

FAREWELL

Paul Gallico

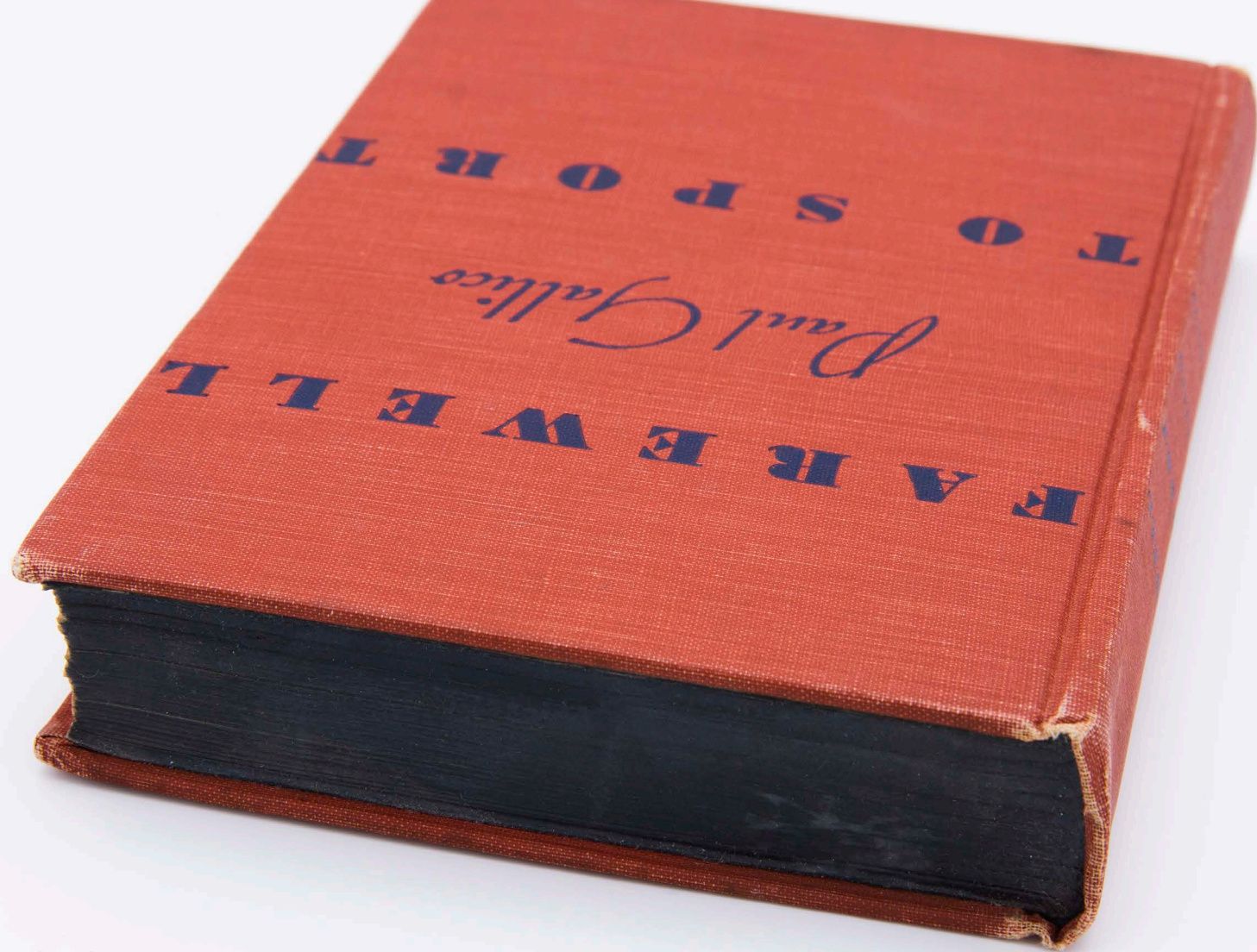
TO SPORT

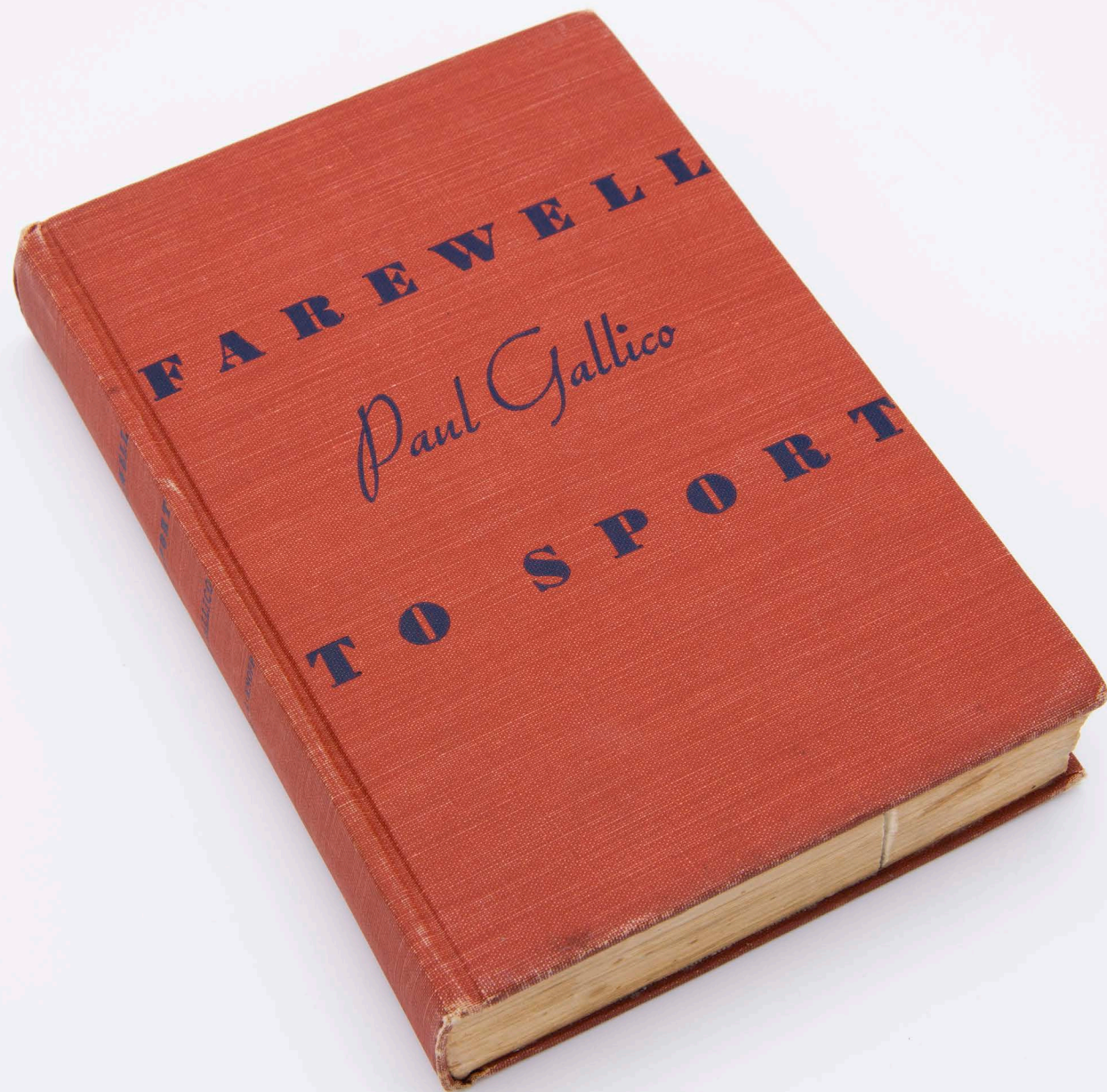
FAREWELL

TO SPORT

PAUL GALLICO

ALFRED A. KNOPP





To Westbrook Pegler, Grantland Rice, Damon Runyon, Harry Salminger, Mark Kelly, Alan Gould, Jim Dawson, Dan Parker, Davis Walsh, Joe Williams, Hype Igoe, Bob Considine, Bill Corum, Henry McLemore, Stu Cameron, Ralph McGill, John Kieran, Jim Kahn, and all the rest of my friends and companions on the sports pages of America, this book is dedicated with nostalgia and my sincere affection.

PAUL GALLICO

I MINE EYES HAVE SEEN THE GLORY...

FROM THE summer day thirteen years ago when as a wide-eyed, open-mouthed novice, a rank cub who had never seen a prizefighter before, I was sent to Jack Dempsey's camp at Saratoga Springs, New York, to write stories about his training for the defense of his title against the challenge of Luis Angel Firpo, to another summer evening not long past, when in the vast Reichs Sports Stadion in Berlin the Olympic flag crept down the masthead and the perpetual flame died and vanished from the great black tripod, my last assignment—this is the first time that I have had a chance to stop for a moment and think over the things that I have seen and reported in the wildest, maddest, and most glamorous period in all the history of sport. I am able to do this, because I am saying good-by to sports-writing.

It was an incredible period, this dizzy, spinning, sports reel of athletes, events, records, personalities, drama, and speed, a geared-up, whirling, golden world in which a lifetime was lived in five years, or sometimes it seemed even overnight, as heroes and heroines, champions and challengers burst upon

II WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE —DEMPSEY?

THE MOST popular prizefighter that ever lived was Jack Dempsey, born William Harrison Dempsey, June 24, 1896, at Manassa, Colorado, and heavyweight champion of the world from July 4, 1919 to September 3, 1926. It has been generally forgotten that for a long time he was also one of the most unpopular and despised champions that ever climbed into a ring. And, curiously, it is possible to place one's finger upon the exact time and place, almost, when the switch occurred and the cult of Dempsey-worshippers was born—a public love and idolatry that have transcended anything ever known in the ring and perhaps, for that matter, in any sport.

It was, I suspect, some time between the hours of one and two o'clock in the morning of September 4, in 1926, in a room at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Philadelphia. It was about then that he returned there minus the heavyweight championship of the world, which he had left with Gene Tunney at the Sesqui-centennial Stadium a short while before. They had fought for half an hour in a torrential rain and Tunney had battered the supposed invincible champion almost beyond recognition.

WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE.—?

He was not alone. Several reporters crowded into the room behind him. A woman came to him with her arms and held him. She was with her finger-
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