



# The Greatest Champion That Never Was: The Life of W. L. "Young" Stribling

*Jaclyn Weldon White*

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William Lawrence Stribling, Jr., known as Young Stribling, was born in a small southern Georgia town in 1904. The son of a store clerk and a farmer's daughter, he should have lived out his years in that rural setting, but he was performing in vaudeville before his fourth birthday and was a professional prizefighter by the age of sixteen.

His rise through the boxing ranks and classifications was meteoric and he soon earned himself a place among the top fighters in the world. Stribling married his high school sweetheart and the couple had three children.

Over the course of his career, Young Stribling traveled the world, rubbing shoulders with celebrities, sports legends, even royalty. Jack Dempsey counted him a close friend and Al Capone wanted to buy his contract and manage his career.

Stribling was also a championship basketball player, an accomplished golfer, an exceptional tennis player, a pilot, and a speedboat racer. He even attracted the attention of Hollywood and was approached to star in a movie about himself. But he was always happiest at home in Macon, Georgia, with his family and friends.

Young Stribling's boxing career spanned twelve years. During that time he fought 287 matches, winning 224 and losing only 12. The rest were draws or no decision fights.

Although he never achieved the championship title he sought, Young Stribling was true to himself and the values with which he had been raised. The most important things in his world were sportsmanship, honor, and doing his best. He never did less.

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