

Father Flynn and the Last NFL Championship at Yankee Stadium

by Victor Mastro

Before the Super Bowl, in my second year as a teen, 1962, I rooted for our Bronx Giants, the New York Giants. They studied football plays, practiced, rested, and ate at Fordham University, and so at Yankee Stadium and the Concourse Plaza. This folklore of football, stories, and tales passed from one elder to a younger; "What a game! The Sudden Death versus the Colts..., How they stopped Jim Brown..., Giants had white uniforms and sneakers, and were perfect in '56, 47-7 over the Bears..., Steve Owen knew defense with his Umbrella Defense..., You should have seen those old AAFC Yankees; Young and Sanders, Boy! were they exciting..., the Army-Notre Dame wars, especially the biggest one in '46..., Sid Luckman threw 7 TD passes for the Bears at the Polo Grounds, Lombardi played guard with Fordham's Seven Blocks of Granite..., Strong and Danowski put on sneakers at the half and the Giants won their first NFL title..., The Four Horsemen..., "Outlined against a blue October sky..."

My three uncles and their friends were all diehard Giants' fans. We would go to home games or gather around the television set for away games. Many of my Christmas gifts were football centric; helmets, books, equipment, etc. Christmas of 1958, I received a pro football, "The Duke." My uncle's friend, Hank, somehow picked up this ball from one of the last two home games at Yankee Stadium against the Cleveland Browns that season. I wanted to believe it was Pat Summerall's 50 yd. clutch kick in the snow and dark of Yankee Stadium, as the Giants beat the Browns, 13-10, to force the playoff game, the following week, Dec. 21, 1958. (Many football historians considered this kick one of the greatest kicks of all time in the NFL). What memories and tales cherished us from that ball...

During the Thanksgiving Game of 1962, the Detroit Lions mauled the champion Packers. The Lions gave Lombardi's Packers their only loss in 1962. My uncle John boasted, "We were going to get tickets for the championship game for Christmas." How? we wondered. John, "Meatballs," devised a plan a few days later. He called the Giants and gathered some information. He told my friend, "Ace," to buy Fordham University letterhead, and have "Ace's" older brother and college professor, to write up a beautifully crafted letter. This masterpiece of a letter will request tickets for a Father Flynn, Religious Dept., Fordham University, and four of his students. A short time later, "Meatballs" called, "Father Flynn, Religion Dept., Fordham University. May God bless you. I will keep you in my prayers and blessings this Christmas season..."

"Did you come across my letter?" "

Yes, Father but the seats are unavailable, and are on hold until further notice."

Meatballs, "Fr. Flynn," paused with his unfiltered cigarette, puffed, and rambled on in a religious rhetoric with prayers and blessings, sort of convincing him in between puffs and pauses. "I will send my best student, Robert, tomorrow with the cash for the five tickets. May God bless you, especially, this season. You will be prayed for in my masses, vigils, and novenas." "Ace," (Robert) was summoned by John. Of course, "Ace" had to go with another masterpiece of letter writing, it was a tight one. The next day as "Ace" stood in the ticket office, the phone rang, it was Fr. Flynn fondly... A few days later, John discussed the upcoming game, "It stated in the newspapers that the last five tickets for the Giants Packers championship were taken up by a Fr. Flynn, Religion Dept., Fordham University..." The football tickets were the promised Christmas gifts from John.

Gameday, Sunday, Dec. 30, 1962, we piled into uncle Freddie's black '58 Le Sabre Buick, "The Bomber," to go to the game. We could not find a parking space. Uncle John motioned with his cigarette to park in the driveway of All Hallow's High School, a block or two from the Concourse.

"How can we park here?" We wondered. Uncle John pulled out some Fordham letterhead and wrote a short note, "Dec. 30, 1962, 12:00 PM - 5:00 PM, Father Flynn, Religion Dept., Fordham University. On official business. May God bless." Underneath the short note, he drew a small cross.

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As we approached Yankee Stadium, many people were crying out for tickets. A stranger came up and offered me one hundred dollars for my seat. One hundred dollars in 1962 to a fourteen year old was big time money. It was being rich for a while. Instead I went with my uncles to the game. Besides, all the difficulty that Fr. Flynn had to go through, I could not and would not part with my ticket. It was brutally cold and very windy, yet I still endured with my gift. I kept my ticket, and watched this historic game.