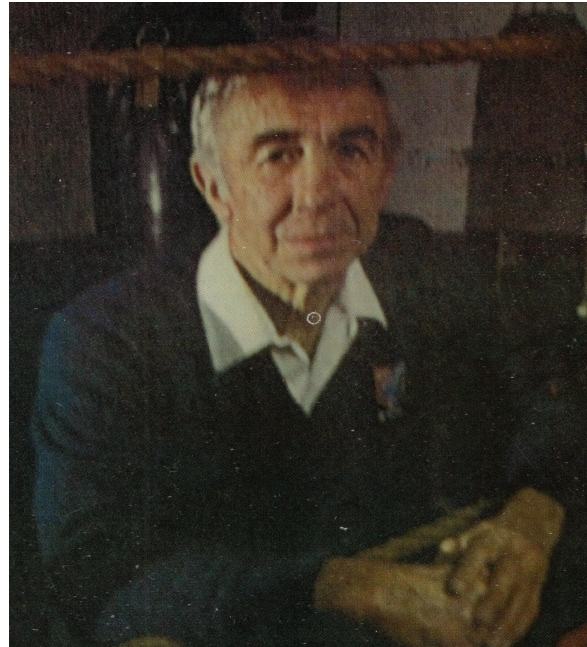


Florian “Flossy” Gust

This week we are happy to name Florian “Flossy” Gust as the 139th inductee in Marshfield’s 150: Heroes and Leaders, Past and Present register. Florian “Flossy” Gust was nominated by his children, Charles, Suzanne, Jim, Jeanne and Jon.

Florian Gust had a six-decade love affair with boxing, and in those years he influenced the developing strength and character of thousands of young men from Marshfield and the surrounding areas. He was born Florian John Gust on September 2, 1918, the son of Jacob and Catherine (Zettler) Gust of Auburndale. As the story goes, the nickname “Flossy” was given to him by Wilmer Drollinger, on whose farm Gust worked during high school. Drollinger often had a wad of chewing tobacco in his mouth and when he said Florian’s name, it sounded like Flossy.



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Gust began boxing to stay active in 1937 on a dirt basement floor at St. John the Baptist School in Marshfield with the Catholic Youth Organization’s fighters. Over the next five years, with the Marshfield Athletic Club and then Golden Gloves he fought in more than 60 bouts without being knocked out. His short boxing career ended when World War II began. He had intended on making a comeback after the war, but got married, started a family and began devoting his time to instructing kids.

Gust started to help coaches Charlie Braem and Eddie Schattschneider of the Marshfield Lions Club with competitions in 1942. He became the boxing coach for the Lions Boxing Club in 1946 and continued through 1957 when the club discontinued sponsorship of the local Golden Gloves and closed the gym.

After several local boxers approached him, Gust agreed to help them out and started a gym in the basement of his rural Auburndale home. The basement was used as the Gust Gym until 1969 when a neighbor offered the use of the abandoned Hillside School. Although the schoolhouse was a step up from the basement it wasn’t anything fancy. Hundreds of young boxers passed through its doors. In 1996 Gust moved the Boxing Gym to the upstairs of the Old Armory, now the Oak Avenue Community Center. It marked the first time since 1957 that boxers were trained in Marshfield.

In these locations, local youth and adults came to test their limits, discipline their bodies and maybe let out some aggression. Gust spent countless hours teaching them the “manly art of self-defense” while emphasizing boxing basics. He coached his boxers not to abuse their skills, saying, “Don’t get into bar room or neighborhood fights, because there’s always someone who’s going to be looking for you because you are a boxer. You’re in a no-win situation to box in a fight, because you are supposed to win, but if you get dropped on the ground, that man is the king of the bar or neighborhood.” Also, Gust emphasized to his fighters what they could do to better themselves instead of how good they were doing. And, when the bell rang for the next round, his last words to the fighters were always, “Good Luck and God Bless.”

For many of these young men, Gust became more than just a coach or trainer. He was like a second father, and he treated them as if they were his own kids.

Gust trained boxers from every corner of the state and traveled all over the country managing amateur boxers – his boxers competed in national tournaments in Chicago, Milwaukee, Salt Lake City, Knoxville, Fort Worth, Las Vegas and Kansas City. One of the highlights in his career came in Madison during 1975 when he was selected as one of the Wisconsin team coaches for the United States Pan American Amateur Boxing Trials. There he worked with future Olympians and later professional boxers Michael and Leon Spinks and Sugar Ray Leonard.

In 1987, Gust was honored by both houses of the Wisconsin State Legislature with resolutions recognizing his 50 years of service to amateur boxing. The governor and mayor of Marshfield proclaimed October 24, 1987 as “Flossy Gust Day” and over 400 of his former boxers, family and friends attended a special dinner and dance. The milestone was also recognized by the Wood County Board of Supervisors, Marshfield Lions Club, the Marshfield Athletic Club, the Marshfield Jaycees, the Fond du Lac Boxing Club and the Menominee Nation Boxing Club.

At the USA Boxing Wisconsin State Championship, held in Marshfield’s Old Armory building in 1999, Gust was honored by his former boxers and hundreds of fans during the intermission. When asked what kept him going, he said, “I love the sport.”

Gust spent the better part of his life training, teaching and arranging boxing shows for thousands of kids from all over the state. Talking about his career once, he said, “It’s all worthwhile when you make a kid happy,” He added “When I look back, I wonder how I accomplished it all?” Referring to running a farm, a family and thousands of boxing careers, he said, “It hasn’t been easy, but if you can help a kid fulfill his dream, you’ve done something.” He went on, “If you leave this world without making it a better place in some way, you haven’t done anything.”

Local boxing legend, Florian “Flossy” Gust died at age 85 on May 8, 2004 after a lifetime of mentoring area youth in the manly art of self-defense while making this corner of the world a much better place.