

## Into the Ring

National Archives photo via wikimedia.org



Sugar Ray Robinson



Photo via boxrec.com

In 1943, a military photographer snapped this photo of Sgt. George Dudley Wilson (l) and Pvt. Walker Smith Jr. These two airmen served in the same aviation squadron (according to the National Archives) at the US Army Air Forces' Mitchel Field on Long Island. They were famous—not in the military, but in the world of professional boxing, and under different names. Wilson, a silver medalist in the 1936 Berlin Olympics, was a welterweight who used the ring name “California Jackie Wilson.” Smith was the one and only “Sugar Ray Robinson,” thought by some (including Muhammad Ali) to be the best pound-for-pound boxer who ever lived. When the picture was taken, California Jackie was 25; Sugar Ray was 22. They knew each other well, having just fought a brutal 10-rounder in Madison Square Garden. Coming into that fight, Wilson—who had already enlisted and took furlough for the match—had a 47-4-2 record. Sugar Ray was 40-1-0. Sugar Ray won the bout in a majority decision, with one judge scoring it as a tie. Soon, they both were wearing the uniform of a nation at war.

California Jackie Wilson