

Voices of Met reason

WHILE THE METS cruised down a road to ruin, Bob Murphy and Gary Cohen drove a straight line, coping with the lows and savoring an infrequent high.

Somewhere between Chicago and Shea, 110 games into oblivion Monday night, even these steady riders felt frustration. It boiled over. Not in an angry way, but in a humorous one.

Once upon a cliché, some wise old dude said things you say in jest have truth in them. So, on Monday — before the Mets opened their series with the Pirates — Murph-Man and Cohen issued a verbal on-air signal that the collapse was official.

"You know, Gary, it was an unusual ride back from Chicago," Murphy said. "The Mets usually get a small plane, but — for whatever reason — we were in one of those big jumbo planes. As we took off, after an 0-6 road trip, all I could think about is maybe they should fill this plane up with gas so we could fly straight to France."

Cohen, laughing, added the kicker: "Yeah, maybe the Mets could find a pickup team in Paris they could beat."

This came from the only

two guys who cover the Mets for the full 162. No other broadcast team, no writer, does it day in and day out. Murphy, the eternal optimist, sat in the radio booth Wednesday, laughed and shook his head when reminded of the comment.

"Perhaps I was a little too flip," he said.

Not to worry. There are no broadcasters more conscious of their relationship with — and responsibility to — the fans as Murphy and Cohen. This is no small feat. It's natural for a voice to mouth disgust during a game when their team is on the receiving end of a butt kicking, but some guys take it personal. We've talked to announcers who whine and sulk off the air when their team goes tube city.

Their rationale is simple. They believe no one watches or listens to a team out of contention. They apply a direct correlation to their own success or failure as a broadcaster with the performance of the team they work for.

TV SPORTS BOB RAISSMAN



This is a selfish perspective. It doesn't take into account the real fans. The hard core which hangs in win or lose.

So on Wednesday, while Bobby Bonilla, Howard Johnson, Vince Coleman and Daryl Boston engaged in a friendly game of craps in the Mets clubhouse (suffice it to say the money they were laying out won't be coming out of their World Series shares), Murphy and Cohen were preparing to call a game. It didn't matter that the Mets were 12½ out, they prepared as if it were opening day.

"You're not talking into thin air," Cohen said. "You're talking to people who've chosen to listen that day. They're not listening because they have a love affair with Bob and Gary, they're

listening because they have a love affair with the Mets. I did three years in the minor leagues. Every day I basically knew nobody was listening. But I love the game. I think I know how the fans listening feel about baseball."

Murphy has been here before. This latest demise is Oreos and a shot of Bosco compared with the Willie Montanez era of the late '70s and early '80s. "That came after they had won twice and the expectation was always very high," Murphy said. "That was hard to cope with. But what happens is you kind of zero in on individuals. Of course it doesn't match the excitement of being in a pennant race. I would never pretend that it does. But I never have a day, fortunately, when I don't look forward to going to the ballpark."

Cohen lived through that down period in a different way. Perhaps it prepared him for what he now must work through. "When Bob was broadcasting those games in '79, '80, '81, I was one of a very few paying customers here," Cohen said. "I came to the ballpark 40, 50 times a year in those days because I enjoyed watching a baseball game. Nothing has changed since then except

now I'm getting paid to watch."

But there have been changes. Now there are only extremes. Highs and lows. Never a middle ground. There is no better recent example of this than the Mets' season. The big buildup came in the winter with the hiring of Jeff Torborg and the acquisitions of Bonilla and Bret Saberhagen. Media and fans were proclaiming Al Harazin this year's genius. Baseball's Camelot was alive and well in Flushing.

Now, it's the Shea asylum. The Flushing toilet. There can be no rationalizing, only ripping. Murphy and Cohen realize this. Their audience realizes it. The trick for the voices is to deal with the reality, but not swing too far in either direction.

It's a delicate balance.

"You watch as things go from one extreme to another," Cohen said. "You build something up, then it's a lot easier to knock it down to the ground than to take a middle ground. But when we come to work, it's not to win or lose. We don't win or lose ballgames. If you go into this job expecting to be with a winning ballclub, you're in trouble — a lot of trouble."

Jake: Cooney talk is all bull

By **BILL GALLO**

Associate Sports Editor

Jake LaMotta, the former middleweight champion who once admitted to a congressional committee to throwing a fight, yesterday scoffed at reports that Gerry Cooney had dumped a heavyweight championship fight against Larry Holmes in 1982.

The report stems from comments made this week by Michael Franzese, a self-described former member of the Colombo crime family, at a U.S. Senate investigations subcommittee hearing on boxing. Franzese said Cooney had tipped friends to bet against him in the Holmes fight. Cooney was outboxed throughout and lost to Holmes on a TKO in the 13th round.

"I watched that fight very closely," said LaMotta, "and I didn't see any hint of a dive by Cooney. Actually, Cooney got hit pretty good, and besides he was just an ordinary fighter and it didn't figure he could ever beat Holmes."

LaMotta, who today will tell you it's no secret that he took a dive against Billy Fox in a Garden fight in 1947, said,

"Listen, there are a million ways to throw a fight and Cooney didn't know any of them. He just got the hell beat out of him, that's all."

LaMotta admitted that his taking a dive against Fox was due to his being squeezed by the mob. "I'm still not going to mention names and all I'll tell you is that I did it because it gave me a guarantee to get my title shot if I went along on the Fox thing — and the shot came.

"Boxing being boxing and what I know about it from my days, if I had to take that dive again in order to get my shot at a title, I'd do it." LaMotta spoke about corruption in boxing like it was commonplace. Even when the mob got

'If I had to take that dive again in order to get my shot at a title, I'd do it.' — Jake LaMotta

him the title shot, there were others LaMotta had to pay.

After all these years, LaMotta revealed how he even had to shell out \$20,000 of his own money to the people behind then-champion Marcel Cerdan. "I gave the money under the table to them. But I'm sure Cerdan himself didn't know about it," said LaMotta.

On June 16, 1949, in Detroit, LaMotta became the world middleweight champion when he stopped Cerdan in the 10th round.

Also accused of possibly throwing fights at this week's subcommittee hearing was former middleweight Vito Antuofermo, who denied the accusations. LaMotta had this to say about Antuofermo: "Vito would never throw a fight. He fought hard and was always trying to win. This is all talk."

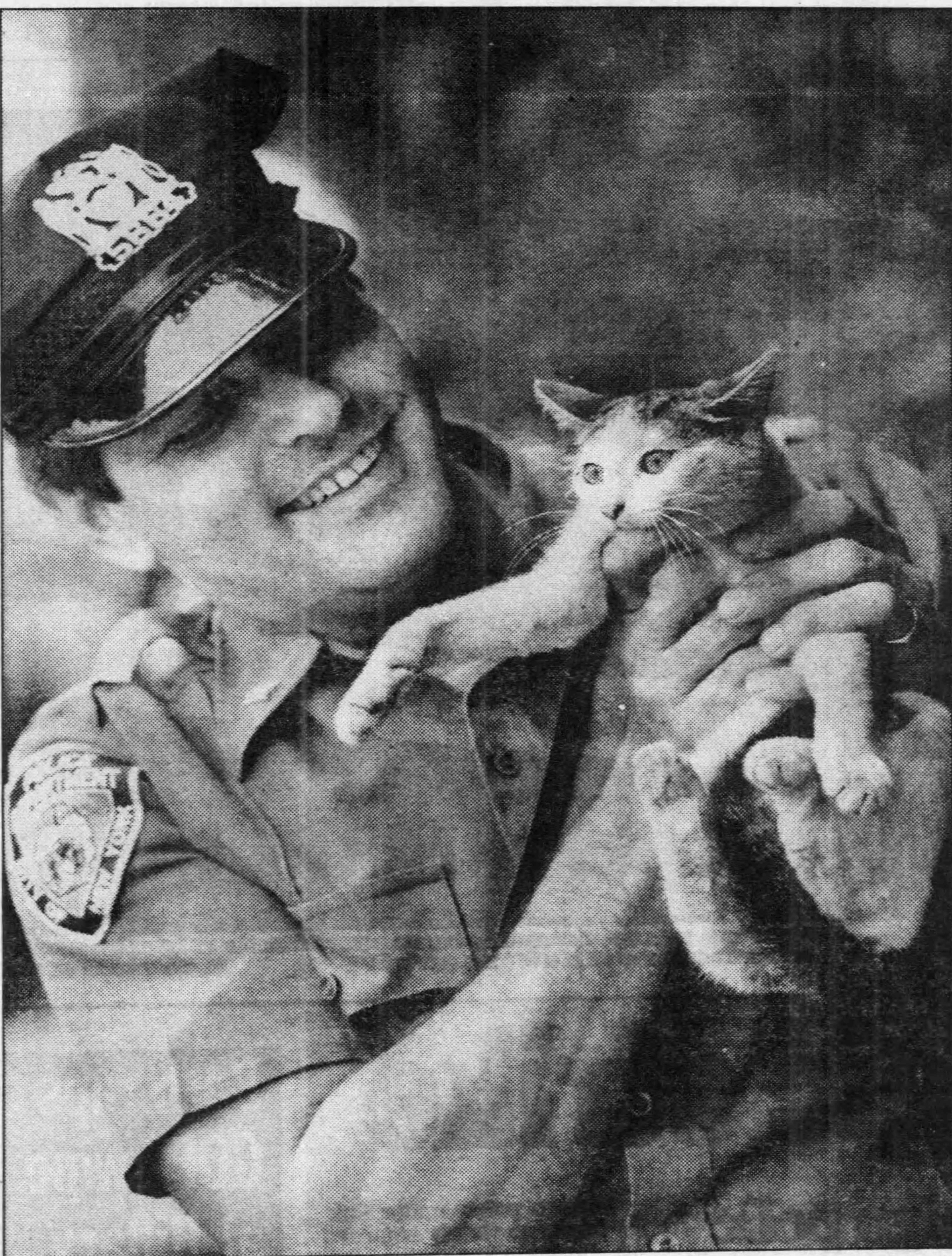
Did LaMotta see a way boxing could be free once and for of the underground reputation that has followed it since the days of Owney Madden with Primo Carnera?

"Yes, by having a National Commission," said LaMotta. "Boxing needs it bad. The fighters are the only athletes in the world who nobody gives a damn about."



JAKE ADMITS FAKE: Jake LaMotta, shown here testifying before Senate committee in 1960, admitted then to throwing a fight against Billy Fox.

DAILY NEWS PHOTO



Heroic double rescue

POLICE Emergency Service team pulls Department of Transportation worker Robert Finn from 25-foot-deep hole along Henry Hudson Parkway near Dyckman St. yesterday after he fell in while trimming trees. The hole, a concrete shaft that is usually covered, leads to electrical access tunnels beneath the parkway. Meanwhile, Police Officer Joseph Kompe (above), also at the scene, helped avert another tragedy. He scooped up a stray kitten wandering along the edge of the highway. Kitty will go back to Highway 1 Headquarters to join a collection of other rescued pets. Finn was taken to Harlem Hospital. **GERALD HERBERT DAILY NEWS**



Rev. Al: I'm no mob pal

Calls charges 'political'

By **SUSAN MILLIGAN**
and **FRANK LOMBARDI**

Daily News Staff Writers

The Rev. Al Sharpton yesterday came out swinging at allegations he was involved with mobsters in a boxing-promotion scheme generated by a 1983 FBI sting.

Sharpton, one of four candidates running for the Democratic U.S. Senate nomination, accused a Senate subcommittee of airing the mob-link charge to discredit him politically.

"Everybody in the black community is laughing," Sharpton said. "The funny thing is that with all the accusations about D'Amato and all the accusations about Ferraro's husband, they're going to try to make the gangster in the campaign the black guy."

He was referring to Republican Sen. Alfonse D'Amato and to Democratic Senate candidate Geraldine Ferraro's husband, John Zaccaro.

The Senate permanent subcommittee on investigations opened hearings in Washington Tuesday on corruption in professional boxing and organized crime influence in the sport.

A focus is boxing promoter Don King, a long-time Sharpton friend.

An undercover FBI video tape played at Wednesday's hearing recorded Sharpton discussing a boxing deal with Danny Pagano, a reputed mobster, and two "investors" passing themselves off as drug dealers with millions to launder. The deal was never consummated.

The two investors were actually undercover FBI agents.

Sharpton insisted yesterday he knew Pagano only as a



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Al Sharpton

music promoter and had not known of his mob background.

Sharpton made a similar denial about Michael **Frantzese**, another mobster involved in the 1983 sting who is now a cooperating federal witness and testified that Sharpton was associated with mobsters.

Sharpton also denied he became a secret federal informant after being snared in the sting. But according to a source involved in the Senate probe, Sharpton cooperated with the FBI in its probe of King by wearing a concealed tape recorder, but that King made no incriminating comments.

King was subpoenaed by the Senate panel but refused to answer questions, citing his Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination.

Sharpton said he has not been subpoenaed.

Gerry's limit: 2 debates

Ignoring charges from rival Democratic U.S. Senate candidates that she has been ducking them, front-runner Geraldine Ferraro has agreed to only two debates before the Sept. 15 primary election.

Ferraro's three opponents had been pressing for as many as 12 broadcast debates. And the League of Women Voters of New York State had hoped for five televised debates upstate and one in New York City.

By limiting the number of debates, Ferraro, who leads in the polls, opted for a strategy normally employed by incumbents, who don't want give their rivals the exposure or risk making gaffes. She hasn't debated her rivals

since May 14.

Both debates accepted by Ferraro will be held in New York City television studios in the five days before the election. Also participating will be State Attorney General Robert Abrams, City Controller Elizabeth Holtzman and the Rev. Al Sharpton.

On ABC and NBC

One is scheduled for Thursday, Sept. 10, from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Channel 7 studio, under the sponsorship of the League of Women Voters. The debate will be available for airing by other ABC affiliates in the state. The second is set for Sunday, Sept. 13, from 11 a.m. to noon, on Channel 4's "News Forum" with Gabe Pressman.

— Frank Lombardi