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Wayne Barker: Born to Fight: The Extraordinary Story of a Bare-Knuckle Boxer

Bernard O'Mahoney

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The extraordinary memoirs of a bare-knuckle boxer, recounting his numerous brushes with the law, and his time in New York

From Salford to St. Louis, Missouri, former professional boxer Wayne Barker fought every man who ever challenged him. In this brutally honest account of his eventful life, Wayne recounts how his parents left him in the care of a gypsie community, where he learned to fight and traveled throughout Britain and Ireland to take on opponents for cash. Later, after being charged with attempting to murder a child killer, Wayne fled to the U.S., where he found work in the gymnasiums of New York sparring with the likes of world champion Wilfred Benítez. By night, he took part in bloody bare-knuckle bouts on the East Side. His ability in the ring was noticed by promoter Bobby Gleason, whose gym had been graced by legendary boxers such as Jake LaMotta, Roberto Durán, and Mike Tyson, and Gleason set up a fight between Wayne and former super middleweight world champion Fulgencio Obelmejias ("Fully Obel"). Wayne's criminal past eventually caught up with him and he was deported to Britain, where he served two years for his attack on the child killer. In his final years, he returned to the streets to earn a living from bare-knuckle fighting, until cancer claimed his life in 2012.

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