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**SUGAR RAY ROBINSON RETURNS TO THE  
RING TO A 'STAMPING OVATION' OF 100 MILLION**

NEW YORK CITY - Revered by Muhammad Ali as, "the King, the master, my idol"; and by The Ring magazine as "pound for pound, the greatest boxer of all time"; six-time world champion boxer Sugar Ray Robinson was immortalized today at Madison Square Garden with a commemorative postage stamp. The dedication ceremony took place during the Daily News Golden Gloves Amateur Boxing Tournament finals.

One hundred million stamps, in the style of a vintage 1940s and '50s fight poster depicting Robinson in his peak fighting years, will be available in New York City Post Offices today and nationwide Saturday, April 8. "When Sugar Ray retired in 1965 at the old Garden, up on Eighth Avenue, he received a trophy," explained Thomas Day, U.S. Postal Service Senior Vice President, Government Relations, while dedicating the stamp. "Its inscription read simply: 'The World's Greatest Fighter.' Years later he was named the 'Fighter of the Century.' That is the man we are honoring today. The United States Postal Service is pleased to delight many of Robinson's fans, and commemorate Robinson's legacy with a postage stamp."

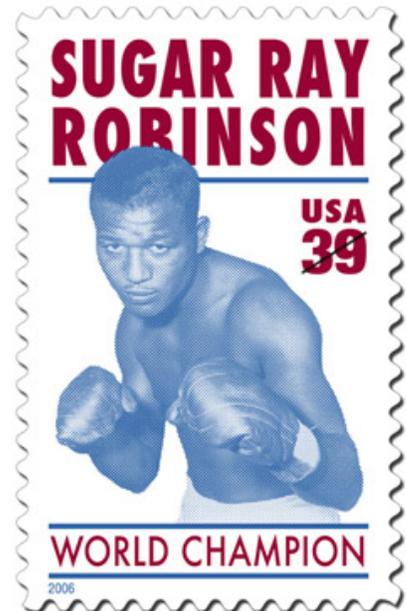
The Postal Service receives approximately 50 thousand stamp subject suggestions annually, yet only 20 to 25 make the cut. The only other boxer placed on a U.S. stamp was Robinson's hero and close friend, Joe Louis.

"My dad was a true competitor," explained Robinson's son, Ray, who joined Day in dedicating the stamp. "He would have loved those odds." Ray Robinson II, a promoter, works with Ring Eight, a boxing support group that assists indigent fighters with housing. He is also supporting a drive to create a Sugar Ray Robinson Museum.

In his prime, Robinson (1921-1989) was virtually unbeatable in the ring. He launched his career with a second-round knockout of Joe Escheverria on Oct. 4, 1940, at Madison Square Garden. Sugar Ray would go on to lose only once in his first 132 fights—a ten-round loss to Jake LaMotta, a decision he would reverse five times.

Although archrivals, Robinson and LaMotta had great admiration for one another. Said LaMotta, "I had great respect for Ray, but I fought him so much that I almost got diabetes," referring to Robinson's nickname, "Sugar Ray," coined by a sportswriter who wrote he was "as sweet as sugar." LaMotta asked Robinson to be his best man in his sixth wedding. "As far as I'm concerned," said New York Daily News Associate Sports Editor and Cartoonist Bill Gallo, who watched Robinson from his Golden Gloves beginnings, "Sugar Ray was the greatest boxer of all. It was like somebody watching Fred Astaire in action and saying 'Can he dance?'" Before the bell, he was calm and relaxed, almost like he could take a nap on his stool. Once the bell rang, he became a craftsman, an artist and killer all in one."

Robinson reigned as the undefeated world welterweight champion from Dec. 20, 1946, until Feb. 14,



1951, when he won the world middleweight title for the first of five times. Sugar Ray announced his retirement from boxing on Dec. 18, 1952, but he returned to the ring at the beginning of 1955. He continued to box until retiring for good at the end of 1965. The words, "The World's Greatest Fighter," were inscribed on a trophy he received in a ceremony at Madison Square Garden on Dec. 10, 1965.

Sugar Ray Robinson was born Walker Smith, Jr., on May 3, 1921 - either in Ailey, GA, (according to his birth certificate) - or in Detroit, MI, (according to his autobiography). In 1932 his mother moved with Walker and his two sisters from Detroit to New York City. They settled in Harlem, where Walker's natural talent in the ring was noticed at a local gym. He fought amateur matches using, as the story goes, a borrowed Amateur Athletic Union card that had been issued to a youth named Ray Robinson. Building a reputation for himself under the assumed name (which he would later take as his own), he fought a total of 85 amateur bouts and won them all - 69 by knockout, 40 in the first round." In 1939 he captured the Golden Gloves featherweight title. In 1940, after winning the Golden Gloves lightweight championship, Sugar Ray Robinson became a professional boxer.

Robinson's portrait appeared on the cover of the June 25, 1951, issue of TIME magazine - the caption read "Sugar Ray Robinson: Rhythm in his feet and pleasure in his work." In 1967 he was elected to the Boxing Hall of Fame.

Boxing Hall of Fame Historian Bert Sugar, and former editor of The Ring magazine, ranked Robinson "the greatest pound-for-pound boxer in the history of boxing" in his book, "Boxing's Greatest Fighters."

"Any and all descriptions of greatness can be applied to Sugar Ray Robinson," said Sugar. "He was indeed the sweetest practitioner of 'The Sweet Science.'"

Robinson was inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 1990, and nine years later a panel of experts assembled by the Associated Press named Sugar Ray Robinson the No. 1 "fighter of the century." He later moved to Los Angeles where he worked as an actor. He established the Sugar Ray Robinson Youth Foundation in 1969 to help inner-city youngsters develop their skills in sports, fine arts and performing arts. He died from complications of Alzheimer's disease and diabetes on April 12, 1989.

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