SAM SILVERMAN

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SHOWN ABOVE IS BOXING PROMOTER SAM SILVERMAN LEAVING HIS CHELSEA HOME IN 1955, AFTER INSPECTING THE DAMAGE FROM FOUR SEPARATE EXPLOSIONS WHEN NO ONE WAS AT HOME.

Sam Silverman, a boxing promoter for almost 40 years who gave Rocky Marciano most of his early bouts, died today after his car ran off the road on Route 2 here, the police said. He was 64 years old.

The Cambridge Fire Rescue squad had to use the "jaws of life" tool to extricate Silverman from his car, giving him resuscitation while he was still trapped in the vehicle, Lieutenant Joseph Roberts said. The police said he was driving East toward Cambridge at 6:25 A.M. Treatment continued while Silverman was sped to Mount Auburn Hospital, Cambridge, where he died, Roberts said. Hospital authorities said the cause of death still was undetermined.

Silverman, who was still active in promoting fights, matched the undefeated Marciano in 31 of his bouts before he won the heavyweight title.

In the 1950s, Silverman broke away from the International Boxing Club run by Jim Norris and tried to break the club's domination of the fight game in the country.

Known as "Unsinkable Sam," Silverman was returning early today from Geneva, N.Y., where he watched a fight involving Al Romano, the "Battling Cop" from North Adams, Mass., according to Bill Ebel, an associate. After driving from New York through the night with Romano, Silverman dropped off the boxer and started for his residence in Chelsea, said Ebel.

Silverman was credited with keeping boxing alive in New England. In addition to promoting in Boston, he matched bouts in Danvers, Holyoke, Pittsfield, Fitchburg, and other Massachusetts towns. He presented a weekly boxing show in Portland, Maine. He also was known as "Subway Sam" because so many of his fights were staged in Boston.

Silverman never realized his ambition to promote a world heavyweight championship match. He had Muhammad Ali, then fighting as Cassius Clay, lined up to fight Sonny Liston in 1965 for the heavyweight title, but Clay suffered a hernia, and eventually, the fight was staged by another promoter in Lewiston, Me.

Silverman; celebrated for his cigars and his ability to turn up cash to promote bouts, started in East Cambridge as a boxer before switching to matching and promoting fights. He spent a year studying journalism at Boston University, quitting when he ran out of money for tuition.

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