


Shelby Chamber Banquet to Offer Ringside View of Gibbons Family Legacy

By Jennifer Van Heel Shelby Promoter May 3, 2023  0



Dr. Gerard Gibbons, grandson of champion boxer, Tommy Gibbons, has visited Shelby many times over the years and will return to be the featured speaker at the Shelby Chamber Banquet.

The annual Shelby Area Chamber of Commerce Chamber Banquet featured speaker is one with some very close ties to Shelby and an infamous moment in the town's history. Dr. Gerard Gibbons, grandson of legendary boxer, Tommy Gibbons, will speak to those in attendance on Friday, May 5th.

This year, 2023, marks the Centennial Celebration of "the fight that won't stay dead," and Dr. Gibbons is honored to follow in his father's footsteps, coming to Shelby to speak at the event.

"Speaking at the Chamber event really feels like a homecoming of sorts," said Dr. Gibbons. "My first time in Shelby was 1973, the 50th anniversary of the big fight. I was 17. It was my first time out of California, first time on an airplane. I loved Shelby immediately. It felt like home. Something that's really inspired me is a memory from that first visit a half-century ago.

Shelby's Chamber of Commerce hosted an event back then. I was at that meeting. I stood in the back of the room and watched my father address the men and women of Shelby's Chamber of Commerce a half-century ago. He was the Chamber's featured speaker at the 50th anniversary. Fifty years after that, I'm walking in my father's footsteps."

While those are some rather large footsteps to fill, Dr. Gibbons is just the man to do it. His family history in the boxing world is nothing short of phenomenal and a fantastic story to share. The great fight of 1923 is a major event, but the role of boxing runs much deeper than that one infamous fight.

Tommy Gibbons was a fantastic boxer, with boxing experts in the 1920's describing him as "the greatest pound-for-pound fighter of his weight in the world." But it was his older brother, Mike, who actually blazed the trail in the boxing world, taking his younger brother under his wing, acting as a mentor and a coach. Mike was called "The St. Paul Phantom" during boxing's Golden Age. Mike earned that moniker because he was just that quick, moving so fast he was almost invisible. It's been said, "he'd make you miss, then make you pay!"

Mike and Tommy Gibbons were "the shining knights of boxing." History has them recorded as five-time boxing hall of famers.

Not only did they shine in the ring, but outside as well. Their boxing talents were sought during World War I, when Mike and Tommy were asked by the US Army to write a training manual for soldiers based on their lessons and methods. This manual was instituted their techniques across the military and is still used by the Army and Marines today. Mike and Tommy not only provided a manual of training, but actually taught millions of soldiers in training the art of boxing, hand-to-hand combat and bayoneting.

The boxing match of 1923, may be the most remembered time that a Gibbons was in the ring in Shelby, but it wasn't the only time. Boxing runs deep in the Gibbons' blood, and Mike's second oldest son, Jack, was another force to be reckoned with in the ring. In 1935, Jack Gibbons fought Sammy Evans, a former wrestler from Cut Bank, in Shelby. It was 12-years later and this match found Tommy and Mike Gibbons ringside as Shelby gave playing host to boxing another try. Jack knocked Evans out in the seventh round.

"When Jack knocked Evans out in the seventh round, a big brawl broke out in the stands," said Dr. Gibbons. "I don't know if it's the Gibbons clan or if it's Shelby, but when you put the two together, interesting things always happen!"

And they are about to happen again as the Gibbons clan prepares to make their way back to celebrate an epic moment in history. Come July, it will be a Gibbons family reunion, with many coming from all over the world- California, the southwest, Minnesota, Montana and even Ireland! Keeping with tradition, the boxing matches taking place at the Marias Fairgrounds during the Centennial Celebration will feature a Gibbons in the ring, Ryan Gibbons, Jr., Dr. Gibbon's cousin.

Boxing is huge in the Gibbons family, spanning generations. Montana also holds a place in the Gibbons family history as they have ventured back here many times over the years. Dr. Gibbons' father, Tommy Jr., was six-years-old when he first came to Montana, back in 1923, to watch his father in the ring with Jack Dempsey.

"Indeed, the entire Gibbons Clan has returned to Shelby countless times... In 1948 for the 25th Anniversary of the fight, then again for the 50th in 1973, the 75th in 1998, literally all of the essential celebrations of what occurred in Montana that fabled summer a hundred years ago," said Dr. Gibbons. "The Gibbons Clan fell so deeply in love with Montana, in 1923, that it became, in many ways, my family's second home. We played here. We got jobs and worked hard here. My mother and father met in Glacier Park, fell in love there. They got engaged here. A hundred years later, the Gibbons Clan considers the people of Shelby to be not only close friends, but family."

The Gibbons family legacy is boxing, with each adding to it in their own way throughout the generations. Dr. Gibbons is quite the success story on his own, earning a BA in film and television production from Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, a BA in Visual Science and a Doctorate of Optometry from Pacific University in Oregon.

He worked for 30 years as a filmmaker, writer and brand strategist for an impressive and very diverse range of clients, including the US Department of Defense, Special Operations Command, Fortune 500 companies, Walt Disney, Special Olympics, Military Health System, Combat Medicine, DARPA and other government agencies, along with advanced science, medical and technology companies.

Today he is the CEO of Fight For Glory, LLC, based in southern California. Several years ago he dedicated himself to exploring his family's history more in depth and writing a series of books, about his family legacy and the amazing story of the men behind it.

It all started in 2016 when he realized that he needed to do something with the boxes of meticulously archived information left for him by his father. Fight for Glory is a three volume series that depicts the events and shares the amazing tale of boxers, Mike and Tommy Gibbons' and those they met along the way.

"Mike and Tommy's journey saw them deeply entangled with some extraordinary moments in history," said Dr. Gibbons. "Along the way they befriended, or clashed, with everyone from Harry Houdini to John Dillinger, F. Scott Fitzgerald to Douglas Fairbanks, Ernest Hemingway to the Marx Brothers. That's barely scratching the surface. Fight for Glory is told in three volumes. The first installment will be published later this year. We're also developing Fight for Glory as a streaming television series."

In honor of the Centennial Celebration of the 1923 fight, Shelby, 1923: A Fight for Glory Story, was created. This is an awesome coffee table book full of photos and information about the legendary 2023 match in Shelby. You can find out more about it by visiting the website, www.FightForGloryStory.com.

"In 150 pages, we tell the story of Tommy Gibbons, Shelby, Montana, and their impossible dream more deeply and completely than ever before," said Dr. Gibbons. "The book is also full of absolutely incredible historical photos, newspaper clippings and illustrations. Our friend, Dean Hellinger, at Marias Museum of History and Art, helped us out with a few of them!"

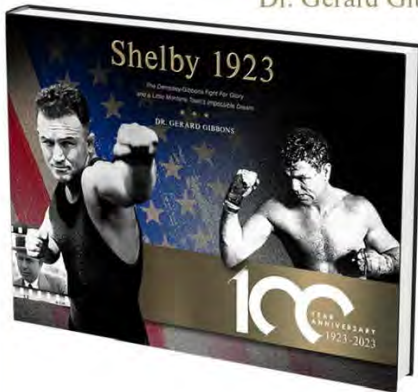
Dr. Gibbons went on to add, "The story the world may have already heard about the Shelby extravaganza, the cowboys and the Indians and the 'hicks from the sticks,' often sounds like fiction. Or worse, a punchline. But told in full, as we have worked faithfully to do, the story yields even greater surprises, richer mysteries, deeper wonder and beauty. It is often heartbreaking and frequently hilarious, but also inspiring. The characters are unforgettable. Through years of research, the Shelby story revealed itself to me as being profoundly meaningful and resonant in today's world. It's a story that means a lot to me, and was written with the people of Montana very much in mind. We'll have copies available at the Centennial Event."

Not only is Dr. Gibbons an accomplished and published author, he is also an avid photographer, guitarist, backpacker and fly fisherman. He shared that he lives his life by a motto borrowed from his father and grandfather, "Comport yourself with elegance, and moderate your pace." Dr. Gibbons has done just that and continues to as he honors and shares his family's incredible legacy with the rest of the world.



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Shelby 1923
Dr. Gerard Gibbons



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