"Apples, Pine Trees and Boxing Gloves!"

We've explained apples and pine trees..... ***What about boxing gloves...?***

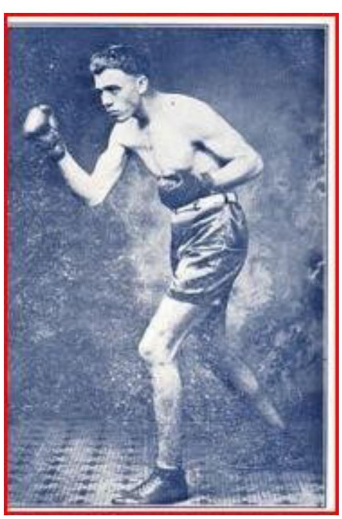
Mr. Edward Sturm had once been in the furniture business on Joseph Ave. and knew well how to greet customers and run a successful retail venture. The tavern business was a bit different, but Edward slowly built the Pine Tree Inn into a profitable enterprise. Ridge Road West would become completely paved (two lanes) from Lake Ave. to Manitou Road, the town of Greece line and beyond. Yet, with all its popularity, Sturm decided to put the Inn up for sale in the fall of 1928. A strapping, young and gregarious fellow by the name of Clement Versluy, who had immigrated here with his family to the United States in 1914, bought the Pine Tree Inn in December of 1928. Despite the depression of the 1930s and prohibition until 1933 (he was cited and fined several times for having illegal spirits on site), the Inn soon became one of the most popular eateries along the greatly improved West Ridge Rd.

Clement Versluy, having dropped his Belgian name, was now calling himself, MIKE CONROY - *"the boxer"!* Mike's professional boxing career had its start in the spring of 1920 with his first fight in Rochester. Boxing was second to baseball in popularity during the 1920s-1950s. He was named one of the heavyweight contenders of Western New York in the early '20s.

With Mike and his wife Alice as congenial hosts, "Mikes Pine Tree Inn" became one of the most favored spots on the west side of Monroe County. The walls of the barroom were covered with framed, autographed boxing greats and other local and national luminaries Mike had befriended. The Inn was enlarged and updated in1948 and now had a capacity to serve 300 people in the dining room and 100 more in the "tap room"! There was also space for a bandstand and a dance floor. Boxing legends from around the country often held gatherings at Mike's place.

The Democrat and Chronicle on Nov. 11, 1953 headline on the sports page read: "Mike Conroy to Quit Business, To See Sights with Alice". Their plan was to lease the business for a period of ten years so he and his wife, Alice, could travel.

The business was leased to Shale (Sol) Gans. Shale had been in the restaurant business on Brown St. for many years. Mike and Alice traveled to Europe, Cuba and Mexico. Within a few years the lease led to a sale to Gans. Shale took little time in a complete redecoration of the venerable Inn with new drapes, wallpaper & carpet, soft lighting, and overhead stars above the dance floor. Gone were Conroy's photo collection of boxers and notable personages. Shales was a bowling fan, sponsoring several leagues. The name was now SHALE'S and in small print, for a while, "*Formerly Mike Conroy's*".

Mike and Alice enjoyed their retirement years, still traveling and visiting old friends until Mike's health declined. Mike was "on the ropes and would soon be counted out" as longtime friend and columnist Henry Clune said in his column . When Mike Conroy (nee Clement Versluy) passed in July 1964, Clune said about his friend: "a big, blustering, immensely good-natured man, who loved life and the hard sport of professional boxing"....."Mike died the other day, and another colorful character departed the Rochester scene."

As a post-script to this tale.....Mike was lucky he never saw the final chapter to his once beloved Pine Tree Inn. Shale Gans filed bankruptcy in 1964 and The County of Monroe seized the property at 1225 Ridge Rd. for back taxes. That is the end of **"Apples, Pine Trees & Boxing Gloves"** plus a few nicked bowling pins!