



Barney Ross (Jewish Encounters)

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Born Dov-Ber Rasofsky to Eastern European immigrant parents, Barney Ross grew up in a tough Chicago neighborhood and witnessed his father's murder, his mother's nervous breakdown, and the dispatching of his three younger siblings to an orphanage, all before he turned fourteen. To make enough money to reunite the family, Ross became a petty thief, a gambler, a messenger boy for Al Capone, and, eventually, an amateur boxer. Turning professional at nineteen, he would capture the lightweight, junior welterweight, and welterweight titles over the course of a ten-year career.

Ross began his career as the scrappy "Jew kid," ended it as an American sports icon, and went on to become a hero during World War II, earning a Silver Star for his heroic actions at Guadalcanal. While recovering from war wounds and malaria he became addicted to morphine, but with fierce effort he ultimately kicked his habit and then campaigned fervently against drug abuse. And the fighter who brought his father's religious books to training camp also retained powerful ties to the world from which he came. Ross worked for the creation of a Jewish state, running guns to Palestine and offering to lead a brigade of Jewish American war veterans.

This first biography of one of the most colorful boxers of the twentieth century is a galvanizing account of an emblematic life: a revelation of both an extraordinary athlete and a remarkable man.

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