan State Athletic Board of Control the sum of 1,000.00  
as a forfeit to guarantee his appearance, his making the weight as above agreed and for his performance of this contract  
in all other respects.

It is understood and agreed that if said BOXER shall fail to appear or make the weight agreed upon or if he should  
fail to pass the required physical examination, then said forfeit money may at the discretion of the Michigan State Athletic  
Board of Control be forfeited to the PROMOTER and under such circumstances the PROMOTER shall pay to the other  
boxer in this contest, the sum of \$\_\_\_\_\_ or liquidated damages. If for any reason, other than the failure on the  
part of either of the two boxers to appear, the PROMOTER does not fulfil this contract, the said PROMOTER shall pay to  
the BOXER an amount equal to said forfeit as liquidated damages, unless this match, by order of the Michigan State Athletic  
Board of Control, is rejected or cancelled.

It is further understood and agreed that if said BOXER in any way does anything which lowers his value as an  
athlete, the PROMOTER may request the Michigan State Athletic Board of Control to cancel this contract without  
further liability.

It is further understood and agreed that the BOXER shall travel in Detroit  
Michigan not later than the 7:00 day of October, 1944, after said BOXER shall report  
at the place of contest at \_\_\_\_\_ o'clock P. M. on the date set for said contest.

It is further understood and agreed that said PROMOTER is to make all arrangements for said contest and is to provide  
a suitable place and proper facilities for the conducting of same.

It is further understood and agreed that all parties to this contract hold licenses as required under the laws of the  
State of Michigan governing boxing and that no one shall be permitted to participate in said contest in any way who is not  
duly licensed.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the said parties have hereunto set their hands and seals the day and year first above written.

In the presence of:

Olympia, Inc.

Promoter

By Jake LaBotta intchmadr

In the presence of:

Michael Christian

IMPORTANT NOTICE: A TRUE COPY OF EVERY BOXING CONTRACT SHALL BE FILED WITH THE MICHIGAN  
STATE ATHLETIC BOARD OF CONTROL AT LEAST SIX DAYS PRIOR TO THE DATE OF CONTEST; SAME WILL  
NOT BE ACCEPTED UNLESS COMPLETE. THE BOXER SHALL POSSESS A VALID LICENSE AT THE TIME HE  
SIGNS OR HIS APPLICATION FOR SAME SHALL BE ATTACHED THERETO.

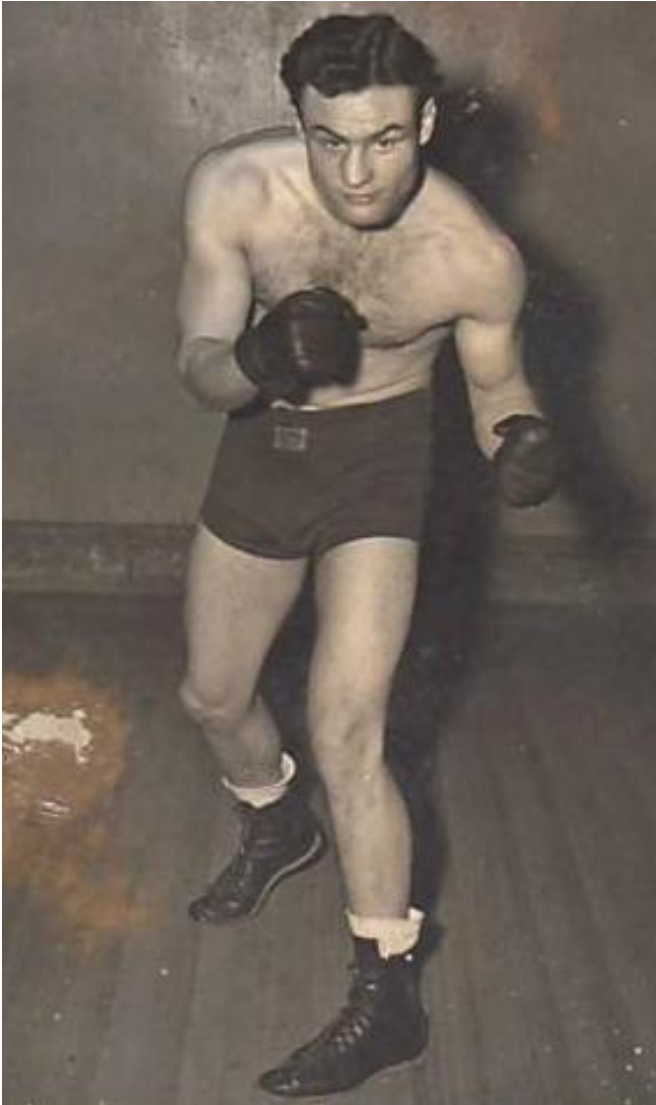
### RECEIPT

Received of the above PROMOTER the sum of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ as payment in full for all slashes and demands which  
I have by virtue of the above contract.

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

Boxer

# Champ



**George fought 73 professional bouts, 781 rounds during his career.**

- **George won or won by decision often in his early career (October 1941-1943, but began losing more fights after his fights with LaMotta in 1944.**
- **George's last fight was against Johnny Dupree who had a 42 win; 13 loss; and 3 draw record. The fight was in Tampa, Florida, in 1948. George lost.**
- **George's overall record was 40 wins; 22 losses; 11 draws.**

# FIGHT RIVALS MEET IN GYMNASIUM



George Kochan (left) and Coley Welch, who clash Friday night in Olympia's ring, met yesterday at Williams gym. Both did some boxing as part of their workouts and will be busy at the same gym the next few days.

## Kochan, Welch Box In Gym Workouts

With both George Kochan and Coley Welch on the scene, interest in the match between them at Olympia Friday night took on a lively tone today.

Both boys are working daily at the new Williams gymnasium on Woodburn. Yesterday Kochan boxed two rounds with Charlie Bates and Welch took on Wes Willie Watkins in a spirited workout.

Kochan and Welch are billed for 10 rounds Friday at 160 pounds.

Fresh from a string of three knockout triumphs within two weeks in the East, Kochan hopes to begin the streak in four in a row when he tangles with Welch Friday.

But is Welch, the Akron slapper, promises to have no easy task. Welch, who boasts the middle-weight champion of New England, like Kochan, is a slugger who likes nothing more than a furiosa ring warfare.

In his last start Welch licked rugged Vic Dellecure in Boston. Welch, like Ray Robinson, found Dellecure a tough customer. Neither one could put Vic on the deck.

Kochan will be remembered for two wild contests with Jake LaMotta at Olympia. Welch, too, is no meekster, having fought LaMotta and Cossie (Thinking) Harris in the same ring.

Many newspaper articles about George and his fights.

# DETROIT TIMES

## Bob Tales

by Bob Murphy  
Sports Editor

Politics Kept Kochan  
From Settling Here

Departed From City  
After Amateur Row

### FOE'S MANAGER RECALLS THE INCIDENT

Next Friday night's bout at the Olympia between Jimmy Edgar and George Kochan might have been an all Detroit affair had it not been for a bit of amateur politics played back before the war.

This bit of business convinced the Akron-born Kochan, who had come here to make his living with his fists, that Detroit was too peaceful a town for the likes of him. So he drifted away to make his headquarters in New York.



GEORGE KOCHAN

Eddie Futch, trainer of Edgar, was telling about the Kochan journey the other day while Edgar was taking a workout at the Williams gym.

"Kochan came here in the days when the Industrial Athletic Association was flourishing," he recalled. "He joined the Chevrolet team then coached by Leo Jones. I was training boys at Brewster Center but farmed some of my boys who lived on the west side to Chevrolet. I was afraid they would lose interest in boxing if they had to travel to the east side to train in the winter time."

### Trained Fighter for Butler

"About that time I also was training a boxer for Dad Butler of the University of Detroit. He was a football player named Bob Burke and he recently signed with the Detroit Lions.

"One night I went to the U. of D. to second Burke during a tournament. At the same time I hoped to contact other amateurs to fill out my program for a show I was staging at Brewster.

"There was one match I was particularly anxious to make. I wanted to match James Canty, one of my rangy left-handers, with one of the Chevrolet boys, preferably with Charley Hayes. Canty and Hayes previously had fought two hard battles.

"So, when I got to U. of D. I contacted Leo Jones about Hayes. He said Charley would not be able to meet Canty. I asked him if he had any other middleweight I could use. He replied in the negative.

### Goes to See Jones

"A short time later this young fellow came up to me and asked about my conversation with Jones. I told him. He said, 'I'll fight Canty. I'm in shape and I came here to fight. I'll go see Jones.'



JIMMY EDGAR

"He went away after that and soon I heard that he and Jones had a row. A short while later this young fellow dropped out of sight.

"Some years later Edgar and I were in New York for a fight. One of the fighters hailed us from a dressing room. He said he used to fight around Detroit and asked if we recognized him. We did, vaguely, but couldn't quite place him until he recalled the Jones incident.

"I'm George Kochan," he said, "and I'm on top here tonight."



# This Kochan Gets Around

By LEO MACDONELL

George Kochan, who is polishing off training at the Monroe gymnasium for his fight with Jake LaMotta at Olympia Friday night, comes from a family of merchant mariners.

Kochan engaged in a light workout before a crowd of railbirds at the gym yesterday and will box today. LaMotta is due to arrive today.

Boxer George, a former member of the merchant marine, has three brothers still serving in that branch. Johnny Kochan, only 24, is a commander and currently on his way to Australia. Joe Kochan has been in North Africa and Sicily and Steve Kochan in Guadalcanal.

After serving five years in the merchant marine, during which he saw a good share of the world, George Kochan quit that service and joined the coast guard, from which he was given an honorable discharge recently.

Kochan boasts 52 professional fights of which he lost but four.

# Wants Kochan to Be New Ring Idol Here

By LEO MACDONELL

With both Jake Lamotta and George Kochan slam-bang fighters, plenty of action is promised when the two middleweights tangle in the headliner of a fistie card at Olympia this coming Friday night.

It will be the first of a series of fall and winter boxing programs planned there by Matchmaker Londes.

Whereas LaMotta, adopted idol of local fight fans, will be returning to familiar haunts, Kochan

will be making his first appearance in a local ring. Kochan hails from Akron via New York.

Before joining the navy a year or so ago, Kochan had risen to fistie heights in and around Gotham.

He had become a sensation and Mike Jacobs had him matched with LaMotta for a headliner at Madison Square Garden. But Uncle Sam stepped in and put a navy uniform on Kochan.

### RESUMES FIGHTING

He was recently given a medical discharge from the navy and resumed fighting in the East. In his last fight he beat Howard Bennett, a highly regarded Baltimore scrapper.

Before that he handed Deacon Logan a pasting. The Deacon had become a sensation in St. Louis, where he rolled up a spectacular string of victories.

Kochan is managed by Tex Sullivan, who also pilots Lee Oma, the lad who won a decision over Lou Nova at Olympia during the last summer.

"We are bringing Kochan to Detroit because we know he can lick LaMotta and want him (Kochan) to be the idol in Detroit," Sullivan explained.

### GIVE US A BREAK

"Otherwise, we could have plenty of work around New York. Detroit is a great sports town and we want fans here to see Kochan. We know the fans will like him. He's a rough and ready battler—more like LaMotta than LaMotta himself."

Howard Fenske and Eddie Taylor, local light heavyweights, will clash in an eight-round semi-windup, boosted as one of these "naturals." The pair is reportedly in the throes of a "stupendous feud."

Anyway, Londes thinks he has good boxing entertainment and is expecting a large turnout of customers. He says the box office at Olympia will be open every day.

The fighters are training at Monroe gym.



JAKE LAMOTTA

# 2 Rifle Matches On This Sunday

The largest outdoor rifle match of the season is being held this Sunday at the Royal Oak Recreation Department Rifle Club. The club is located in Starr road (13 1/4 mile road) a mile east of Woodward.

Registrations were taken at 9 a. m., with shooting set for 10 a. m. First match will be 20 shots at 50 yards. Other matches include a Dewar (20 at 50 yards and 20 at 100 yards), 20 shots at 100 yards, while match four will be an aggregate of the first three events. Any type of sights will be allowed.

### STATE TROOP SHOOT

A special indoor match is being held this Sunday between Co. I, Michigan State Troops, and Co. E, Kalamazoo Troops. The match will be fired over four positions and is the first in a series of special shoulder to shoulder events to be held this fall and winter. George Miller, instructor of Michigan State Troops, is in charge of the match.

# Bunker Hill Beat Bronco

KALAMAZOO, Sept. 23—Play regulars, the Western Michigan C to defeat before an air-minded B today, 33-7.

The Fliers have a sparkling football team. They accounted for three of the visitors' five touchdowns.

The game was only three minutes old when Schwall passed 19 to Kutner for the first touchdown and later in the quarter they set up another with a 38-yard pass to the Western 8 as the quarter ended.

Mike Elder, famed Colorado State star, put it over on the second plunge. Jack Baer, reserve back, converted.

The Bronco fought back and

## Kochan Knocks Out Opponent With Opening Round Punches

A hard shot to the stomach of a substitute opponent midway in the first round provided George Kochan of Akron with a rapid knockout in the headline bout of the 20th Century fight card at Labor hall Tuesday night.

Scout Blackmer was victim of the punch after substituting for Mike Janoski, Smithfield fighter, who was forced from action by a carbuncle. Blackmer mixed with Kochan, a fast hard puncher, for a few opening flurries but was floored for the count when the Akron fighter drilled a hard left to his midsection. Blackmer weighed 160 and Kochan 158 for the bout which was scheduled for eight rounds.

In a wide open preliminary battle, Junior Kuffman of Massillon gained a four round decision from Howard Umbles of

Canton. Kuffman's more solid punching offset the speed of the Canton Negro to build a margin in the final round. Umbles staggered his opponent in the third frame but couldn't follow up his advantage.

The main preliminary was won by Don Datavio, 156, of Massillon as he outlasted Tiger Jackson, 157, of Kent, in an awkward, hitting fray. Tony Hoffer of Canton, spilled Young Janoski of Smithville four times in four rounds to win a decision and Jimmy Hatfield, 138, Canton, succumbed in the first round against Milton Glass, 135, of Akron. The program opened with Milton Brown and Chester Jackson, both of Canton, who together weighed roughly 113 pounds, fighting to a three round draw.

# George Kochan Is In Feature Bout

## Undefeated Middleweight Clashes With Alzek in White Plains County Center Ring.

George Kochan, undefeated middleweight youngster from Akron, Ohio and now a member of the U. S. Coast Guard, clashes with Jackie Alzek, fast coming Brooklyn 160-pounder, in the feature bout of eight rounds on Tuesday night at the White Plains County Centre, Bronx River Parkway and Tarrytown Road.

Kochan, regarded as the hardest puncher among the present young crop of middleweights, will be making his eleventh start since placing himself under the management of Joe Gould several months ago. The Ohio lad, only twenty years of age, has floored every one of his opponents but faces his toughest foe thus far in Alzek. The Brooklynite is a seasoned battler and in his last two scraps defeated Jack Kenny and Wild Bill McDowell. Kochan became very popular with Westchester fans when he knocked out Augie Angarano in the White Plains ring four weeks ago.

Alzek rules a 7 to 5 favorite to outpoint his heavy hitting rival but if there is a kayo Kochan figures to score it. Promoter Joe McKenna anticipates a sellout crowd for the middleweight tussle and has promised the winner a bout with Vic Delicurti of Harlem.

Danny Rosati, promising 150-pounder from Newark, N. J., trades wallops with Terry Mendez of South Norwalk, Conn. in the semifinal contest scheduled for six sessions. Rosati recently made his New York ring debut at White Plains and registered a decided hit. Two more sixes will bring together Frankie Ray, crack Bronx 150-pounder vs. Andy Kodak, crowd pleasing Philadelphian; and Al Fine, White Plains welter weight vs. Joe Gillis of Corona, L. I.

Two four-rounders will show Frankie Warren of South Norwalk, Conn. vs Vince Fazzare of Brooklyn; and Mike Bulik, West Side lightweight vs. Leroy Greenwood of Long Branch, N. J.

le  
tit  
Th  
m  
th  
F)  
  
w:  
ta  
le:  
pi  
st  
th  
K)  
  
sh  
st  
m  
m  
F)  
L)  
ve  
ie  
cr  
L)  
w  
th  
ni  
  
L)  
st  
T.  
fo  
w  
w  
le  
  
a  
ve  
tc  
pl  
w  
se  
si  
oi  
te  
N  
A  
di  
k:  
te  
ci  
T  
be  
F  
E  
th  
  
st  
to  
oi  
cl  
fr  
ir  
rc  
cl  
  
tu  
th  
T  
M  
n  
fr  
a  
T  
y

## Passion For a Job...But a Big Price to Pay

**George told Munroe Falls resident, Bob Sallaz, “Bobby, my manager wasn’t afraid of nobody.”**

**Thus, George was often set up for fights with others better than himself. This led to brain injuries which could not be repaired.**

# Injuries from the Job



Once returning to Akron at the end of his fighting career, George wasn't "right."

Today we would call this "traumatic brain injury," as boxers rarely used head gear that would protect the brain from the force of punches to the face and head. There were also no support services for people with these injuries.

Downtown Akron Locals Recongized George and did what they could to help him.

**In Akron, many knew George and would do what they could to help him. The police force knew George and would see him shadow boxing and staying in shape up and down Akron's streets.**

## Making Money, Yet Losing His Investment

**George came home from his fighting having earned money, enough to purchase two homes: One for his mother, and one for his sister, who later became is guardian.**

**His sister later sold both homes, leaving George with no home to live in. As a result, George lived at the Old Mayflower Hotel which eventually became a Senior Assisted Living Center.**



# Getting Recognition

**A local sports writer stumbled upon some write-ups about George in his glory days of fighting. He decided the local prizewinning boxer deserved recognition for his role in boxing. The newspaper bought George a new suit and a limo took him to a banquet where he was inducted into the Summit County Sports Hall of Fame.**

**A nice article was written up out his induction in the local news.**

**After that, George wore his suit everywhere and even enjoyed a good cigar every now and then! It felt good to be recognized by his hometown.**

## Munroe Falls resident befriends “Champ”

Munroe Falls resident, Bob Sallaz, said his dad knew George Kochan from his amateur boxing days in the late 1930’s. He told his son, Bob, to be kind to “Champ” when he would see him in downtown Akron.

George would often use the Akron City Hall basement coffee shop to use the restroom and often get a treat of a cup of coffee and a donut offered by Bob Sallaz.

Bob would often talk to him, always calling him, “Champ,” or “Your Honor.” In fact, Bob would tease George and tell him to run for Mayor as Mayor Ballard was not a fan of George.

# Scrapbook photos and magazine cover



# The Passing of “Champ”

It is good to remember local heroes of the past. Not many remember the name of George Kochan, an Akron boy who followed his dream. For Munroe Falls resident, Bob Sallaz, he will always remember the “Champ!”

## George “The Champ” Kochan

George “The Champ” Kochan, 73, died Monday, Sept. 18, 1995, at Ridgewood Place after a long illness.

He was born in Akron and had been an Akron resident for most of his life. He was a professional prizefighter from 1941 through 1948 and was inducted into the Summit County Hall of Fame. He was one of the top-rated fighters in his weight classes and fought Jake LaMotta—Middleweight Champion and Archie Moore—Light Heavyweight Champion. He was a member of St. Bernard Catholic Church and was previously active at St. Vincent Catholic Church.

Mr. Kochan is survived by his brother, Pete Kochan of Akron; several nieces and nephews, and great-nieces and -nephews, and will be missed by many dear friends. He was preceded in death by his brothers, Steve, Joseph, and John Kochan.

Funeral services will be held Thursday, 8 p.m., at the Kucko-Anthony-Kertesz Funeral Home, 95 W. Waterloo Rd. The family will receive friends Thursday, 6 p.m. until time of service. Interment services will be held at Holy Cross Cemetery on Friday at 11 a.m. Donations may be made to Hospice of Medina County.

(Kucko-Anthony-Kertesz, 724-1281.)

## Akron Beacon Journal Article on George Kochan's Death

### GEORGE 'CHAMP' KOCHAN DIES AT 73

Akron Beacon Journal (OH) - Wednesday, September 20, 1995

George "The Champ" Kochan of Akron, a top-ranked middleweight contender during the 1940s, won 44 professional fights. But Monday he lost his final bout -- to cancer.

The Champ, who became a well-known downtown Akron street character in later years, died at Ridgewood Place after a long battle with cancer. He was 73.

As well as his 44 wins, Kochan lost 21 and drew 11 fights in his eight years as a pro boxer. The Akron native fought such standouts as Jake LaMotta, Archie Moore, Ossie Harris and Billy "Blackjack" Fox.

Kochan claimed to have won more than \$200,000 during the 1940s and to have wooed movie starlets and buddied with Jack Dempsey. In later years he survived on a small Social Security disability check and wore hand-me-down clothes.

A fixture at the Ninth Floor coffee shop in the Akron Police Station, Kochan often bummed money for coffee from police officers, lawyers, judges and even an Akron mayor or two.

John Adams, who was the court-appointed guardian for Kochan, says that during his illness, Kochan sometimes walked away from his Copley nursing home and came downtown. But he wasn't gone long because all the Akron cops recognized him and took him back.

"All the cops loved him," Adams said.

Kochan fought three bouts with LaMotta. Of his first on Sept. 29, 1944, Kochan said it was the best fight of his career, but the judges gave LaMotta a close 10-round decision. LaMotta won their next two matches by knockouts. "In those two fights, LaMotta showed that maybe I didn't win that first fight after all," Kochan recalled in a 1978 Beacon Journal story.

Although classed as a middleweight, Kochan sometimes fought heavyweights. "My manager wasn't afraid of none of them," he explained.

Kochan was a U.S. Coast Guard veteran of World War II. He was inducted into the Summit County Sports Hall of Fame in 1982.

For many years he attended daily Mass at St. Vincent Catholic Church and was a member of St. Bernard Catholic Church.

He was preceded in death by brothers, Steve, Joseph and John Kochan and leaves brother Pete Kochan of Akron.

Calling hours are from 6 to 8 p.m. tomorrow, when services will be held at the Kucko-Anthony-Kertesz funeral home. Burial will be at 11 a.m. Friday in Holy Cross cemetery.

Akron Beacon Journal (OH) - Wednesday, September 20, 1995

❖ With thanks to:

Bob Sallaz of Munroe Falls for the information and  
stories about George Kochan

Barb Baltrinic, researcher and organizer of this  
presentation

February 3, 2021