

Hi, Fred Nelson for community Comment,

During the mid-Nineteen Thirties, my Dad would take me to the Broadway Arena to watch either boxing or wrestling matches. The Arena was located on Fifth Street between Broadway and Commercial Streets. The area is now occupied by the Best Western Humboldt Bay Inn. This was during the Great Depression but my Dad always found enough money for admission to the 'fights' plus a soft drink and a bag of freshly popped corn or fresh roasted peanuts. The boxing was mostly amateur with various local boxing clubs involved including Klamath, Crescent City and Hoopa. The clubs produced some exceptionally good fighters. The wrestling matches were professional and fun to watch. In those days, the wrestlers put on a performance of skill and showmanship. Even though some moves were noticeably staged, the performer knew how to physically handle the situation to avoid more serious injury. I think that they took more chances then and less of the noticeably false bravado that is shown today as the wrestler struts and stomps around the ring, making gestures and shouting all kinds of colorful words and slogans and then waits for the crowd to respond. Sometimes this ends up in staged arguments between the opponents wasting more time as the audience is short changed in action. In the Thirties, the villain got in the ring, made a few gestures to get the crowd's attention and then went to work. I compare this to comedians from the old days to those of the current period. The comedian then, finished a punch line and moved on to the next tidbit after the crowd's reaction died down. Now-a-days the comedian throws out a punch line and then waits for the crowd reaction rather than moving along to the next line which can be very awkward and deprives the audience of a full performance. The lady wrestling matches were also interesting to watch when the woman with the longest hair took the most punishment. I really got a kick out of mud wrestling matches, held for the men as well as for the women. Side boards would be installed ~~on all four sides~~ and buckets of mud would be carried in and dumped in the ring to a depth of a couple of inches. My father and I did not seek a ringside seat when these events took place. Handfuls of mud, thrown by a wrestler, did not always hit their target. The Broadway Arena hosted many events over the years including dance marathons, popular during depression days. People were looking for any kind of activity especially if any prizes were involved. I remember my folks stopping at one of the dance marathons to see what was taking place. Taking a peek through the front door I remember seeing numerous couples on the dance floor, moving painfully slow and holding each other up, only allowed to stop for food and to use the rest room.

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