

“.....and the Olympics didn’t take American Express”

## Chapter One: How ‘Bout Those Cowboys

I inherited a predisposition for pain from my father, Ron, a born and raised Buffalonian with a self-mutilating love for the Buffalo Bills. As a young boy, he kept scrap books of the All American Football Conference’s original Bills franchise. In the 1950s, when the AAFC became the National Football League and took only the Cleveland Browns, San Francisco 49ers, and Baltimore Colts with it, my father held out for his team. In 1959, when my father moved the family across the country to San Jose, California, Ralph Wilson restarted the franchise and brought Bills’ fans dreams to life. In 1960, during the Bills’ inaugural season, my father resumed his role as diehard fan, and I joined the ranks. It’s all my father’s fault.

My father was the one who tapped his childhood buddy Larry Felser, a writer for the Buffalo Evening News, for tickets. My father was the one who took me to Frank Youell Field every year to watch the Bills play the Oakland Raiders, compliments of Larry.

By the time I had celebrated Cookie Gilcrest’s yardage gains, cheered Joe Ferguson’s arm, marveled over a kid called Juice, adapted to Jim Kelly’s K-Gun offense, got shocked by Thurman Thomas’ receptions, felt the thrill of victory with Kemp and Golden Wheels Dubenion, and suffered the agony of defeat through four straight Super Bowls, I was a diehard Bills fan. Along with an entourage of up to 30 family and friends, I witnessed every Super Bowl loss. Like any good junkie, begging for tickets from my industry friends was not beneath me.

I thought I hit bottom in 1991 with the Bills Super Bowl loss to the Giants, wide right.

I really hit rock bottom two years later with the Bills third consecutive Super Bowl loss, this time to the Cowboys, in the Rose Bowl 53-10. This loss, topped with the previous two losses, was too much for my addicted mind to handle. I surrendered myself to the belief that a greater Power could return me to sanity. I turned to God.

I prayed to the Big Guy to let my beloved Bills win the Super Bowl and promised that, in return, I would give up my favorite social pastime for one year, drinking. I call it a modified, but still viable, step two application.

That year, 1993, Bill Clinton took office, Michael Jordan retired from basketball for the first time and the Bills went 12-4. They beat the Kansas City Chiefs 30-13 and were back in the Super Bowl for a fourth consecutive season. I, as promised, had been sober as a church going Mormon since the previous Super Bowl. When the Bills kicked off on January 30, 1994 I knew my deal with God was in play.

In spirit, I was with God. In person, I was in the Georgia Dome. Although I had already been to Atlanta four times that year (Billy Payne had won the Olympic hosting rights), I ignored the jealously fueled globetrotter taunts, leveraged every relationship I had, got 30 tickets for friends and family, and headed down south one more time.

I might as well have been the lone fan in the stands that evening. Nervous and sober, I sat frozen in my 40 yard line seat. From the moment the Buffalo Bills outdid the vaulted Cowboy Cheerleaders, to the Bills' coin toss victory at center field, through Steve Christie's 54 yard field goal that culminated our methodical first march, my focus remained impenetrable. Every minute offensive or defensive achievement sent my eyes skyward and my blood pressure sky high. At half time, with the Bills leading by 7 and, most importantly, handling the mighty Cowboys, I remained in my seat, talking out loud to God, telling him that he was not letting me down. My devotion to victory was out of body, I did not go to the bathroom once.

We received the kick off, Jim Kelly and Thurman Thomas marched us down the field, and I could feel it. We would score this touchdown and then Bruce Smith, Cornelius Bennett, and company would take over on defense and shut the Cowboys down.

It was all going according to our (mine and God's) plan. Kelly throws a perfect strike to Thomas. Thomas takes off across the middle of the field for a huge gain. Thomas drops the ball. Thomas drops the ball? Thomas drops the ball! So not the plan.

James Washington of Dallas scooped up that damn ball and ran 46 yards for the score. Just like that, it turned. I remained hopeful.

A former, less spiritual, version of me would have known better. Just one year before, when the Bills trailed the Houston Oilers by 25 at halftime of a playoff game, I had given up. When, by the 3rd, the deficit was 32, I swore that we stood a better chance of Jesus Christ showing up in our backyard than we

did of winning that game. That game's outcome taught me not only to keep faith until the final seconds ticked, but also left me spending quite a bit of time in the backyard.

So what if this was the Super Bowl. Who cared that these were the Cowboys. Not even the southern drawling, "How 'bout those Cowboys" chanting, alliteration loaded Jerry Jones and Jimmy Johnson were going to scare me. I had God on my side and God is not a fan of bravado.

Apparently, the Bills don't do it for Him either. The 7 points scored off of Thomas' fumble quickly turned into 24 unanswered Cowboy points. It was over. God had let me down. My spirit was crushed. And there was Jerry Jones in all of his southern glory screaming "how 'bout those Cowboys." It was enough to make me vomit, which I did the very next morning after making up for lost time with my good friend Jack Daniels.

Hung over wakeups are never fun. Hung over wakeups on the Monday morning after the team that you told everyone was unstoppable, infallible, unbeatable losses the Super Bowl in the second half are unbearable. Throw in a two hour airplane ride, add a group of first class traveling asshole Cowboys fans, have those fans start harassing my prideful, Bills jacket wearing wife, narrate the scene with bellows of "winners always sit in first class," and my close encounter with being escorted off of a plane becomes completely reasonable. I hated the Cowboys. I hated Jerry Jones.

The following day, I was back on the road again. I landed in Chicago, hit up a pay phone, dug out my telephone charge card, and dialed my office. My mood was clear. I may be in the sports business, but the only thing that I had real passion for was the Bills. And everyone knew it. When I asked for my messages, my assistant's answer was tight and quick. Still, I knew something was amiss.

"Eugena," I asked heavy hearted, "is there anything else?"

Silence.

"Eugena?"

“Well, yes...Someone called saying he was Jerry Jones and wanted to speak with you.”

Apparently, two days wasn't enough time for my colleagues to get all of their barbing bs in. Composed, I told Eugena to throw away the message. Returning the payphone to its receiver, I laughed to myself. “Sure. I bet the real Jerry Jones took time away from his busy schedule of ‘how ‘bout those Cowboys’” chanting to give me a call. Nice one.”

During my check-in phone call the following Friday, Eugena informed me that Jerry Jones had called again. Again, I told her to throw away the message. It was getting old, but at least I had a hunch of who was behind this charade.

Chris Welton and Mark Lewis were my counterparts at ACOP, the Olympic entity that represented Atlanta. They were tenacious, too big for themselves, southern Georgia types. Worse, they were football types. Even worse, they had predicted a Bills collapse. Worst of all, I had told them that, with God on my side, Buffalo victory was eminent.

Confrontation was the only solution. I called Welton, told him his gag was not funny, and demanded that he cut it out. He claimed, with his untrustworthy southern drawl, that he had nothing to do with it. Welton threw Mark under the bus. I called Mark, recited the same intimidating spiel, and got the opposite answer. Mark claimed he had nothing to do with it, but threw Welton under the bus. My powerful speech put an end to the ribbing.

The following Wednesday, days after I commandingly silenced the hassling, that “Jerry Jones” guy left another message. My powers had failed. I grabbed the message and looked at the number. I knew the area code, 214, was a Dallas number. I had to find out who was behind this.

I dialed the number. A petite voice on the other end answered, “Jerry Jones’ Office.” I was shocked. Welton and Lewis had really taken this far. They used their NFL contacts and got Jerry Jones’ direct line.

I was silent. The young voice on the other end repeated, “Hello? Mr. Jones’ office.”

They got me. "Hello, my name is Rob Prazmark. I have several messages that Mr. Jones is trying to reach me. Could you tell him that I am available to speak to him?" I felt so stupid.

"I'm sorry, but how do you pronounce your name again?"

I pronounced it. I spelled it. I waited on hold for five minutes feeling more and more stupid as time passed by. Welton and Lewis really got me.

The petite voice interrupted the booms of Welton and Lewis' laughter echoing in my head. "Oh, I am sorry, Mr. Pray-z-mark, Mr. Jones is in conference. Can I take a number and someone will get back to you?"

Welton and Lewis would not win. "Well, if Mr. Jones would like to speak with me I will be in my office on Monday at 10:00 am eastern time. He can reach me then and on the following number."

At 10:00 am on Monday morning, Eugena walked into my office with a look of embarrassment on her face. Jerry Jones was on the phone and wanted to speak to me.

Back then, there was no such thing as caller id. I had no idea where this phone call was coming from. All I knew was that those bastards Welton and Lewis had a contact working in Jerry Jones' office and were commandeering the ultimate set up.

Bracing for the drones of laughter, I reluctantly picked up the phone. "Hello, Robert Prazmark here."

Then, I heard it. The once vomit inducing, Texas/Oklahoma voice that pained my Buffalonian heart seeped through the phone.

"Mr. Pray-z-mark, my name is Jerry Jones. I am General Manager and President of the World Champion Dallas Cowboys. How are you today sir?"

I was startled. I was confused. I was suspicious. I responded with a slow "I am fine, Jerry. Congratulations on the win, but please call me Rob."

My voice was steady, but my fingers were snapping feverishly in Eugena's direction. She came running into my office, I covered the phone's mouthpiece and choppily instructed her to summon my lieutenants Dick Pinkham, Marty Rotberg, and Steve Kerepsi. They had to hear this.

Dick, Marty, and Steve came running into my office as Jerry started in on his preamble. As I did many times during negotiations when I thought people would change their stories or deny saying things, I activated my secret speaker phone. This innovative device allowed the people in my office to hear both sides of the phone conversation without the person on the other end knowing. Speaker phone was a useful educational device for my team, served as a means of verification if issues got confusing, and would have been a Godsend had I had the foresight to subject my ex-wife to it.

Unbeknownst to Jerry, he had the ears of the entire office. "Robert," he began, apparently missing my cool "call me Rob" request, "the Dallas Cowboys are back to back World Champions." The words were like salt on my still very raw wound. "We are arguably the most popular team in the world today. We are America's Team. We sell more merchandise than the rest of the NFL teams combined. We get the biggest ratings. No team can come close to us. We have more fans than any 4 teams combined, yet we must share all of our revenue with the other 29 teams in the NFL. We must share all of this revenue - TV, licensing, ticket revenue - with the likes of San Diego, Detroit, Cincinnati, Buffalo and it is not fair. I am tired, Robert, I am tired of carrying this league and I need to demonstrate to the world that we can do it ourselves."

Jerry was referring to the NFL Trust. The NFL Trust, an agreement signed in the early 1960s by all of the NFL clubs, stated that the entire league would pool all of its revenues, including TV, sponsorship, licensing, etc., and divide the total sum equally between the organizations. Years before salary caps existed, the NFL Trust was the means to ensure that the larger markets, which earn much more money, would not outspend the smaller markets for players.

Jerry Jones had inherited, or purchased, the shrewdness of Tex Schramm, the original General Manager of the Cowboys. Tex was a schemer. From his days spent at CBS, Tex knew the power of the NFL East's TV market. He wanted in that market, and got the Cowboys mixed up with the Giants, Redskins, and

Eagles. Tex knew that games played on Thanksgiving Day got national exposure, so he got the Cowboys games on Thanksgiving Day. It was Tex, before Jerry, who understood the power of the brand.

Tex was the creator, but it was Jerry's team now. Jerry sat at the top of the NFL and on the other end of my phone.

Jerry spoke and my silent worker bees buzzed about. Steve feverishly took notes while Marty and Dick slipped me hurried catalogues of scrap paper suggesting how to direct the conversation. Like a man possessed, Jerry pitched heavy. Finally, I snuck a word in.

"Jerry, Jerry, Jerry." He stopped.

"Robert, I am so sorry. You can see how passionate I am about this. Did you have a question?"

Yes. I had a question. In a 1978 Cowboys highlight film, the narrator called the team "America's Team" and the name stuck. As far as I was concerned, it had no substantiation. When associated with the Cowboys, "America's Team" was a thorn in the side of the other NFL teams, including my beloved Bills. So, I asked.

"Jerry, why do you think you are America's Team?"

"Robert, because I know, I just feel it. You know that feeling?"

"So, Jerry, you have no research to back that up, do you?"

"Robert, we sell 33% of all the merchandise that the NFL sells, double, triple the nearest team. When we play on National TV, our ratings double the other national games. And what thanks do I get? I get to share all this money with the other 29 teams, some of which don't care about putting a better product in the league. I'm not naming names here, but you know who I am talking about. They just sit back and

collect my money. It is not fair, but rules are rules and until we change the rules I get to subsidize their ventures.”

“Jerry, why are you calling me?” While I was revered in international circles for my work on the Olympics and World Cup, my exploits and successes were not that well chronicled in the states, especially inside the NFL.

“Robert, my sources tell me you are the best. You think big. You love big challenges and best of all you have no history with the NFL. I want to hire you.”

“To do what?”

“WE are going to create a National Program around Texas Stadium. WE are going to create a new property because Texas Stadium is the epicenter of Football and WE are going to show the NFL that WE can create our own source of revenue that I don’t have to share with those other less than aggressive money grubbers. Are you in?”

Jerry was a closer.

“Jerry, the NFL guys are natural born killers, they are not going to think this is funny.”

“Robert, you are the man. I need you on my team. I will make it worth your while if we are successful. The fact that I have reached out to someone outside the NFL world will send a message and they all know what you have accomplished.”

Man, he was getting to me now. Maybe I underestimated my reputation in the states. The phrase “How ‘bout those Cowboys” still made my mouth fill up with saliva, but it wasn’t quite as gut wrenching anymore.

At this time, my company was extremely busy. We had Olympic work, were neck deep in Smithsonian issues, and were focusing on the World Cup. I tried to put Jerry off.

“Jerry, this is going to take a monumental effort and we are very busy on so many fronts. I am not sure we can devote the time you need.”

“Robert, Robert I only ask that you meet with me in person so we can continue this dialogue. I understand that you are a professional, but I need you on my team. Can we meet?”

I said sure, but told him that it would have to be in several weeks. Jerry wouldn't be put off. “Robert, I need to meet with you on Wednesday. I will be in Amelia Island for the owners meeting and will make transportation arrangements for you. Just one day. I will have you back to New York in the evening. Robert, I know you love a challenge, this is it. You and me taking on the NFL. C'mon. I will have my assistant call you to discuss transportation.”

Dick, Marty and Steve all shrugged their shoulders. “Jerry, I will do the best I can to meet you on Wednesday.”

“Now you are talking. See you Wednesday!”

And like that, Jerry was gone. Dick, Marty, Steve and I sat in silence. It was a cold, February day in Greenwich, Connecticut. Snow flurries fell from buildings' awnings, ice coated the sidewalks, and the wind blew hard. Jerry Jones offered me a day of sunshine and warmth, footed on the Cowboys bill. I was in.

Moments later Eugena joined the group to tell me that Marilyn, from Jerry Jones' office, was on the line to discuss transportation details.

My flight was scheduled to depart from New Jersey's Teterboro Airport. As a well traveled executive, I was aware of Teterboro's private jet only policy. Winners may fly first class, but guests of Jerry Jones fly private.

“Mr. Pray-z-mark,” Marilyn said with that warm southern accent, “if you could be so kind to be at Teterboro no later than 5:00 am on Wednesday, we have wheels up time at 6:00 am. This will get you to Amelia Island around 9:00 am for a meeting with Jerry at 10:00 am. Will this work for you?”

I said sure and informed her that Dick Pinkham would be making the trip with me. Dick, my vigilant consigliere, was eager to go, but cautioned me. “Rob, I am not sure if that was Jerry Jones. Do you realize what he is proposing? You are dealing with the NFL here. They are a serious group.” Remember, the NFL stands for the No Fun League.

I knew how serious the NFL was. I was serious too. I was seriously convinced that this “Texas Stadium” caper was going to take my career to a new level. I was seriously imagining chants of “how ‘bout that 21” or “how’ bout that Prazmark.” I was seriously beginning to drink the Kool-Aid. I should have seriously slowed down and realized that the cross between Jerry Jones and Jimmy Johnson is Jim Jones.

It was Monday, February 14, 1993. My group and I had two days to go to school on the NFL and Jerry Jones. For forty eight hours the 21 team was the Jerry Jones team. From book stores to libraries to college newspapers, we dug around trying to find out everything we could about Jerry Jones, the Cowboys, and the NFL Trust. We did not have the luxury of conducting internet searches, so we were forced to go deep. The easy solution would have been to use our contacts in the NFL to direct our research, but we were flying way below the radar. The key was that the NFL could not know that anything was going on.

On Tuesday night, everyone was ready to present his findings. Arkansas native Jerry Jones learned the value of hard work, creativity, and flare from his father Pat. Pat Jones, an entrepreneur of sorts, opened a roadside fruit stand, developed it into a chain of supermarkets, and remained hands on throughout the entire venture. Jerry respected the value that his father’s role brought to the store.

While in attendance at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville, Jerry played football for the Razorbacks, met his future wife Gene, was coached by Barry Switzer, and roomed with Jimmy Johnson. After graduation, Jerry worked in the Missouri-based insurance company that his father purchased with profits from the grocery store.

Working for the family business did not satisfy Jerry’s appetite for success. Despite purchasing a franchise, investing in real estate, and getting his hands in just about every business sector, Jerry still felt

incomplete. Nothing he got involved with mimicked the passion that he felt for the game of football. Jerry followed his passion to Miami where he proposed minority ownership of the Dolphins.

After meeting with Joe Robbie and Barron Hilton, who was selling the San Diego Chargers, Jerry realized he was neither financially nor knowledgeably prepared to take on such a large task as owning a football team. Jerry was forced to shelve his passion until his father sold their insurance company. At this time, Jerry moved onto oil and gas exploration and founded a company called Arkoma.

The oil industry paid off financially for Jerry, but he still craved passion. At the start of 1989, while vacationing in Mexico, Jerry fatefully stumbled upon the news of the sale of the Dallas Cowboys. This was the answer to the void in Jerry's life and so, with zero hesitation, Jerry called Bum Bright, the team's owner at the time, to get the deal underway.

Overall, I learned that Jerry was passionate, heartfelt, and in love with his team. It was clear that Jerry Jones, and whatever he had in store for me, was on a completely different level than anything that I was used to.

I did not sleep Tuesday night. At 3:00 am on Wednesday morning I got out of bed, drove to Dick's house, and was greeted in the driveway by my colleague, waiting outside of his front door unprotected from the elements. It was the painful kind of cold that only North Easterners understand. The temperature on the dash of my station wagon read 19.

WCBS Radio 880 narrated our trip from Rye to Teterboro. The forecast called for a morning wind chill of about 5 degrees with blowing and drifting snow. My station wagon had the road to herself. In total darkness, we crossed the George Washington Bridge. At around 4:45 am we pulled up to our designated private terminal and waited. The night watchman would not let us into the building area. Dick and I sat in the car, our limited speech interrupting the sound of swirling winds outside.

"Well, Dick, I think we should walk around the front of the hangar, would hate to keep them waiting when they arrive." We assumed traditional cold weather stances (hunched over backs, furrowed brows, clenched fists) and hurriedly walked out front into the sweeping red and green light of the control tower. There was not a sole in sight. Under the watchful eye of the security guard, warm and snuggly inside the FBO, we jumped up and down and blew on our freezing hands to stay warm.

5:00 became 5:15. Then 5:30, 5:45, 6:00, 6:15. Dick's teeth were chattering and my anger was bubbling. Welton and Lewis got me good. How stupid could I be! For all the practical jokes I have played in my life, these two smooth talking southern boys nailed me. I couldn't believe it. I grinned at Dick, gave a half smile and shivered, "Let's go. I think I've been had."

We picked up our frozen, snowed covered briefcases and turned against the wind. The door of the FBO was now open and a few new lights were on. We walked in, Dick hit the bathroom, I tried to regain blood flow, and disbelief set in. Stupid, stupid, stupid.

Defeated, we headed out the front door towards the car. A voice stopped us.

"Excuse me, excuse me, sir, are you waiting for DC 1?"

I didn't understand the question. So he tried again.

"Are you waiting on DC 1?"

So I asked, "What is a DC1?" Was he talking about the old World War Two plane?

"Are you here expecting a Lear Jet with tail numbers DC1?"

Then my trusty consigliere thawed. "Rob, that's Dallas Cowboy One".

The airport attendant continued. "The pilot wanted me to find you to say they were delayed because of weather over Oklahoma and they are inbound and on final approach."

It was real. The owner of the Dallas Cowboys, the very same man whose voice once made me physically ill, was sending his private jet to pick me up and carry me to a meeting where we were to discuss a top secret plan which would potentially transform the landscape of the entire National Football League and the only thought that my genius marketing mind could come up with was “holy shit.”

From a runway facing window I watched DC1 touch down. In what felt like ages later, the plane taxied in. The whining noise of the decelerating jet engines still sits with me today. The door unlatched, opened sky-ward, and two monster sized men descended the emerging steps.

Brick house number one spoke. “Are you Mr. Pray-z-mark?”

As if out of an old Budweiser ad I grinned, “Yes. I. Am.”

“Sorry we are late, bad thunderstorms over Oklahoma. We are going to do some paperwork here with the FBO and we will be on our way in 10 minutes.” Captain bear went one way and co-pilot bull escorted us onto the plane.

Jerry Jones was polished, and so was his ride. Chromed out with a Dallas Cowboy helmet as big as Jerry’s ego painted on its tail, this Lear Jet was showboat end to end. Everything in the cabin, from napkins to plates to glasses, maintained the décor of Cowboy blue and grey.

I had been in private jets before. I had been in nice private jets before. I had been in the Time Warner G4 before. If the G4 was a sedan, this was a sports car.

As the door sealed shut, the cabin pressurized, the engines whined, and the gyros kicked, I became reminiscent of my days as a private pilot. I was all ears as the pilots radioed ground control and then the tower for clearance. We taxied directly to the end of the runway and then, like a Star Wars spaceship, the plane rose up in a steep incline. I was Luke Skywalker in the Millennium Falcon.

Dick and I looked at one another, shaking our heads as the ride of our professional lives literally took off.

I was wired and wound up, thinking deep thoughts. "Maybe God did the right thing by letting the Bills lose. Maybe that was supposed to happen to bring me here."

Dick slept.

About halfway down to Jacksonville, I noticed a telephone. After gaining permission from the pilot to use the phone, I called my wife. The pilot answered. This pattern repeated 5 times.

"Mr. Pray-z-mark, first time on a private jet?" The pilot asked.

I was giddy. Holding in laughter I bellowed a line from an early 90s Budweiser ad, "first time on a private jet this small!" Apparently southern, possibly ex-linemen pilots and I do not share the same sense of humor. They did not laugh. Neither did Dick.

In Jacksonville, Jerry had a car waiting to pick us up. Like royalty, we were ushered to the Ritz Carlton Amelia Island. In three hours, we had gone from freezer burned executives to cozy warm VIPs. We left our winter belongings in the Lear for our ride back to real life that afternoon.

Dick and I were escorted into the hotel's pristine lobby where we were to wait for Jerry. Our waiting room happened to be in the midst of the walking paths of the NFL's who's who. Rooney, Kraft, Taglibeau and more mingled as if they were normal people. I recognized Ralph Wilson, owner of the Bills, and prepared to apologize to him for my apparently treasonous actions. Dick talked me out of it.

Thirty minutes later the elevator doors opened and Mohammed descended from the mountain. With surprisingly broad shoulders and a massively engaging aura, Jerry walked straight towards Dick and me. I was stunned.

Hand outstretched he began, "Robert, great to meet you. You are a hard man to get a hold of."

I could just imagine his face if I told him the truth.

“Jerry, this is Dick Pinkham, my number two at 21 and, I hope you don’t mind, but I think the two of us can get us started.”

“Dick, pleasure to meet you. My information tells me that you are former CBS and are good friends with Neal Pilson. How is Neal?” Neal, a great guy, was the former head of CBS Sports. Dick played the name game with Jerry, remaining completely unshaken the entire time. He was the best consigliere I could imagine. I listened to the conversation and composed myself.

“Gentlemen, have a seat. Now, I must ask you one important thing and I need your word on this. What we are about to discuss today stays between us. From this day forward we are family. Now, do I have your commitment on this?” There was that WE word again.

I know how to keep someone’s confidence, especially when I am specifically told that a conversation or information is confidential.

Both Dick and I nodded.

Then Jerry unloaded. He unveiled his thoughts about the inequities of the NFL Trust, how certain owners were in it only for the ride, how he wanted to change and transform the league to get ready for the future. For the next four hours, we were the only thing that mattered to Jerry Jones. He never looked around the room. He zeroed in on my eyes when he spoke with me. Both Dick and I agreed that when Jerry Jones speaks to you, he makes you feel like you are the center of the world. I have known people like him in the past. They are all consuming.

From where I was seated, I could see the attention that “we” were drawing. Taglibeau, and many others, did 2 or 3 drive bys. At about hour two, a young man sheepishly approached our table. Jerry never saw him. When he interrupted, Jerry was polite but upset. Jerry introduced Dick and I as his friends and then, without pause, told our interrupter that I was his friend from the Olympics and that I was helping him get tickets to the next Games. Jerry nailed Dick’s and my names in the introduction but, for reasons that I cannot figure out, never mentioned that of the NFL person. Years later Dick and I surmise our uninvited visitor was a young Roger Goodell.

At one point, Jerry took us back to his boyhood days and the deep appreciation he had for his father. He told us that after he told his father he had purchased the Cowboys for \$180 million, and he cashed in every dollar he had, borrowed to the max to make his dream happen, his father sat back and said, "Son, I hope you have an exit plan." Jerry responded, "Dad, I don't, that is the beauty of it. Fear is the best motivator."

He spent time talking about how hurt he was when public sentiment went against him when he fired Tom Landry. "Guys, I can take it, but the insults the media, Cowboy fans hurled at my family were very personal." I was convinced.

February 1989 was an ugly time for everyone involved. Jones privately admitted he knew nothing about running a professional football team and when Tex Schramm resigned shortly after the infamous Valley Ranch Press conference firing Landry and Joe Bailey resigned to join Tex in the formation of the World League, 3 of the 4 wheels had fallen off the wagon and Jerry did not have an exit plan.

After might-be-Roger left, we started right back up. We covered everything. At one point, Jerry was off to the races in a stream of consciousness. Dick was lost. I was really lost and the laser beams shooting from Jerry's eyes directly into my soul did not help the situation. He was missile locked, firing away and I was in a tailspin. I thought, "Oh God, he realizes I'm not following."

He abruptly stopped, sat back, and said "Robert, Robert I can tell by the look in your eye I lost you. I mean I really lost you." Then he laughed. "That's okay, because I lost myself and had no idea where I was going with that. Robert, where do we go from here?"

This part I understood perfectly. Dick and I had planned to ask Jerry for a retainer to develop a sales plan and also a commission formula, should we be successful. I outlined that plan.

Jerry stood up, said, "Great, fax it to Marilyn in the morning and let's get busy," and the meeting was over. With the exception of bathroom breaks, Jerry, Dick, and I had gone on for five hours, non-stop. My head was killing me.

Keeping up with this Jones was not an easy task. Dick and I were spent. We spoke our first words buckled into our DC1 seats. With a boom the plane took off, the pilot pulled a quick barrel roll, and Dick

and I started in. Sure that Bebop and Rocksteady could hear our every word, Dick and I coyly discussed our thoughts and compared notes.

Dick had a mound of notes as big as our pilot's shoulders. I had almost as many. In retrospect, my job was to maintain eye contact with Jerry and try, try, try to keep him on point. Dick was the note taker.

Our mission was clear. While I was truly enthralled with Jerry, there were a whole lot of things to consider.

First, the 800 pound gorilla called the NFL. While I had not previously worked for the NFL, working with Jerry meant that I might find myself on the league's famous blacklist of agencies and people.

Second, I was not one hundred percent positive that we could actually sell a National Program based on Texas Stadium. If we failed, the wrath of Cowboy Khan would be upon us. And I was pretty sure that the NFL writes its blacklist in permanent ink.

Last, my colleagues and I were already working for the IOC and renewing TOP sponsors. We were in the development stages with the Smithsonian for their 150th anniversary. We were in the marketplace selling sponsorships to World Cup '94 for Alan Rothenberg. We had the ability to handle Jerry Jones, but I was not sure if we had the capacity.

At 9:30 pm DC1 landed. The next morning, at 8:30am, I held a 21 team meeting. Everyone wanted in on the scoop. Ten minutes into my wrap up, Jerry called. Once again I assembled Dick, Marty, and Steve, activated my secret speaker, and picked up the phone.

"Jerry, if you don't mind, I want to put you on speaker so you can address the team."

"Great, Great. Let's go."

He was back at it. “Robert, the more I think about our little meeting yesterday the more I am convinced this is the right thing to do and I don’t want to wait another day. So what are your thoughts, how do we get going?” Then he stopped talking.

I thought the line went dead. “Jerry, are you still there?”

“Yes sir. I am anxious to hear our plan.”

It was my turn to talk. I went into my visions of our relationship and how the process would work. I explained to Jerry that his project would be like all of the other projects that 21 and I had managed. I laid out the customary steps: conduct research, gather assets, agree upon prospects, put together a kick ass presentation, and hit the road.

“All in Jerry, this is a yearlong campaign and I need your involvement.”

“Involvement?” he said. “Man, you won’t be able to keep me away. But I will promise you one thing. I will run interference for you with the NFL. They aren’t going to take kindly to what we are doing. I got your back on that one.”

Preliminaries behind us, we moved on to terms: retainer plus commission. The retainers are offset against the commissions earned. If we failed, Jerry had the right to terminate but I did not have to return the retainers. I believe the commission rate was somewhere around 20%. Like I always did, I planned to handle my own expenses. No reason to battle over a Motel 6 cubbyhole or an entire day of connections. I upped the retainer to cover Hiltons and direct flights.

Jerry did not pushback, he just offered a warning. “Robert, please take me off speaker for a moment.”

I did.

“You have a deal, but I must warn you that this could get really, really nasty. I want to make sure you have the fight and will in you and that you are my guy, not the NFL’s. And no matter how difficult this may be, you won’t quit on me nor will you turn on me.”

I asserted, “Jerry, I have no relationship with the NFL. The NFL has never called me and asked me to work for them. I am for hire. I am good at what I do. I am loyal and I love game changing challenges.”

“Alright then, get me some paper. Handwrite it if you have to. Time is a-wasting.”

Then, he was gone.

By Friday, my lawyer had drafted the agreement. With the creative title DRAFT stamped at the top, I faxed the papers to Marilyn. One hour later my fax machine rang and out slid a Dallas Cowboy helmet. Jerry had taken all ten pages of the DRAFT, crossed off the word draft wherever it appeared, initialed next to each cross off, and signed the agreement.

We were in business. The adventure began.

## FAST FORWARD TO FEBRUARY 2010 JERRY JONES PART 2

As the Vancouver Games began to wind down, the family prepared to leave. They were conditioned to know that I was always on call and sometimes I could join them, sometimes I could not. Sometimes I was a no show and sometimes I was a surprise. As long as I woke up every morning and got them their event tickets, everyone stayed happy. Swiping my Visa at the ticket office always cracked me up; the employees there called me the problem. I was the guy who made Visa the only credit card that could be used for ticket purchases. The teasing was flattering and reminded me of how nuts I was back in those early days. Never forget, one idea can change everything.

One of the last events we went to as a family was the women’s figure skating final. As I sat there, playing IOC consultant, husband and dad, I got a text from Dany, who was also at the event.

“Rob, you wont believe who is here!”

“You got me, Obama?”

“Better.”

“Who?”

“Jerry Jones!”

“No Sheet. Where?”

Dany directed me to Jerry’s section and seat. By this time, my wife and kids were scanning the crowd for Texas Waldo.

“Dad, Dad, there he is!” my Sarah shrieked.

Jerry Jones at a figure skating event was like Lou Ferrigno at a fashion show – it made no sense. But, three sections away from me, there he sat, next to his wife Gene, taking it all in. I couldn’t tell if the Canadians just didn’t know who he was or if they were too “It’s a Small World” to care.

Seeing him face to face sent me right back to Amelia Island - right back to the owner's meeting, me telling Jerry that the NFL would be all over him, his Cowboys and his Texas Stadium caper, my concerns just adding shine to the sparkle of that big ole' Jerry Jones smile.

It started with a promise. "Robert, you go build me a national program and get me some big sponsors and I will handle the NFL," Jerry said.

That was all the 21 team needed to hear. Helmets strapped on, we were ready to play the game.

In essence, our job would be to create a sponsorship program to ambush the NFL's sponsorship program - without looking like we were intentionally ambushing the NFL's sponsorship program. First, we needed to navigate the NFL rules and create a "national" program within the league's legal boundaries.

Second, we needed research. If Jerry wanted to pin the "America's Team" badge to his Cowboys' jersey, we needed to prove that the Cowboys were America's Team. To sell a national program, we needed to demonstrate the Cowboys national appeal - with precision.

Third, we needed a sales presentation. Last, we needed a prospect list. Oh, and a ton of meetings.

The 21 team was ready to roll and, after one of the most shocking phone calls of my life, Jerry was ready to accept our full commitment.

Phone calls from Jerry were random, but regular. On one particular day in late March, I picked up the phone to find a slightly less sure-fire than usual Jerry on the other end. His voice was hesitant, and I knew something was up.

"Robert, I have some news I want to share with you, and I expect you will keep this confidential."

"Of course Jerry, everything we talk about is confidential." The last thing I wanted to do was break Jerry's trust.

"Well, just several hours ago I made the decision to relieve Jimmy Johnson of his coaching duties." I was stunned. Jimmy Johnson, with Jerry's guidance/assistance/backing, had reinvented the team. He had literally JUST won back-to-back Super Bowls - yea, yea, yea they were both against the Bills. He was the driving force behind the players. It was common knowledge that Jerry and Jimmy were drifting apart - apparently battling over who was the real reason for the team's success.

Jerry continued our conversation, complementing Jimmy the whole time. He did not have a disgruntled or discouraging word to speak.

"Robert, I just felt the need for the change, it will be best for the Cowboys and I want to make sure that you, too, believe this is the best thing for the Cowboys because I need all of your enthusiasm, all of your commitment, on our little adventure. I need to know that you are committed."

"Jerry, you have it. I trust your judgment, and I want you to know that the entire 21 team will remain dedicated, loyal, committed and energized."

"Robert, you are a good man. I wanted to call you before anyone else and before you read it in the newspaper or see it on Sports Center. Robert, thank you, thank you."

After we said our goodbyes, I sat truly stunned. Not shocked that Jerry had fired Jimmy Johnson; shocked that he was calling me to tell me that he had fired Jimmy Johnson. I was nothing more than a

hired agency, brought on to do a job. That was the moment when I realized that Jerry had placed me in his circle of trust, his inner sanctum. I was part of the "family" that Jerry spoke so passionately about. I would do everything I could to get Jerry what he wanted.

April is a quiet time in the NFL - the Super Bowl ends the season in January, the draft is over and done with, training camp is still months away. April 1994 was the perfect time for us to get Jerry's undivided attention. We spent the month holed up at Valley Ranch, the Dallas Cowboys training camp, in Dallas. Jerry toured us around - inside the locker rooms, through the training areas, onto the hollowed grounds of Texas Stadium, down the same tunnel that Don Meredith, Bob Hayes, Roger Staubach, Tony Dorsett and, as much as I hate to admit it, Troy Aikman, Emmitt Smith and Michael Irvin had blasted through on their way to the history books. With literally no one in the stands, the place was magical; I could only imagine it on game day.

Regularly, Jerry would stop our tours to introduce us to various members of his team. His daughter Charlotte, who just had her first child, was in charge of special events. His sons, Jerry Junior and Stephen, were also involved.

A few execs were either suspicious, envious or just plain pissed off at our general presence. Jerry's previous rainmaker was a guy named George Hays. George had started with Jerry during Jerry's oil days and, when Jerry renovated the suites at the stadium, George sold the hell out them and made himself a bundle. Jerry didn't care how you got things done; if you were successful, you got paid. Having sold a majority of the suites, George was put in charge of selling sponsorships.

This guy was unimpressed. In one meeting, held in a team briefing room reminiscent of a college lecture hall, George sat at the back of the class, questioned every word that came out of Jerry's mouth, rolled his eyes at every hint of excitement in Jerry's voice and, at one point, partook in a ten minute process of finger nail clipping. George never missed a chance to tell us that Jerry's plan would flop - and so would we.

When pre-season kicked off, the 21 team flew down to see the Cowboys in action. Jerry had hired Barry Switzer, the former University of Oklahoma head coach, to replace Jimmy Johnson. Switzer had coached both Jerry Jones and Jimmy Johnson at Arkansas and had won three national championships at Oklahoma. The Cowboy machine was on autopilot; as Jerry once said, his mother could have coached the Cowboys that season.

As the teams warmed up, we were escorted onto the field VIP style. Field passes in '94 were different than field passes today; back then, the field was exclusively players, staff and media. But this was Jerry's stadium and he was going to bring whomever he damn well pleased down to his field. Talk about an adrenaline rush; standing so close to these monstrous men, watching them prepare at game speed, the intensity was electric.

Before kick off, we relocated to Jerry's suite. Gene, Jerry's wife, was the gracious hostess and Jerry made his rounds, greeting everyone who walked through the door with his Jerry Jones grin. When that whistle blew and the ball was in play, the whole mood changed; Jerry went into missile lock and everyone knew to stay the hell out of his way.

By August, we had enough meat to assemble the Texas Stadium National Football and Entertainment Program - essentially, a list of assets. From concerts to tractor pulls to regional high school football championships, Jerry was hell-bent on filling the stands every day and he did not discriminate.

The list of assets looked something like this:

Exclusivity - An anomaly in itself, since in most cases we would be going up against an NFL sponsor.

Nationwide use of the Texas Stadium Mark - This distinction between the Dallas Cowboys and Texas Stadium was important. Unless in conjunction with other team marks, an NFL team cannot use its mark outside a special geographical territory. The San Francisco 49er can't promote their mark in New York.

Access to players, in non-Cowboys attire, for commercial purposes - You see this all the time. Eli Manning in a logo-less helmet endorsing some product. Here, Jerry had made the entire team available, including Aikman, Smith and company.

VIP Passes to sidelines on Game Day

Access to Valley Ranch for meetings

Several Appearances by Jerry Jones for corporate conferences and/or TV or Radio ads, nationwide.

A suite on game day

The option to travel with the team to away games

Advertising in all Cowboys' radio shows and regional television shows produced by the Cowboys.

EXCLUSIVITY in the stadium, year round - Pouring rights, food rights, payment system rights. This was where the cash register sat, and Jerry controlled it because he owned the stadium.

The first step was done. The next thing we had to do was prove the Cowboys were, in fact, a national brand. We hired Performance Research out of Providence, Rhode Island to figure out if the Cowboys were truly "America's Team." For three weeks, we held our collective breath while Performance Research collected the data. Our list of questions was simple and included:

Who is your favorite football team?

If not that team, who would be your next favorite team?

We surveyed every NFL market. The results were mind blowing! The Cowboys were clearly the number one team in America, by far. But, even more interesting, in almost every other market, the Cowboys ranked number two after the local team. For instance, in DC (pre Ravens), the Redskins ranked first, the Cowboys ranked second.

The study also included franchises from all other US sports - this was way before Manchester United or Real Madrid had crossed the Atlantic. The results showed that the Cowboys, more so than the Bulls, the 49ers, the Braves, were the number one pro team with the greatest winning tradition. The Cowboys

beat the Yankees in overall qualities; they crushed the 49ers for the NFL team with greatest winning tradition, 47% to 19%. No question about it, the Cowboys were America's Team - at least that's what 42% of people polled would agree to. Over 90% of fans saw the Cowboys as winners, well managed, exciting, entertaining and rich in tradition. Our timing with that survey could not have been more perfect. I'm not so sure what would show up if we ran the same questions today.

By this time, the sports media could smell that we were cooking something up; Jerry was the guy wafting the stench out of the kitchen. In an interview with the Sports Business Journal in September of 1994, Jerry took the Texas Stadium Plan public. That unveiling was followed up with a report on the research findings. It was our coming out party and it put us right on top of the NFL's watch list.

We were on the map, but were not quite ready to start making any real moves. Jerry was patient; he understood that budgeting cycles for these types of programs are on a calendar basis. Unless we got a hot one, or lucky, the '94/'95 football season was our prime selling season.

We put together our prospect list, which basically consisted of every anti-NFL sponsor we could think of. The NFL had Coke, we were going after Pepsi, the NFL had Visa, we were going after American Express, the NFL had GM, we were going after Ford and Nissan. You get the picture.

By fall, we were in the process of lining up very targeted presentations. The Texas Stadium National Football and Entertainment Program was getting quite a lot of attention, but still, the NFL sat on the sidelines. As long as we didn't sell anything, the NFL's biggest issue was explaining what was going on to their existing sponsors. My guess is they went with something about Jerry and his hair-brained ideas. Without any real sales, it was easy to say that the plan would fade away and disappear.

Meeting after meeting, it became more and more apparent that we were lining up for a long putt. Most companies don't want to be seen as ambushing another company; it's a bad reflection on the personality of the business and its senior management. We had no problems getting great meetings, but just couldn't push the ball over the line.

Jerry stayed with us every step of the way; he was involved at every level. At one point, my contact at the Toyota National Dealer Group called me up to tell me that the keynote speaker at their national

meeting had cancelled last minute. The meeting was in Dallas and Toyota wanted to know if I could get Jerry to fill in. The speech was set for 12:00 noon; it was 9.30am. I called Jerry, told him that Toyota was a hot prospect, and filled him in on the situation. By 12:15, he was standing on stage, charismatic as ever, addressing 500 Toyota dealers, executives and me. You could say that he delivered that same speech a hundred times; no one in that room, including me, would care. Jerry was inspiring.

Propped behind the podium, Jerry walked the audience through his path to the Cowboys. He talked about his time working as a life insurance salesman. On one occasion, in Dallas for a meeting, he needed to rent a car. When he approached the rental car counter, there was a long line. When he finally reached the front of the line, he presented his credit card for payment. The card was declined. With that, the rental car agent loudly declared to the entire line, "Mr. Jones, when you learn to pay your bills on time, we at Hertz will gladly rent you a car."

"That's ok ma'am, I will just go get me a taxi," Jerry replied. He said it was the lowest point of his career.

Jerry talked to the Toyota dealers as a peer; he was an entrepreneur talking to other entrepreneurs. He spoke about getting up every morning, having to look at your own face in the mirror every day, realizing that you are responsible for the salaries of your employees, you are responsible for their mortgages and tuitions. You are responsible for feeding your own family. There are days you just do not know how you are going to make it through. But somehow, somewhere, you believe in yourself and you get it done.

Here was the owner of the World Champion Dallas Cowboys, a guy who risked it all to get what he always wanted, talking to a group of dealers and sales people as if he had been one of them. He thanked the group and the group responded with a standing ovation. I met him as he was walking out the door to his car.

"How was that?" he asked

"Jesus Jerry, that was amazing. If this football thing doesn't work, I think I know some large congregations that could use you."

He smiled and said, "Got to run." He was off.

Jerry was always there for us. Whether we were bringing down large groups of potential sponsors or knocking off a one on one meeting, he was always vintage Jerry. That season the Cowboys finished 12 and 4; we went 0 and 16. Jerry did not lose faith. He trusted us, and if he was going to take on the NFL, he needed to let us do our thing.

Heading into April of 1995, we had several solid prospective sponsors. The first was Pepsi. While the local bottler was enjoying pouring rights at the stadium, we elevated the discussion with the Headquarter Brand people. If the local bottler wanted to keep playing, he needed some corporate money. Jerry was working both angles hard.

Jerry had befriended Phil Knight at Nike and sent him our Deck. We installed the nuts and bolts of the deal, but the conversation was to be a private discussion between Jerry and Phil.

Next came American Express. Marty Rotberg, one of my key guys at 21, had a way of squeezing through the doors of the right offices. In this case, he somehow eluded all of the gatekeepers and made his way to Andy Wing, Mr. Big at American Express.

Andy Wing was the type of guy who wanted to make a name for himself. A senior vice president of marketing and new business, he had a weakness for big names - entertainment or sports. If we wanted to be heard, Jerry needed to be in on the presentation.

We set our American Express meeting for early July of 1995. AmEx is headquartered in lower Manhattan and Jerry was in New York for other NFL meetings. On a hot, humid July-in-New York morning, we swung by and picked Jerry up at the Regency Hotel on Park Avenue. The hotel, conveniently located a few blocks from NFL headquarters and owned by the Tisch family, was the place to be if you were an NFL exec - free continental breakfast if you could flash your NFL membership card.

At 9:00am sharp we rolled up in front of the Regency. The doorman was quick to step up to the car. We announced that we were there to pick up Mr. Jones, and, on cue with a twinkle in his eye and a bounce in his step, Jerry jumped in the back seat of my Mercedes Benz 300 station wagon. Marty had planned to hop into the backseat and give Jerry shotgun, but the Cowboy was too quick. So we traveled downtown with Jerry sitting bumped up to the Cheerio filled child's car seat.

With Jerry drilling Marty for background info on Andy Wing, we sped down Park Ave, cut over to 5th and headed towards our destiny. Jerry couldn't wrap his head around why American Express wanted to play with Texas Stadium and the Cowboys? Visa was the NFL sponsor and Jerry couldn't get 50 cents out of them for a local deal. Marty explained about card member rewards and card volume. If we could drive Texas Stadium revenue and offers to American Express, the math would work to our favor. Jerry was like a dog on a bone and he wanted to jam this one up the NFL's rear. Like a man possessed, he stared out the window at the skyscrapers flying by.

We were at the corner of 5th and 50th. St. Patrick's Cathedral on our left, Rockefeller Center on our right.

"Gentlemen, Gentlemen, look there," Jerry directed.

He pointed to a stunning woman with long blond hair dressed impeccably in four inch heels and a business suit, the heat forcing her to sling her jacket over her shoulder and reveal a tight, sleeveless camisole top. She easily could have been a former Dallas Cowboys Cheerleader.

"Gentlemen, that is an attractive young woman." As if thanking him for the compliment, the woman shifted her gaze to our car and beamed a bright smile Jerry's way. The light turned green and, with a wink from our friend, we continued down 5th focused back on the task at hand.

In all of the years that I knew Jerry, that was the only time I ever saw or heard him talk about any woman other than his wife, Gene, his daughter, Charlotte, or Marilyn Love, his life long assistant. So much has been written about his alleged wandering eye. I never saw it; none of us ever witnessed him being anything but a true professional. Occasionally, he would drop an F-bomb, but we never even saw him with a drink in his hand. Maybe it was me, maybe I was naïve, but I never witnessed anything that would support any of those rumors.

We took a hard right onto 42nd Street, drove through Times Square, swung a left on the West Side highway, blazed through a series of green lights and were down to American Express Plaza in record time. With our presentation, videos, leave-behinds, and Jerry in tow, we checked into the main security gate. Even in these pre-911 days, security was very high because of the building's proximity to the World Trade Center.

Strolling through the lobby felt like walking a red carpet. Eyes turned as Jerry and his aura floated by; this was game day and he was on. Although the shouts of "Go Cowboys!" and "Hey Jerry, how 'bout those Cowboys!" were welcoming, the echoing "Boooooos" reminded us all that we were in Giants country. From security to the elevators, Jerry shook hands, signed autographs and loved every second of it; Elvis was in the building.

Up on Andy Wing's floor, Marty and I set up the slides and videos. Andy made his entrance and grabbed Jerry to take him around for introductions. Andy and Jerry were made for one another; by the time they returned, I thought that they had worked out some sort of deal. The hook was down Andy's mouth and coming out his rear. While the presentation was a formality, I needed to get everything out on the table. Andy needed to know exactly what he was and was not buying. Included - Texas Stadium. Not included - the NFL and the Cowboys.

This was a Texas Stadium deal and, while it would send the NFL into orbit, it was legit and driven by big time revenue to American Express. We put the numbers out there: \$3 million per year for 5 years. Andy didn't blink. Marty had built a revenue model back based on the sale of tickets at Texas Stadium, merchandise and a special rewards program that basically allowed an American Express platinum member to strap on some pads and play wide receiver. It was a thing of beauty and Jerry was the ultimate closer.

"Andy, I realize you have a lot to think about, so let me offer up a recommendation.

Next week let me invite you and your team down to Austin to see our camp, meet some of our team, including the players, and then we can fly up to Dallas and see Valley Ranch and the Stadium. This way we can have a visit and you can see what we are talking about in person. Just tell me what day works for you. I will send our plane, grab you in the morning and get you back here that same night."

There was that damn plane again. Jerry knew exactly how to use it.

Andy bit (surprise surprise) and the following week he, his team and, of course, me and my man Marty boarded DC1, headed to Austin to huddle up with Jerry, Troy, Michael and Emmitt. Then back on the plane for a quick trip to Dallas for a tour of the facilities.

Sitting comfortably in front of the Cowboys' four Super Bowl trophies, Jerry went for the kill. Andy didn't have a chance. Jerry wanted \$3 million for 5 years, Andy wanted to try it for a year at \$1 million. Andy put up a huge fight. When it was over, it was \$2 million for a 10 year deal with the first two years guaranteed and a series of options. The first was a 3 year option and the final option was for the last 5 years. The deal was done. Jerry had locked down the biggest non-team deal in history with a huge brand who also guaranteed to promote Texas Stadium, hire Cowboys players as endorsers and use Jerry in three national commercials. "Do you know me?..." Talk about pissing off the NFL.

Andy, who may have not had the authority to commit, had to go back to New York and get the money. And Jerry was happy to send him home, courtesy of DC1. We were back up north by midnight.

I drove Marty home from Teterboro that evening/early morning.

"Marty, I'm not sure Andy knows what happened there."

"Rob, I'm not sure Andy has the authority to do that deal."

The day was long, but watching someone like Jerry in his element made the world just feel right.

August blew by quickly. We had three solid deals in play. Jerry had Nike, both of us were working Pepsi and there was American Express. Much to Andy's credit, he was going through with the deal.

That summer, Jerry stole Deion Sanders away from the 49ers, who were really, really mad. In mid August, Jerry announced the Pepsi/Texas Stadium deal. The news came out as a picture; Jerry sitting behind a table, enjoying a 16-ounce Pepsi, his feet, clad in Pepsi cowboy boots, propped up on the desk. This was a direct slap in the face to Coke, the NFL sponsor who would not negotiate local pouring rights with Jerry. While the NFL was miffed, one success for the new anti-NFL Texas Stadium Program did not mean the end of the NFL Trust, which was due to expire in 2003.

On September 6, 1995, all hell broke loose. It was a Monday night and the Cowboys were playing the Giants in Giants Stadium. The Cowboys dismantled the Giants 35-0, but the real bloodbath happened at halftime.

According to the plan, halftime was supposed to be a ceremony honoring Phil Simms and retiring his uniform. Six minutes before halftime, with the Cowboys in a commanding lead, Jerry walked onto the field with Phil Knight, CEO of Nike. At that exact moment, the Cowboys and Nike released a statement announcing their seven year deal. It was to be an exclusive sponsorship deal. Nike was to supply team uniforms and dress the coaching staff with jacket, shirts, ties and slacks. In those days, teams could choose who made their uniforms, but going against NFL licensing was severely frowned upon. The NFL league-wide license was with Apex One. When Apex One closed its doors, they opened a legal loophole and Jerry exploded through it faster than Emmitt Smith did against the Giants. The statement also announced plans to build a state-of-the-art theme park at Texas Stadium.

After the game, Jerry got asked why he chose that exact moment to announce the deal. "We knew the nation would be watching," he replied.

The media went crazy. The New York Times wrote, "This was a blatant slap in the face of the NFL." And, it was. But it was only round one.

The next day, NFL Commissioner Paul Tagliabue sent a scathing note to Jerry. According to Tagliabue, Jerry had violated League policy. Jerry didn't see it that way. Tagliabue summoned Jerry to New York. The owners were mad. Jerry was right where he wanted to be.

Carmen Policy of the San Francisco 49ers said, "I think Jerry Jones has developed into an Al Davis wanna-be. He enjoys this maverick image....There is money and there is class and the two aren't synonymous. What he is doing is contrary to the image of the NFL."

The Saints' Tom Benson, Bills' Ralph Wilson, Steelers' Dan Rooney and Broncos' Pat Bowden went on record to say that they were "furious."

Wellington Mara, NY Giants: "I feel sorry for the guy. I don't think he got the concept of what it means to be a member of the team. Anything that jeopardizes the sharing of revenues is a very serious threat to the stability of the league."

The NFL's position, courtesy of Roger Headrick, chairman of NFL properties, was that "The Nike deal is with Texas Stadium, but Texas Stadium and the Cowboys are one in the same, since Jerry owns both."

Jerry's only friend in the fight was Al Davis of the Oakland Raiders. Al was anti anything that had to do with the NFL.

On the eve of Jerry's mid-September summit with the NFL and the commissioner, Business Week ran an incredible article that just pumped Jerry up even more.

"Everything coming up Silver and Blue in the NFL" was the cover story. "A cowboy the NFL can't Lasso."

I found myself defending Jerry and our program. "Rob Prazmark, President of 21 Marketing, who has been advising the Cowboys on their national program, said 'The difference in opinion is a simple American business problem. NFL Properties is interested in enhancing the NFL Corporate Brand. Jerry and the other clubs are interested in selling more product.'"

While the NFL knew of my deal with Jerry, I had been letting Jerry take on the media. But now I was also a target. The NFL saw my assisting Jerry as anti-NFL. Personally, I received a kind of "you'll never work in this town again" attitude from the media. I didn't care, Jerry was my man, he was paying me, and he was going to owe me on the American Express deal.

Behind the scenes, the NFL was discussing penalizing Jerry. Unless he stopped his game, they would suspend his regular revenue sharing splits from the NFL trust. They were even considering taking away his draft picks.

On September 20, Jerry showed up at NFL headquarters on Park Ave, had lunch with Tagliabue and other NFL executives, and defended his deals and this "national program" that we had helped create.

With no indication that he would stop, Jerry was legally served papers informing him that the NFL was suing him for \$300 million. Reflecting on the lunch, all Jerry said was, "I thought it was a good lunch, especially the clam chowder I was eating when they served me my lawsuit."

My reaction was more like, "Oh my God." Two things came right to my mind. One was that 21 was going to be dragged into this lawsuit - 21 Marketing was named in the complaint. Two was what would this lawsuit do to the Amex deal? Andy had gotten the money and the permission to sign the deal, but big corporations usually don't like being sucked into lawsuits.

Slowly, a strange wave began to travel through the NFL ownership. First, Al Davis went public saying that he wasn't sure the NFL had the authority to sue one of its owners without a vote of the ownership. Then, one by one, individual owners began to think what this lawsuit would mean for their own franchises. Kraft (Patriots), Laurie (Eagles) and Huizenga (Dolphins), all new owners who had put up big, big money, began to back off. Kraft was actually trying to come up with a compromise for Jerry - 50% of NFL Properties revenue would be split evenly and 50% would be based on actual sale. Mostly, the owners went neutral. Ralph Wilson was leading the charge on dismantling Jerry. Wilson thought Jerry was tearing apart the ownership, and he was. The ownership basically split old school versus new school; between six and ten owners were on Jerry's side.

The timing of the lawsuit was well calculated. The NFL knew American Express was due to announce any day and they had hoped that this move would discourage the official okay.

As expected, I got a call from Jerry. "Robert, Robert, you still with me?"

"Jerry, absolutely. Whatever you need, I am with you."

"Well, the most important thing is that we need to get American Express across the line. I have spoken with Andy and they are still with me. You need to keep them focused, we can't lose them. Second, if this is going to get ugly as I think it is, I need you to cooperate with the lawsuit, discovery, depositions whatever, I got you covered. After all, they only sued me for \$300 million. What cheapskates! I have been sued for a billion before.

You call me if you need anything. My lawyers will coordinate with your lawyers."

In true Jerry style, he had spoken his peace and was gone. I was left with two big questions. One, what happened if the NFL sued me? Two, who was covering my legal bills? Maybe this was Jerry's comfort zone, but I was a newbie in the hundred million dollar lawsuit game.

On October 8, after a few nail-biting calls with Andy and AE, AE announced. They were the official card of Texas Stadium, the only card accepted for the purchase of season tickets and a ton of promotion. On October 24, Jerry asked a Federal Court to dismiss the NFL lawsuit. His request was denied, but Jerry was ready with his next move. The NFL had played right into his hands.

On November 7, almost a month to the day of the American Express announcement, Jerry counter-sued the NFL for \$750 million. Just as Jerry had predicted, the fight was getting uglier by the minute.

With each day, we packed up more and more files to send to the NFL for discovery. At one point, I told them they were welcome to come to our offices and live with us. The process took an ungodly amount of time. Depositions by the NFL were tying up my days. Jerry went underground, only urging me to tell the entire truth and give them everything.

The NFL talk shows were weighing in on the long term dangers of these suits, suggesting they could reopen the anti-trust argument that Al Davis had fought and lost years prior. So much money, so much confusion. The lawsuit was also getting the attention of Capitol Hill.

For the next 12 months, the legal beagles went at it. Jerry continued to ask the courts to dismiss the lawsuit against him, the courts continued to deny his motions. In September of 1996, one year after the Nike, Pepsi and AE deals, Jerry announced that we had signed with AT & T, which flew in the face of the NFL's deal with Sprint. Our deal with Jerry had expired at this point, and our business with the Cowboys was limited to the lawsuits. Then, in December of 1996, the NFL and Jerry Jones ended their lawsuits in what seemed like a draw. Jerry eventually got Taco Bell; the NFL had McDonalds.

The media declared Jerry the "kind of winner" since he was able to keep his deals and continue to market Texas Stadium his way. Clearly, Jerry got the "power" he was seeking. He was named to a

special commission for long range planning. It was an incredible test of will and, in 2003 the NFL Trust was redesigned, not abolished, as Jerry wanted.

Logically, this is the end of the story. But there was one more piece of unfinished business.

Our deal with Jerry was a classic representation deal: retainer and commission. Once we secured a sponsor, the retainer would be deducted against the commission. We understood the rules of engagement were different for every deal. With Nike, we simply assisted in the development of the Texas Stadium rights package and carried out the painstaking research. With Pepsi, we introduced the package at the corporate level, but Jerry sold at the local level. Our agreement was very specific; it laid out exactly what and who we got paid on. The one thing it left out was option clauses.

So when, in 1997, some two years after the original deal was signed, and after I had "sold" 21 to Mark McCormack and IMG, we learned that American Express had elected to renew the first of their two options, Marty and I did some quick math. The total value of the 5 year deal was now xxxxxx and, when you subtract the retainers, we were now above water. Jerry and the Cowboys would owe us an additional \$1.3 million. This was going to be simple. Jerry and I always enjoyed each other, had mutual respect and, after all, I picked up my own legal tab. I would simply send him an invoice. He would understand.

Needless to say, the conversation did not go as planned. While extremely personal and congenial in the beginning, the IMG news was news to him. He had very mixed feelings towards IMG. After I had joined IMG, I learned that Jerry had first hired IMG to do exactly what he had hired me and 21 to do. After a meeting with Mark McCormack, Jerry had paid IMG huge fees and got nothing in return other than a summary document. No leads equals no money. Also, he had to deal with IMG and the football division in player contracts and negotiations. While IMG pulled off the Herschel Walker deal for him years previously - a deal that yielded Aikman, Smith and Irving - Jerry still had an ax to grind somewhere.

By the time I got to the commission part, the "good ole' Jerry" that I knew and loved was not so good. From his perspective, he had paid me my retainer, the retainer had been paid back from the first American Express payment, and we were done.

The part about him owing me another \$1.3 million didn't go over so well.

"Robert, I will have my people look at it, but if I recall, our contract said nothing about paying a commission on any options. It just doesn't." He was right; the contract was silent.

"In fairness, call me back next week and I will have a look." Fair enough.

I had my attorneys also take a look. They, too, said it was up to interpretation.

At the end of the next week, I rang Jerry back up. I got no return call. A week turned into a month. No response. I resorted to a letter asking for a phone call. In response, I received a stronger note from Jerry. He felt he had paid me and we were finished.

As a parting gesture, and probably for old time's sake, he left the door open to a phone call, to be coordinated by his long time assistant, Marilyn Love. At the appointed time, I called Marilyn, who dutifully put me through to his car phone. Jerry was on the move and he always drove himself at frightening speed in whatever top-of-the-line vehicle his sponsor could provide.

This time he was conversational and open to having a discussion. "Robert, let me restate my position. We have no deal with respect to options, our agreement is silent, and let's be candid, I paid you handsomely."

When it came to my turn, I reversed the argument and reminded him of all the money he made on American Express, and the hell I had endured via the NFL. I also reminded him about player agents and their option clauses; I tried to bring it back to his world.

With that, I could hear the sound of faint sirens coming through the phone.

"Damn it! Robert, bear with me one moment, I may have been traveling a little fast here."

He left me on speaker and I listened to the entire exchange.

"Oh, Officer, good day. Is there something wrong?" He asked in his polite, apologetic tone.

I couldn't make out the muffled response.

"Why, yes I am, Officer," Jerry said. Clearly, the officer had recognized him. "No sir, I did not realize I was speeding, I apologize. Yes, one moment."

I could hear the glove compartment open and close. As the officer returned to his squad car with Jerry's license and registration, Jerry resumed our discussion.

"Robert, being a reasonable person, I can see why you think you are owed this compensation. But, this is business, Robert, and I just refuse to accept it."

The officer returned.

"Yes, sir, we play the Cardinals this Sunday, they always play us tough." I thought to myself, is Jerry going to try to bribe his way out of this ticket with some tickets of his own?

The officer wasn't impressed. He slapped Jerry with a speeding ticket for going 90 in a 65.

"Was I really going that fast, sir?"

Jerry thanked the officer for his ticket. He never even attempted to talk his way out of it.

I gave it one more shot. "Jerry, let's try to settle this." He was not budging.

The conversation, while pleasant, was not going anywhere. Then, my mouth did something that my brain did not command.

"Jerry, you know what I have to do. If two parties can't agree, we have to figure out a way to settle this."

"Robert, I know what you have to do, but I will not go to arbitration. I always lose in arbitration. Do what you need to do son, but promise me one thing."

"Yes, Jerry?"

"Let's keep it within the family, Robert. Hear me clear, let's keep it within the family."

He was telling me that if I was going to sue him, he did not want any publicity. The message was stern and strong.

"Robert, I have to go pay my speeding ticket now, I am sure we will be talking soon."

The next week, we filed papers on Jerry Jones, the Dallas Cowboys, Texas Stadium, and a slew of other companies tied back to Jerry. I gave him the heads up that he was going to be served and I wanted to do so in a private way. He was appreciative, and we served his attorneys.

I could not believe what I had done. I had just sued Jerry Jones, billionaire. Here was a guy who could counter-sue me for everything I owned, for crossing the street the wrong way. I was scared shitless. Every time someone would ask me my name, I was sure I was being served. I was afraid of the postman.

My attorneys did not help matters. They were dying to depose Jerry. Jerry ducked the first date, then the second date, and by the time the third date came up, the judge said that if Jerry did not show, he would rule in my. This was a straight up lawsuit. A lawsuit for a commission.

On the eve of the final date of deposition, the lawyers hammered out a settlement. I was into legal fees by about \$250,000. They wanted to take Jerry down, but I didn't. I actually saw his point and he saw mine. We settled somewhere in between. The deposition was off.

The next day, Jerry was on the phone wanting to talk to me.

"Robert, you beat me, and I don't say that very often." I couldn't tell if he was serious or not.

"Jerry, the fact that you are calling me tells me you believe the opposite."

"No, Robert, you got me." I still could not read him.

As we hung up, he said, "Robert, next time you are in Dallas, swing by and let's have a visit."

In true Jerry style, he was gone, but this time gone for a very long time.

There I was, 13 years later, sitting at an Olympic Venue, 3 sections away from Jerry. We had not spoken since.

Instinct told me that it was time to re-engage him. Jerry and I had not seen or spoken to each other in 13 years, which coincidentally was the last time the Cowboys had won a playoff game. Now, he was building Cowboys Stadium and I wanted to help. Jerry was struggling to find a naming rights deal and I had all of the research that could get him mega bucks. I wanted it to be like old times.

I decided to wait until the competition was over to approach him. As it was the final, the participants were awarded medals and the crowd's departure turned was even more condensed than usual. I abandoned my family and, on my way over to Jerry, got swallowed by the storm of people. Discouraged, I returned to my also disappointed family. They knew the number of times I had tried, in vain, to reach out to Jerry and felt for me.

As we allowed the mosh pit to carry us towards the door, I couldn't help but notice a small commotion at the top of a ramp a little way ahead of me. A bunch of my NBC friends and some walkie-talkie wearing security people were standing around looking quite confused. I, once again, abandoned my family, this time sending them off to the Olympic store, and broke into a little jog. There, in the middle

of the commotion, were Jerry and Gene Jones. Apparently the Joneses were guests of NBC and the NBC limo assigned to Jerry was nowhere to be found.

And as I got closer to the group, both Gene and Jerry turned around. All of our eyes met at the same time.

“Robert, Robert Prazmark, is that you?” Jerry bellowed.

“Yes, sir!”

“Gene, you remember Robert who helped us a few years back? Those were some interesting days, weren't they?”

With a big smile on my face I said, “Jerry, I will take them to my grave.”

We shook hands, Jerry still the imposing figure I remembered him as, the smile, the twinkle in his eye. I gave Gene a kiss on the cheek and she asked about my lovely wife and the ages of my children. And as we walked up the street together, Jerry reflected fondly on our time together.

“Robert, I know you and Marilyn have been in touch and you want to have a visit.” That was Jerry's term for meeting. “I think that would be a good idea. The next time you are in Dallas, why don't we get together and get caught up? I would like that very much.”

“Jerry, count on it.” As the once-lost-now-found limo pulled up, we said our goodbyes. Like a true Canadian, I was beaming ear to ear. He hadn't changed a bit.

After the Games, I called Marilyn Love, Jerry's assistant, to set up an appointment. I called back around eight times. We never did have that visit.

