

## THE EARLY YEARS

Introduction by Merrill Reese

Phil Jasner was born to be a sportswriter. That's all he ever wanted to be from day one. We weren't in the same class, but we did go to Beeber Junior High School and Overbrook High during the same years. Phil was sports editor of both the Beeber *Oracle* and the Overbrook *Beacon*. At some point, we met in schoolyard basketball games. That led to football where I was always the quarterback and at 6-foot-3, Phil was a great target at receiver. Even then, Phil thought about a career as a sportswriter. I wasn't nearly as mature. At 5-foot-8, I still believed I would grow another four or five inches and end up on the cover of *Sports Illustrated* with my right wrist cocked as I looked downfield. Oh well.

By the time I entered college, I had determined that the closest I would ever get to the line of scrimmage was the broadcast booth. There I could enjoy my passion and share my love of sports with millions of fans. Phil stayed faithful to his original course. At Temple, I majored in communications (radio-TV) while Phil focused on journalism.

At the end of my freshman year, I was appointed sports director of WRTI (the student-run FM radio station). As a sophomore, I got to broadcast Temple football, almost all losses, and Temple basketball, a lot of wins. That year, the Owls got off to a great start. There was great anticipation as they prepared for a trip to Kentucky to meet the number one team in the country. WRTI only covered home games because there was no budget for broadcast lines and travel expenses. I got up my courage and went begging to the alumni association to finance the broadcast. I almost dropped over when they said yes. Now all I needed was a color analyst. No problem. Phil was covering for the *Temple News*.

I was excited for another reason. I had never been on an airplane. The day of the flight it snowed . . . and it snowed . . . and it snowed some more. The flight was

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canceled and we were put on a train at 30th Street station. Phil and I shared a Pullman car. Along the route, a man jumped onto the tracks and the train hit him. We were halted for over two hours. By the time we arrived in Lexington, it was almost 27 hours later. When you're confined to close quarters for that long, you either end up despising each other or become very close friends. Phil and I shared our dreams and career paths. Phil's biggest hero was the brilliant sportswriter at the *Daily News*—Stan Hochman. Mine was Eagles play-by-play voice Bill Campbell. Stan played a major role in Phil's biggest career move. Bill and I became very close friends years later as I had established myself as the Eagles voice.

Throughout the years, Phil and I remained close. Our lives took us in different directions. The day-to-day pressure of real life coupled with the demanding careers made it difficult to stay in constant touch, but we knew we were always there for one another. All it took was a phone call and we were up-to-date on everything.

I don't think there was ever one story that Phil wrote in the *Daily News* that I didn't read. And I appreciated his tenacity as a reporter, his clear grab-you-by-the-veins writing style and his sense of fairness and journalistic ethics. If Phil wrote it, I knew it was true. He never threw rumors and innuendoes against a wall and hoped that they stick. Phil told me that Stan Hochman's edict—"Get it first, get it right"—was etched in stone.

In this business, it's easy to make enemies. Coaches and players are often very sensitive to criticism and Phil never minced words. His personal feelings about someone never affected his evaluation of their performance. Phil wasn't a ripper. He didn't enjoy tearing people apart, but he felt responsible to his readers and he told them what he saw. I'm sure there were ruffled feelings from time to time, but I don't remember Phil ever making an enemy. Allen Iverson's famous "Practice" press conference where he said "We're talking about practice!" led to a famous exchange with Phil. We will remember that as long as we live.

Nobody has ever made a more indelible impression on my life than Phil. When something happens, I still, for a brief second, think about calling him. And then it hits me hard again—that Phil is no longer with us. But then again, his memories that were left will always be there and his special presence will forever impact our lives.

**MERRILL REESE** *has spent 40 seasons as the play-by-play voice of the Philadelphia Eagles and was recently inducted into the franchise's Hall of Fame.*

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ACCENT ON YOUTH

*The Philadelphia Jewish Times*

August 31, 1962

WALK DOWN A STREET in Philadelphia. Any street, any day, any time. Something's different. It's still summer, but something's not the same.

They're kids all over.

In the playgrounds, the swimming pools, parks, back drives, on the street corners, outside the bowling alleys. All over the place. They're home from the seashore, from Europe, from camp. From all over.

And their parents, for about an hour and forty-five minutes, are beset with ecstasy and glee at the return of their little loved ones. But soon, almost unbelievably soon, the initial shock plunges to its nadir and you hear in a quiet, almost whispered tone, the plainful, mournful wail of bored youth: "Hey Mom! I don't have anything to do!"

"Oh happy days," mother mumbles as she shoos her young ones out the door. "Go find your friends and play till dinnertime."

So when you walk down a street in Wynnefield, Overbrook Park, Oxford Circle, Logan, South Philly, or anywhere, you see kids. They're all out playing till dinnertime.

That kid throwing the ball against the wall, you think. Maybe he'll be President someday, or maybe he'll play second base for the Yankees . . . whichever pays more. And how about that little girl? Maybe a model? . . . or the First Lady?

You're thinking about all this, and suddenly you stop. Because just ahead in a driveway between two row homes are 18 kids, and instead of messing up the sidewalk, they're staging an outdoor musical to raise money for charity. With 14-year-old Harry Freedman directing, the kids display their talents via songs, dances, choruses and skits. In 1961, you learn, they earned \$85 for the Retarded Children Association, and this year they sold \$87 worth of advance admissions.

Susan Freedman, Andrea and Tina Silverman, Meryl and Joel Podolsky, Harriet Weisman, Stephen Kafin and Jeffrey Borland were some of the performing youngsters. They range in age from 11 to 16, and now you feel a little more secure when you think those kids are the adults of tomorrow.

"Kool Kats Productions" was the name of the teenage version of the Great White Way, and as you think about it, you wonder if this day will be noted in the annals of American History as "The day 18 potential cool cats became Kool Kats?"

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Smorgasbord . . . Karen Sherman, a junior at Temple, has received the Presser Scholarship to the university's School of Music. It's the second music scholarship for the Roxboroughite. She won a Board of Education music scholarship when she graduated from Girls' High. . . . Merrie and Bruce Kristol, of Merion, recently returned from a trip to Florida with their parents, Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Kristol. Merrie returns to Harcum Jr. College in the fall, and Bruce embarks on a collegiate career at Pennsylvania Military Academy. . . . Miss Beatrice Buten, also of Merion, has returned from a European summer. Miss Buten graduated from Brandeis University in June, and leaves in September to study for her master's degree at Berkley. While in Italy this summer, she had a brief reunion with some of her Brandeis classmates. . . . Robert Weinberg, son of department store owner Sol Weinberg, will resume studies for his master's degree in business administration at Harvard. He spent the summer doing research for a New York firm. . . . Levittown's Jane Frankel will be in the cast of the final Children's Show of the season at St. John Terrell's Lambertville Music Circus. The musical revue will have songs, dances and novelty acts for the kiddies, and the performers will all be under 18. Abe Neff joined forces with the Al Small orchestra, of the country villa in Bushkill, Pa., to put on an entertainment program for the kids at the Golden Slipper Square Club Camp. . . . The Rhawnhurst Jewish Young Adults are holding a social Sunday, Sept. 9, at 2312 Loney St. Dress is casual, but no slacks. Anyone interested should contact Norman Master, at 2501 S. 10th St., or Joe Shour, at 356 Rockland St.

Sports note . . . Spike those rumors about Dan Swartz leading the American Basketball League Tapers if they play in Philadelphia next season (if they play at all). Dan just inked his name on a contract with the Boston Celtics.

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### PERGINE GAINS SOUTH BEND GRID PRAISE

*Montgomery Newspapers (part of the fall 1966 football preview)*

September 15, 1966

WHEN JOHN PERGINE WAS a junior at Plymouth-Whitemarsh, Notre Dame Athletic Director Hugh Devore mailed him tickets to a South Bend spectacular. When he was a senior, Ara Parseghian offered him a scholarship.

It was like telling Roy Rogers he could have Trigger.

Pergine was an outstanding quarterback for the Colonials, an All-State basketball player and a promising baseball performer. He's 6'1", 215 these days, and strictly an inside linebacker.

"Don't be too quick to pass judgement on John because he's no longer a quarterback," Parseghian cautioned. "People have been passing judgement on John Huarte as a pro, but they forget it took him four years to develop into a Heisman Trophy winner."

Responds to Challenge: Colonial coach Ron Landes, who has had several players climb into college prominence recently, echoed Parseghian's comment.

"Everybody seems to be more concerned with John becoming a linebacker than John is," Landes pointed out. "His fans are pretty disappointed that he's no longer a quarterback, but John is happy with his new position. He likes the challenge."

He has also responded to it, although he sheepishly minimizes his accomplishments. What he did was win a Player of the Week honor during Spring Practice.

"It's not really an award, or anything fancy," Pergine explained. "They pick an outstanding player each week, and hang his picture on the bulletin board. I guess I did okay one week."

You can't afford to guess when you glance at the kamikaze flight plan that doubles as the Notre Dame schedule. Parseghian says you have to win a bowl game to be allowed to play the Irish. Duke, Army, Navy, Purdue, Northwestern, Michigan State and Southern Cal are some of the qualifiers.

Pride Major Ingredient: "There's never any problem getting up for the games," Pergine noted. "Football season provides the best weekends of the year. There are students, fans and tourists all over the place. The coaches help us a lot, too. They're sincere, and don't play any favorites. They see what you can do, and they work with you steadily. It's a terrific football atmosphere, and pride is a big thing."

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Pergine seriously started thinking about college when he was a junior in high school.

“I had a good season, and began believing I could make it in college ball,” he remembered. “I have pro ball in the back of my mind now, but first I want to do well in college. Every year, I learn more. If I keep learning, well . . .”

Parseghian, Pergine noted, stresses guts and courage—ingredients that many overly sophisticated fans secretly regard with a smirk.

“I don’t know about that,” Pergine said quietly. “All I know is it works with us.”

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### ROGER GRIMES: EVERY GAME IS WORLD SERIES

*Norristown Times Herald*

October 31, 1968

ROGER GRIMES IS A Philadelphia Eagle taxi squader, and everybody knows National Football League teams don't keep extra ballplayers around because they photograph well or look nifty standing on the sidelines.

Roger Grimes is also a star runner and receiver for the Pottstown Firebirds, and Dave DeFilippo knows Atlantic Coast League teams don't use NFL or AFL taxi men because their names look cute on the roster.

Pottstown thumped the Lowell Giants 25–14 last Saturday night, and Roger Grimes netted 62 yards in 11 carries and caught four passes for 156 yards and two touchdowns. In the halfback's private World Series, it was a bigger victory.

For the former Penn State wunderkind, the road has been long and treacherous. But he is almost back. He knows it, and DeFilippo thinks the Eagles know it.

"Look, they don't sign guys because they're nice fellas," the Firebirds' coach and general manager said pointedly. "Roger is a good running back—a thumper who rarely takes any punishment on his knees because he's always driving forward.

"And he can catch the ball. I'm not Roger Grimes' publicity man, but the boy's got great hands for the normal passes to swing men coming out of the backfield. He can take the screens and flares, but he can also run the deep patterns.

"I guess it'd be fairly easy for the taxi guys to come up here two nights a week and just go through the motions. But this kid plays every game like it was the World Series."

Things started for Roger Grimes at tiny Cornwall High, about 13 miles east of Hershey. There were 85 people in his graduating class. Not 85 ballplayers, 85 people. But he played his way onto the Big 33 roster and into Penn State.

They were saying all the usual superlative things about the gritty sophomore, but he never made it through his second college "World Series."

"I twisted my knee in the second game of my sophomore season against UCLA," he remembered. "It took some time, but I recuperated and tried to finish the year without getting an operation.

"Next thing I knew, I had mononucleosis. And then the knee went again.

"I still wasn't sure whether I was going to get that operation. I was working out in the gym before Spring Practice and hurt it again. They operated in May.

"I really didn't think too much about it, though. I knew plenty of other players who had had the operation and had no problems later. I was more relieved than anything else. I was finally getting it over with."

The story does not get all bright and shiny and Walt Disneyish from there. Not for a while.

Roger Grimes felt he was healthy and ready, but he was a grim spot performer for the next two Nittany Lion seasons. He graduated in June and was signed as a free agent by Dallas.

Six weeks and several roster cuts later, he was finally placed on waivers. An hour after he cleared the offering-around procedure, the Eagles were on the phone.

"They took a quick look and asked me to join their taxi squad," he said. "It wasn't the same as getting the chance to play someplace, but I was happy.

"I know I didn't play much for two years and I got here too late to play in any of the Eagles' exhibitions. That's why I was glad for the opportunity to join the Firebirds. When you don't play, you begin to lose confidence. You start to wonder whether you can do the things you thought you could do.

"Now I'm playing and learning, and that's what I need more than anything. It's a little tough, working out four days with the Eagles and twice with the Firebirds, but it won't hurt me. You need a break to play in the major leagues, and maybe this will be mine."

Once there was a tumult and shouting around University Park for Roger Grimes. Now it is for Ted Kwalik and Charlie Pittman and Bobby Campbell.

When the knee goes, the tumult subsides and the shouting becomes a whisper.

Instead of All-East or All-American honors and perhaps a bonus contract and a spot in a big league backfield, he is scrambling for success and recognition at a lower level. And looking for a way to the top.

It is Roger Grimes' private World Series. Keep tuned.



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### OLAF VON SCHILLING—VILLANOVA FROSH SWIMMER WHO'S GOING PLACES

*Norristown Times Herald*

May 1, 1968

YOU ASK OLAF VON SCHILLING to name the places he's been and he just smiles sheepishly and says it's easier to name the places he hasn't been. There are only a couple.

Olaf Von Schilling—Ollie—is a freshman at Villanova. He is a swimmer, and a good one. A very good one.

He is 24 years old and will probably compete for the West German Olympic team this summer. When his country needs him for a meet, all it has to do is ask.

His country asked about six weeks ago.

"I got a cablegram at the dormitory on Thursday telling me that West Germany was competing in a triangular meet with East Germany and Russia at Tiffelis, on the Black Sea," Ollie explained. "They wanted me to swim for them. I was planning to go home the following week for the West German Nationals, so it just meant leaving a little sooner."

Really, it meant more. A lot more.

What it meant was about two dozen hours on airplanes, several more hours waiting restlessly in airports, having breakfast in Germany—he had to stop home for some equipment—and dinner in Moscow.

It went something like this—

"I left Philadelphia late Saturday afternoon, and arrived in Frankfurt early Sunday morning," Ollie began. "I had to pick up some additional plane tickets and some equipment, and fly from there to Copenhagen. I was only in Frankfurt for about an hour.

"I had to wait two hours in Copenhagen to make the next connection—there was no faster direct way—and flew from there to Moscow. A man from the Russian Swimming Federation met me at the airport, took care of my visa—it usually takes about a week to get one—and took me out to dinner. I had some borscht, a small steak, peas and carrots and tea. They had a soft drink that was something like Coke, but it tasted terrible. I couldn't drink it.

"The flight from there to Tiffelis also took about seven hours, and the German coach met me at the airport. I got there about 1:30 in the morning on Monday.

"I thought the meet started on Tuesday, but they told me I had to swim Monday night. I was really tired, too. I couldn't sleep at all on the plane.

"I didn't get up until 1:30 in the afternoon. My body and stomach were pretty confused by the time and altitude changes, so I worked out for about an hour just to loosen up. The altitude on the Black Sea is about the same as Mexico."

In the storybooks, Olaf Von Schilling would have won three dramatic races and been greeted at the post-meet banquet with thunderous applause and glistening medals.

Ollie had to settle for a 4:18 victory in the 400 meter race and second place finishes in the 100 and 200 meter competition.

He didn't have time to attend the banquet.

"The West German Nationals were Saturday and Sunday, so I left for home right after the meet," he explained.

He won all three there, slicing six seconds off his 400 meter time.

Tuesday morning he was back at Villanova.

"They interviewed me on West German television before I left," Ollie remembered. "They think a college athlete in the United States lives like a professional but I set it straight. I guess it's probably like that, but it's not that way at Villanova.

"I have 21 hours of classes a week, I swim 21 hours and I study for two or three hours every night. I get pretty fair grades—Bs and Cs—and I think I could get better ones if I studied more.

"But two or three hours a night is enough, unless you have a special exam or a final. I feel you should work hard, but still be able to enjoy life, and I enjoy my life at Villanova."

He is a swimmer partly by default, and he wound up at Villanova through a wave of clinics, friendships and an automobile accident that nearly ended his athletic career.

"I met the U.S. Olympic coach, George Haines, at a clinic in Germany," Ollie said. "He liked me, and wanted me to come to California, where he was the coach at the Santa Clara Swim Club.

"I came, and when it was time for me to go home, he wanted me to stay and go to college here."

Ed Geisz, the Wildcat coach, took it from there.

"We were interested in Bob Burke, a backstroker from Brooklyn Prep who had taken up residence in California to train under Haines," Geisz explained. "Burke and Ollie became friends and roommates and decided they wanted to go to college together, Burke was interested in Villanova, and Ollie said he would come, too."

But Ollie returned to Germany for a visit. He was sitting in a parked Volkswagen when the other car hit him. He was in traction and a cast, and didn't swim again for four months.

And while he was in the hospital, Burke enrolled at Michigan State.

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“Swimming was the only thing left for me,” Ollie said. “The doctors told me I shouldn’t do too much running around or play any contact sports. I had liked soccer as a youngster, but I hurt my foot and had to give that up.

“The accident ruled out water polo—and I was pretty good at that, too—tennis or track. So I concentrated on swimming.

“I had said I was coming to Villanova, and I kept my commitment.”

The ‘Cats were 4–6 in freshman dual meets, but Ollie swept 29 of his 30 events. His only second came by a tenth of a second in the 100 yard freestyle against Princeton.

“I really like it here,” Ollie said. “In German universities, they want you to always be the best, no matter what you’re studying. There’s not really much time for sports.

“Here, you study, you compete and have time for some fun. I like that.”

He has been to Russia 10 times as a swimmer, and competed in places like Turkey, France, Israel, Angola, Japan, Hong Kong and Liberia.

You ask him where he has not competed, and he stops to think.

“South America,” he said. “I have never competed in South America. Or in Ireland.”

But if the next cablegram says West Germany is swimming against the Irish Nationals, he’ll be there.

Just leave the tickets and bathing suit at the airport. For Ollie, the rest is routine.