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Romance, a surprising friendship, and an intriguing biography Now in a new second printing

The Prizefighter and the Playwright: Gene Tunney and Bernard Shaw, by Jay R. Tunney, is the story of two extraordinary men. Shaw was a Nobel Prize-winning playwright. Tunney, who defeated Jack Dempsey for the heavyweight crown in 1926 and 1927, was anything but a typical boxer.

First published in 2010, **The Prizefighter and the Playwright**, by Jay R. Tunney, sold out in its original edition but is again available in hardcover (Firefly Books, \$35.00) and will soon be available in various e-book formats.

Written by Gene Tunney's son Jay and enriched with never-before-published family photographs, letters, and interviews, the book paints a portrait of the boxer no one knew. The book evolved from the acclaimed BBC radio series *The Master and the Boy*.

In December 1928, boxer Gene Tunney fulfilled his dream of meeting playwright George Bernard Shaw. The result was an unlikely friendship, powered, among other things, by Tunney's love of literature and Shaw's fascination with boxing.

The Prizefighter and the Playwright, which has received stories in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, the *Times Literary Supplement* (London), the *Toronto Sun* and *Associated Press*, pulls readers instantly and inescapably into this surprising relationship. It includes many revelations, new sources and letters from persons such as Charlotte Shaw and Thornton Wilder.

On its surface, it is the story of the friendship between a professional athlete and the acclaimed playwright, offering intimate glimpses of the two. It is also a romance between a rich girl and a poor boy. But **The Prizefighter and the Playwright** is more than the story of two extraordinary men. It tells the riveting tale of Gene Tunney – a self-made man, a high school dropout who not only reached the acme of his sport, but also turned himself into a gentleman who could feel at home lecturing at Yale or discussing novels with the men who wrote them.

In 1928, Tunney retired from the ring as the first undefeated world heavyweight champion and married steel heiress Polly Lauder. He did so, with possibly the finest 76-1-1 record in history. What he never gave up was his love of literature. Using his celebrity to indulge this passion, Tunney traveled widely,
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befriending a host of writers and scholars, including besides Shaw, Thornton Wilder, Ernest Hemingway, Hugh Walpole, John Marquand and William Lyon Phelps, Professor of English at Yale University.

In a twist of fate, Shaw and Tunney shared a profound spiritual crisis during a holiday together in the Adriatic Sea. Shaw, an avowed atheist, witnessed what he later referred to as a ‘miracle’ – in the near death of Tunney’s bride. In his introduction to the book, former Shaw Festival director Christopher Newton writes that reading of the miracle and the friendship “has helped put the soul back into an author who hid his humanity behind a screen of words.”

The Prizefighter and the Playwright also greatly enlarges the perception of one of the greatest prizefighters of the twentieth century.

All of that and more is related in this beautifully written book, a fitting tribute to a man who believed reading would open doors, and whose son shares his father’s gift for words.

About the author:

Jay R. Tunney, the son of legendary boxer Gene Tunney, has written for publications worldwide, including the *New York Times Magazine*, the *Asian Wall Street Journal*, the *Hartford Courant*, the *Annual of Bernard Shaw Studies*, and the *Independent Shavian*. He is a member of the Governor’s International Advisory Council for the Shaw Festival in Ontario, Canada, and vice president of the International Shaw Society. See www.tunney-shaw.com

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The Prizefighter and the Playwright: Gene Tunney and George Bernard Shaw

by Jay R. Tunney, Introduction by Christopher Newton

288 pages / 6" x 9" / 69 black-and-white photographs and illustrations, index

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Available now at bookstores; online booksellers or from Firefly Books www.fireflybooks.com

E-book available soon from online booksellers

Reviews of **The Prizefighter and the Playwright** include:

“...a meticulously researched narrative so attuned to the facts that one has to periodically remind oneself: This is his father [Jay] is writing about.” - *The Irish Times*

“...even for the relatively uninitiated reader to the heady world of pugilism, **The Prizefighter and the Playwright** is never less than compelling.” – *The Irish Post*

“One might dismiss the book, unread, as only a testament of filial devotion, but **The Prizefighter and the Playwright** is an engrossing read... Gene Tunney comes warmly alive as someone worthy of Shaw’s almost paternal interest, and G.B.S. emerges in a more private dimension than he is often seen by biographers...” - *Shaw: The Annual of Bernard Shaw Studies, Volume 31*

“...a beautifully produced book, with some wonderful black-and-white photographs, **The Prizefighter and The Playwright** is high recommended...” – *Boxing Monthly*