



New England Cable News and the Terry Glenn Story

In 1999, New England Cable News (NECN) was one of the largest local news networks in the country, reaching more than 2 million homes in five states. NECN's main studio was in Newton, Massachusetts, and it had bureaus throughout New England, including one in the *Boston Globe* building. A 24-hour station, it ran mostly original programming: news updates, full-length newscasts, sports, weather, traffic, documentaries, lifestyle shows, and talk shows. For footage of national news events, NECN relied on an independent agreement with ABC NewsOne, which gave it access to ABC video.

Defying critics who had doubted that it could survive in a crowded, competitive market, NECN in only seven years had carved out a niche between national cable news networks and local news broadcasts. It maintained weekly and monthly ratings that attracted advertisers and made it profitable. It had succeeded, observers said, by providing high-quality programming at a relatively low cost. Jim Thistle, then-director of Boston University's broadcast journalism program and a former executive at Channel 5, told the *Boston Globe*: "It's become the regional CNN. They've gone for content over flash. They're doing longer stories, more politics, and live coverage of nonbreaking news—debates and things—that the others have forsaken."¹

Getting off the Ground

NECN emerged as part of what the *Columbia Journalism Review* (CJR) called "a journalistic movement burgeoning across the country."² In the 1980s and 1990s, local and regional all-news channels sprung up in most major markets. By 1993, there were enough of them to form their own association, the Association of Regional News Channels (ARNC). "The newcomers," said a 1998 article in the *Boston Globe*, "are mushrooming into a force that is changing the dynamics of local TV news. Whether it's spot news, ongoing live coverage of a major event, or a coveted interview with

¹ Suzanne C. Ryan, "Cable Station Turns 10 with a Sense of Patience," *Boston Globe*, April 14, 2002, p. L7.

² David Lieberman, "The Rise and Rise of 24-Hour Local News," *Columbia Journalism Review*, November-December, 1998, p. 54.

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a prominent newsmaker, cable channels pose a serious and growing challenge to the long-held dominance of broadcast stations.”³

By 1998, there were almost 30 local cable news stations nationwide, reaching roughly 23 million viewers. Some stations covered and served large cities: New York, Chicago, Washington DC, and San Francisco. Others focused on regions: the Pacific Northwest, Orange County and, beginning in 1992, New England.

NECN launch. NECN launched on March 2, 1992, a \$10 million joint venture of Continental Cablevision (later part of Comcast) and the Hearst Corporation. At its inception it employed 90 people and reached some 650,000 homes. The channel was the brainchild of Philip S. Balboni, former vice president and news director of Channel 5 (WCVB-TV), the ABC Boston affiliate. Immediately prior to creating NECN, he was special assistant for new projects to the CEO of the Hearst Corporation—a position that helped him to negotiate the deal between Hearst and Continental.

Balboni conceptualized NECN, drew up its business plan, and made the key hires. Charles Kravetz, the assistant news director under Balboni at Channel 5, became NECN’s news director. Balboni and Kravetz had helped Channel 5 to become both highly rated and respected, and they had lofty goals for NECN. Local news channels, Balboni told CJR, aim to be “the highest quality source of news on television.”⁴ The premise of the undertaking was that good TV journalism could be profitable. “There’s a strong appetite for quality local news,” Balboni said.

NECN started at a relatively low cost, relying on young, largely unknown on-air talent, non-union labor, and new technology. NECN used roboticized cameras, for example, allowing it to produce newscasts with four technicians, rather than the 12 to 14 required by traditional newscasts. Yet NECN didn’t impress critics at the outset. “Stories rarely lasted longer than those on standard newscasts,” the *Boston Globe* wrote in March 1992.

Each-half hour is predictably a carbon copy of the one that preceded it.
The reporters and crew seem to be the equivalent of a Triple-A farm club,
waiting for the call to the majors.⁵

The *Globe* praised the morning anchors and the in-depth coverage of basketball star Magic Johnson’s appearance at a high school, where he spoke about AIDS. But “except for the Johnson coverage, there wasn’t any sense of city or region,” it noted.⁶ A *Boston Herald* piece two months after the launch said, “The channel has not broken a story of note. Instead, NECN concentrates on

³ Don Aucoin, “Cable’s News-Comers: Regional News Operations Challenging Broadcasters, Changing Viewers Habits,” *Boston Globe*, January 4, 1998, p. N1.

⁴ Lieberman, “The Rise and Rise of 24-Hour Local News,” *Columbia Journalism Review*.

⁵ Ed Siegel, “Magic Saves NECN’s Debut on Cable,” *Boston Globe*, March 3, 1992, p. 27.

⁶ Ibid.

going 'live' with easy, stagy news events, such as ceremonies and speeches."⁷ In its early months, NECN ran Channel 5 news telecasts which, the *Herald* said, created an unflattering contrast: "Compared to NECN, NewsCenter 5 never looked so good."

But Balboni knew that problems were inevitable, and that a news channel didn't emerge fully formed. NECN, much anticipated and closely watched, didn't have the luxury of making its mistakes in obscurity. "People forget what CNN was like when it first went on the air," Thistle of Boston University told the *New York Times*. "They had some really rocky moments and now people talk about them in hallowed tones. I think NECN started with far fewer problems than CNN did."⁸

Into the Black

The programming quickly improved. NECN had been on the air for less than a year when it won the Associated Press award for best newscast, beating the three local network affiliates. A year and a half after its launch, the *Globe* critic who had panned NECN now had tempered praise: "New England Cable News continues to improve, but is more adept as a headline service than as a news source providing added depth to stories."⁹

Viewers, however, were still hard to come by. NECN lost more than \$10 million in its first year, including start-up costs. Advertising sales—which, according to NECN's business plan, would eventually account for 65 percent of revenue—were below \$1 million in the first year. NECN charged \$250 to \$500 for a 30-second spot, compared to the \$3,000 charged by the top-rated telecast, Channel 5 (WCVB). According to critics, NECN hadn't found its niche. "In a very cluttered market, blessed with good local news, people need to think about what they want out of New England Cable News," said Mark Jurkowitz of the *Boston Phoenix*, an alternative weekly newspaper. "And New England Cable News isn't giving them the answer."¹⁰

In the spring of 1993, Greater Boston still provided more than three quarters of NECN's audience. But Balboni continued to believe that there was unsatisfied demand for his product. "Our mission is to convince cable operators to carry us," Balboni said. "It's a very tough job and it takes time."¹¹ Balboni was proved right. Over the next few years, NECN expanded. By June of 1996, it reached every major city in New England except for Providence, Rhode Island. By April 1997, it was available in 2 million homes, twice as many as when it began five years earlier, "the

⁷ "N.E. Cable News Misses Its Calling: Repeated Stories Replace Enterprise Reporting," *Boston Herald*, June 3, 1992, p. 57.

⁸ Glenn Rifkin, "A News Niche Grows in New England," *New York Times*, April 26, 1993, p. D1.

⁹ Ed Siegel, "Six O'Clock Highs and Lows: Ch. 7 Takes Tabloid Path in Race to Win Local News Game," *Boston Globe*, Nov 3, 1993, p. 75.

¹⁰ Rifkin, "A News Niche Grows in New England," *New York Times*.

¹¹ Ibid.

magic number in terms of our viability as a business,” said Balboni.¹² Almost 90 percent of cable subscribers in Greater Boston and 58 percent in those in New England now had NECN. Some 40 percent of these homes tuned in at least once during an average month.

In the mid-nineties, NECN opened bureaus in Manchester, New Hampshire and Hartford, Connecticut and built a second studio and control room in Newton. As it became more established, NECN was able to hire well-known anchors, veterans of the Boston news scene who brought both credibility and viewers to the station. Beginning in November 1998, NECN began to beat CNN; that is, it attracted a larger audience in New England in an average week. Balboni’s business plan had predicted that NECN would begin to make money within four years. NECN missed the goal by two years: it first turned a profit in 1998.

The Market

NECN muscled its way into a crowded market. In 1992, the three traditional network affiliates plus three commercial UHF channels—25, 38 and 56—all competed for viewers in the country’s seventh largest TV market.¹³ For years, Channel 4 (WBZ-TV) had been number one, but beginning in 1978 Channel 5 topped the ratings. Channel 5 was created in 1972 by business and educational leaders who had acquired the license for the station in part by vowing to deliver high-quality programming with an emphasis on local news. Channel 5’s newscasts were, at least by the standards of TV journalism, sober and substantive. “Channel 5 was clearly driving the market,” said the *Globe*.¹⁴ “Responding to WCVB’s success, the Channel 4 newscast got increasingly competitive and serious,” while the third network affiliate, Channel 7 (WHDH), “tried any number of formats to compete with the other two, but it was always a matter of one step forward and one step back for that station.”

But the Sunbeam Corporation took over Channel 7 in 1993 and brought with it a fast-paced, glitzy, graphic-heavy style that had helped to turn around the fortunes of news stations in other cities. Former Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis, fresh off a teaching stint in Florida, had seen the Sunbeam station in Miami and expressed concern about its foray into Boston even before the new station had launched. Partly in response to Dukakis, the president of Sunbeam promised a toned-down version of its standard newscast, but as it turned out, there was a marked difference between the new Channel 7 and the other two channels. The *Globe* described the revamped Channel 7 as a “station that thinks you’re a no-brainer or a voyeur, with little interest in

¹² Daniel M. Kimmel, “Good News at NECN: Cable Service Can Profit From Growth,” *Boston Herald*, p.32.

¹³ In 1992, the three UHF channels were WFXT-TV (Channel 25, the Fox Broadcasting Company affiliate); WSBK-TV (Channel 38, then a UPN affiliate); and independent station WLVI-TV (Channel 56). At the time, WBZ Channel 4 was the NBC affiliate; WCVB Channel 5 was the ABC affiliate; and WHDH Channel 7 was the CBS affiliate.

¹⁴ Ed Siegel, “TV Wars,” *Boston Globe Magazine*, February 12, 1995, p. 18

the New England area except the body count, and a good deal of interest in *People* magazine celebrity reportage.”¹⁵

Over the next couple of years, as Channel 7 moved from a distant third to a close third, it seemed to influence the coverage of its competitors. Stories on the other two stations, observers agreed, became shorter and more sensationalistic. Critics of this trend included Kravetz, NECN’s news director, who told the *Globe*: “I believe that the coming of Channel 7 has reintroduced the idea of live coverage when the material doesn’t dictate it.”¹⁶ Commenting on coverage of a winter storm that he thought was overwrought, Kravetz said, “There is such a breathless nature to the local news.”

In February 1995, just a year and a half after the new Channel 7 had launched, a long piece in the *Globe* argued that the newscasts of the three network affiliates had become disturbingly similar. “What the city could really use is a strong alternative to the way all three stations ply their journalistic trade. The closest is New England Cable News,” it said.¹⁷

NECN’s Niche

Depending on the story and the time-slot, NECN competed against different stations. It teamed up first with Channel 25, and then with Channel 38, to produce a 10 p.m. newscast that competed with Channel 56 for early-to-bed viewers. At the same time, NECN provided national news coverage, which drew viewers away from CNN and other national cable news channels. In fact, ratings revealed that as a rule more New Englanders watched NECN than CNN, except when there was a national story of extraordinary interest, such as the O.J. Simpson trial. But NECN’s bread-and-butter was the sort of sensational local story also featured by the other local news broadcasts.

Although NECN competed against the other Boston news channels on certain stories, it could not—and did not need to—beat them head-to-head in the ratings. According to its radio-style ratings model, it was cumulative viewership that mattered most, and NECN sought to attract viewers during off-peak times. According to CJR, around-the-clock news channels appealed particularly to niche demographic groups, such as commuters who could not make it home in time for the evening news, and young parents who watched the news when they had a spare 15 minutes. In general, ratings of local news channels peaked during primetime, weekday mornings before 9, and weekend mornings.

¹⁵ Siegel, “Six O’Clock Highs and Lows: Ch. 7 Takes Tabloid Path in Race to Win Local News Game,” *Boston Globe*.

¹⁶ Siegel, “TV Wars,” *Boston Globe Magazine*

¹⁷ Ibid.

Some stories NECN had to itself, because the scope of its coverage was narrower than that of national news cable stations yet broader than that of the other local news broadcasts. “If our mandate is New England,” said Kravetz, “that means we’ll skip a lot of stories—fires, car accidents, petty crimes—that a local station might do.”¹⁸ NECN could, for example, choose not to report on a fire in Boston in favor of a school board controversy in a Boston suburb. The major TV stations in Boston reached hundreds of communities, but lacked the resources and inclination to cover most of them in-depth. NECN filled in the gap.

Advantages and Disadvantages. NECN’s relatively small budget put it at a disadvantage, especially during breaking stories. While recent technological advances helped NECN to compensate, there was sometimes no substitute for the superior resources of the network affiliate stations. NECN producers, reporters, and technicians had to do more with less. But the challenges were not just financial. NECN had to fill 24 hours a day without relying too heavily on repeat programming. “I give Charlie Kravetz ... a lot of credit for what he has to do over there every day,” said the news director at Channel 4. “It’s quite a daunting task, trying to fill up that much time.”¹⁹

But NECN enjoyed certain advantages. Its competitors had to wait until the next newscast to report stories, unless they decided to preempt network programming—an expensive and often unpopular undertaking. Reporters competed fiercely to get their pieces into a very constricted news hole. NECN, by contrast, could air a story as soon as it was finished, or could put up a brief report on a piece still in development, then report additional information as it became available.

NECN could also cover stories more thoroughly than local news broadcasts, which had only two to three hours a day to deliver the news. When former Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev came to Boston in 1992, NECN covered the visit for five straight hours. NECN provided gavel-to-gavel coverage of the 1997 trial of Louise Woodward, a 19-year-old British *au pair* charged with murder after the baby in her care died. The “nanny trial” coverage generated high ratings, so high that the network affiliates also began to carry it live.

An Alternative. Once Channel 5, under pressure of competition from Channel 7, became glitzier and faster paced, NECN was generally regarded as the most sober TV news outlet in the market. That was by design: NECN news managers wanted their station to be an alternative, a serious news channel holding the line against tabloidization. They saw NECN not so much as a direct challenger to its competitors but as a different creature altogether, something like the National Public Radio of local television news. Speaking to the *Globe*, Kravetz said:

¹⁸ Daniel M. Kimmel, “NECN Coming Into Its Own,” *The Patriot Ledger*, July 22, 1996, p. 15.

¹⁹ Aucoin, “Cable’s News-Comers: Regional News Operations Challenging Broadcasters, Changing Viewers Habits,” *Boston Globe*.

I still think there's a place and need and value for a station you can tune in to and get news without hype and without sensationalism... We get feedback that, yes, we're a slower animal, but that's good for a population troubled by the direction that local news is headed in.²⁰

Balboni concurred: "We give people a qualitative alternative to the broadcast news on TV, which has lowered the standards, shortened the duration of stories, and left behind people who want a more intelligent, substantive presentation of the news."²¹

Not all observers were so generous. The *Boston Herald*, a frequent critic of the station, found it precious. The newspaper called NECN "dour, elitist, defensive" and suggested that it was less interested in fashioning an exciting, risky station than in gaining "respectability—a precious commodity to the channel's news director, Charles Kravetz."²² This press tended to depict the NECN newsroom as Kravetz's personal fiefdom. But NECN prided itself on encouraging collaboration among producers, reporters, and anchors. "We tend to talk it through until we come together in a decision," says Tom Melville, an executive producer. "We seem to be able to successfully get everybody on board."²³

True, Kravetz and Balboni set editorial policy. They wanted NECN above all to be accurate, even if that meant going relatively slowly on a breaking story. "The idea that there is such a thing as a real truth, there is something that is verifiable, is core to good journalism," Kravetz says.²⁴ High-quality journalism, Kravetz and Balboni believed, would pay commercial dividends in the long-term. Sports Director Steven Safran explains NECN's philosophy:

The way you build a reputation isn't by the one story getting up six seconds before the other guy's; it's how you do it over time. NECN has always taken the approach of: if we are consistently doing these stories methodically and building up our reputation over years and years and years, then people are going to trust us as a matter of course.²⁵

But NECN was hardly puritanical. It was a news outlet like any other, hungry for a good story. As it boasted in a press release about its live coverage of an infamous ice-skating scandal

²⁰ Siegel, "TV Wars," *Boston Globe Magazine*

²¹ Aucoin, "Cable's News-Comers: Regional News Operations Challenging Broadcasters, Changing Viewers Habits," *Boston Globe*.

²² Monica Collins, "NECN Needs a Niche," *Boston Herald*, March 25, 1994, p. 45.

²³ Author's interview with Thomas Melville, June 5, 2007, in Newton, MA. All further quotes from Melville, unless otherwise attributed, are from this interview.

²⁴ Author's interview with Charles Kravetz, June 5, 2007, in Newton, MA. All further quotes from Kravetz, unless otherwise attributed, are from this interview.

²⁵ Author's interview with Steven Safran, June 5, 2007, in Newton, MA. All further quotes from Safran, unless otherwise attributed, are from this interview.

during the 1994 Olympics: “NECN was the only place to turn for a replay of Tonya Harding’s press conference in which she confessed to knowing about the attack on Nancy Kerrigan.” Many of the stories that NECN relied on for ratings, like the “nanny trial,” covered violent or salacious topics—the same stories that tended to dominate the other local newscasts. NECN amassed the highest ratings of its first year when it covered the three-week trial of a software engineer who had murdered his wife and small children. It impressed critics and attracted the attention of its competitors with its breaking coverage of 1994 murders at an abortion clinic in Brookline, Massachusetts. Rocky Mountain Media Watch found in a 1999 study that almost two-thirds of NECN news stories centered on violent topics: war, disaster, and crime.

But NECN did exhibit differences. While the station was just as likely as its competitors to cover “juicy” stories, it was more likely to cover them in-depth. It also aired documentaries. A *Globe* article described NECN’s approach:

The ‘scrappy station,’ as it’s been called by TV critics, has survived in the crowded Boston market by staying out of step with the industry. While others were downplaying ‘personality driven’ news, it hired veteran anchors Chet Curtis, Margie Reedy, R.D. Sahl, and Tom Ellis. When the push began for faster-paced newscasts, NECN opted for fewer, more in-depth stories (on average two to eight minutes long.)²⁶

A Sports-Mad City

The largest city NECN covered—Boston—was among the country’s biggest sports towns, perhaps surpassing even New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia. There was no way to quantify a city’s level of interest in its sports team, but economists at Northeastern University attempted to do just that, comparing Red Sox fans to baseball fans in other cities. Using a formula that measured attendance relative to a team’s position in the standings over a 30-year period, the professors found that Red Sox fans were indeed the most loyal.

Whatever the merits of the study, the interest in Boston’s sports teams was undoubtedly widespread and intense. In the sports realm, NECN could afford to cede little, if any, ground to its better-financed rivals. NECN provided not just scores and updates, but also live reports from games, features, analysis, coverage of press conferences, and post-game interviews with players. One of NECN’s most popular and acclaimed shows in its early years was Mike Adams’ *Sportsworld*, an hour-long nightly sports talk show. Freewheeling, unscripted, and sometimes crude, it became a favorite of sports fans and stood out on a station whose other programs could be staid by comparison.

²⁶ Ryan, “Cable Station Turns 10 with a Sense of Patience,” *Boston Globe*.

In Boston, it was not uncommon for a sports story to lead the news. Sometimes the line between sports and news blurred, especially when athletes attracted attention for off-the-field activity. In 1998, for example, Channel 4 led its noontime news with a report on an incident involving Dave Meggett, a punt returner for the New England Patriots, the professional football team. Visiting Toronto to attend a teammate's bachelor party, Meggett had been charged with robbery and sexual assault. NECN and Channel 5 also gave the story significant attention, but no station gave the story greater prominence than Channel 7, which cut into regularly scheduled programming to cover the Toronto police detailing the charges against Meggett. "This is a big, local news story," said Channel 7's news director. "Certainly in a breaking news situation, when there's an opportunity like a press conference, we will carry it. It only helps inform viewers."²⁷

The New England Patriots and Terry Glenn

A Troubled Franchise. For much of their history, the New England Patriots had been a troubled franchise. Nicknamed the "Pats" by supporters and the "Patsies" by detractors, they entered the American Football League as the Boston Patriots in 1960. They had sporadic success in the mid-70s and 80s, including a Super Bowl appearance in 1986. But in the late 1980s its owners, the Sullivan family, lost millions of dollars on business ventures and were forced to sell the team to Victor Kiam (majority owner).

The low-point in the team's history came in 1990, when it finished a league-worst 1-15 and was implicated in a notorious case of sexual harassment. After a game, several Patriots players verbally assaulted Lisa Olson, a reporter for the *Boston Herald*. Olson went public, sparking a national discussion about women in male locker rooms and prompting Kiam, the Patriots' owner, to call her "a classic bitch." The league launched an investigation, and Commissioner Paul Tagliabue fined Kiam and three players. If the Patriots weren't league laughingstocks, they were close.

Their prospects brightened after the 1992 season when the new owner, James Orthwein, hired legendary coach and two-time Super Bowl champion Bill Parcells. With rookie quarterback and number-one draft pick Drew Bledsoe at the helm, the Patriots won five games. In January of 1994, New England businessman Robert Kraft bought the team. Boston had historically reserved its strongest affections for baseball's Red Sox, basketball's Celtics, and hockey's Bruins, but the Patriots began to attract a large, intense following. All the 1994 games sold out before the season and the team made the playoffs. In 1995, the Patriots drafted Ohio State wide receiver Terry Glenn and signed him to a six-year, \$11.6 million contract.

²⁷ Howard Manly, "Ch. 7 in its element with Meggett story; station couldn't wait to jump on this one," *Boston Globe*, March 3, 1998, p. C6.

A Controversial Player. It would be difficult to imagine a rookie football player attended by more controversy or playing under more pressure. Glenn was the player his coach didn't want; owner Kraft had picked him over Parcells' objections. The pressure only intensified when Glenn missed most of the pre-season and the season opener with a pulled hamstring. Asked in training camp how Glenn was progressing, Parcells said, "She'll be alright." This slur on Glenn's toughness received enormous attention in the media and led callers on talk radio to label him "Teresa." Throughout his tenure with the Patriots, Glenn would be scrutinized and psychoanalyzed by fans and journalists.

But Glenn recovered and helped the Patriots make the Super Bowl for the second time in its history. In the media furor that accompanied the 1996 Super Bowl (which the Patriots lost), stories focused on Glenn's tragic past: he never knew his father, and when he was 13, his mother was beaten to death. Journalists cited the experience both to counter claims that Glenn wasn't tough and to explain his aloofness, which struck some as coldness. "He's quiet, almost introverted. He doesn't smile much," said one reporter.²⁸ Another quoted Glenn's high school coach, who said, "The day his mom was killed his life more or less ended. When he lost her, he felt he didn't have anyone to work for, anyone who'd be proud of him. He kind of shut down and became very introverted."²⁹

In the next two seasons, Glenn was plagued by injuries—a torn hamstring, a sprained ankle, a broken ankle, a scratched eye--and had trouble staying in the lineup. Yet he was a key player. The Patriots, said one story, "can't live without" a healthy Glenn.³⁰ The *Herald* summed up the frustration with his erratic performance:

He has become the Patriots X-factor, the mystery guest, Terry Glenn has. You know the defense is always going to come to play. You know the running game is suspect. You know Ben Coates is going to catch the ball over the middle, and that if Drew Bledsoe gets some time he's eventually going to make opposing defenses pay. But Glenn? Who really knows? In a sense he's football's version of schizophrenia... Are we going to see the Glenn, who has a stadium full of speed and talent, or the Glenn whose [sic] had both his heart and work ethic challenged?³¹

Other Patriot stars were frequent guests on TV and radio shows, but Glenn kept to himself, rarely giving interviews or signing autographs. "Glenn," said a piece in the *Herald*, "is

²⁸ Rich Cimini, "Glenn's Unlikely Ascension," *New York Daily News*, January 26, 1997, p. 65.

²⁹ Tom Archdeacon, "Troubled Past Stays With Glenn," *Dayton Daily News*, January 25, p. 1D.

³⁰ Karen Guregian, "Actions speak volumes; Pats a different team with Glenn in lineup," *Boston Herald*, December 8, 1998, p.91

³¹ Bill Reynolds, "Killer Nickname Fits Glenn for what he did to the Oilers," *Providence Journal Bulletin*, September 21, 1998, p. 2D.

often silent, to the point where many fans don't even know the sound of his voice."³² The 1999 season started off poorly for Glenn and the Patriots. The press began to report that Coach Peter Carroll had lost the confidence of both players and management. Rumors of Carroll's firing swirled as the Patriots lost six of seven games in the middle of the season to fall out of playoff contention.

There was a sense among reporters and fans that the players were out of control—on a personal as well as a professional level. Early in the season, second-year tight end Rod Rutledge, purportedly drag racing, crashed in a rest stop. He was escorted away from the scene of the accident by starting tight end Ben Coates, who the previous year had been arrested for domestic abuse. Just three years after their appearance in the Super Bowl, the Patriots were in disarray. "The Patriots are now a house of a cards," wrote one reporter. "All jokers."³³

Then on Thanksgiving morning 1999, late for a team meeting, Glenn was stopped by police in Walpole and charged with driving to endanger and driving without a license or registration. Glenn later admitted to drinking too much the night before at a charity function in a Saugus nightclub hosted by Patriot Willie McGinest.

³² Steve Buckley, "First and Glenn: In a rare interview, he heralded Patriots receiver discusses receptions, perceptions and deceptions," *Boston Herald*, August 29, 1999, p. B20.

³³ Dick Cerasuolo, "Carroll, Pats at a loss; Bring on the new coach restore confidence," *Telegram & Gazette*, November 30, 1999, p. D1.

