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## UPSETTING MEET IN LENINGRAD

Surprise winner Shorter consoles Russia's Mikitenko



## **MAN OF MACHISMO: Part 3**

by **JOE KAPP** with **JACK OLSEN**

# **WE WERE JUST A BUNCH OF PARTY POOPERS**

So says the Viking quarterback in explanation of the Super Bowl defeat. Instead of whooping it up like so many swashbuckling Odins, the Vikings suddenly got very serious and played like cautious businessmen



After the Vikings won the Central Division title we had to play Los Angeles for the Western championship, and our team really did a job. That was the game where we were behind 17-7 at the half after I assisted in a crucial fumble. Then I managed to throw two interceptions. But in the second half our defense held—as it had been holding all year—and we put together two of the prettiest touchdown drives you've ever seen to beat one of the finest teams in football 23-20. They tell me that Ram Coach George Allen is still going around shaking his head and saying, "I can't believe it. I can't believe it!" I don't blame him. He had the game won, but somebody forgot to tell the Vikings.

Now we had to face Cleveland for

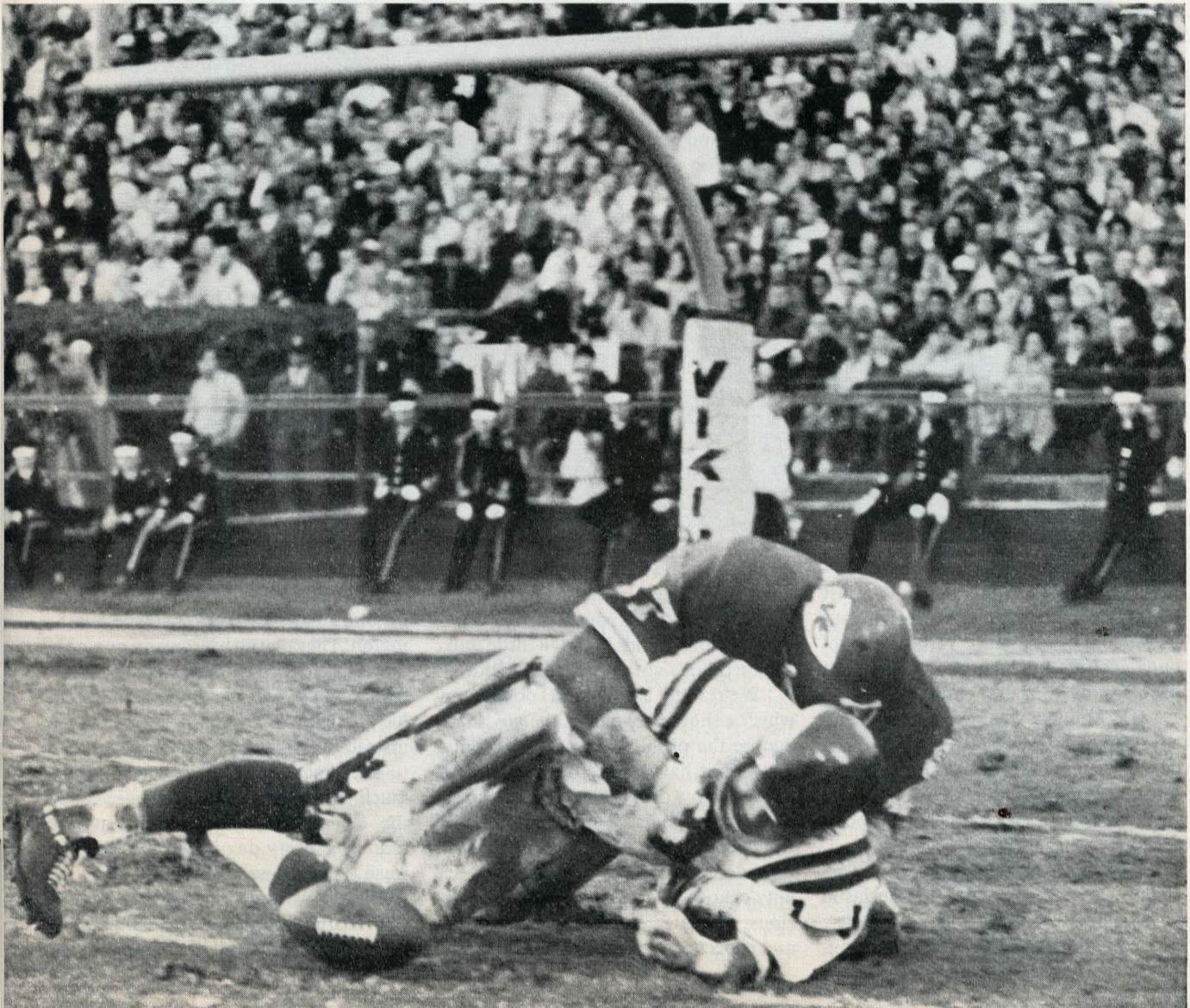
the NFL championship. We had beaten them 51-3 in a league game earlier—one of those games where we could do nothing wrong and the opponents could do nothing right—but we knew that they had some horses. At this stage of the season we were running on sheer momentum; we had come too far to blow it all now, and Cleveland couldn't stop us. Early in the game I called a hand-off to Billy Brown, but he slipped on the ice and I had nobody to hand off to, so I barged through the left side of our line and went in for a touchdown. They told me I left Walter Johnson and Mike Howell sprawled behind me. I don't even remember hitting them. I gave it the old Bill Brown-Dave Osborn technique. Their idea is that you take the

ball to the goal line by whatever means necessary. Those two guys would go through a brick wall if you painted a goal line on the other side. You have to club them with a stick to stop them.

Later on I made a play that everybody talked about, but it really wasn't as sensational as it looked. To begin with, you have to understand that it's against my principles to run the ball out of bounds. Football is just as much a game of inches as baseball or any other game, and you've got to get every inch you can. Frankly, I'd be embarrassed to run out of bounds just to avoid getting hit. J.J. might be watching the game on television, and I wouldn't want him to think that his old man lacked machismo. Well, in the NFL

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AARON BROWN OF THE CHIEFS SLAMS INTO KAPP, CAUSING A FUMBLE. SUBSEQUENTLY, BROWN KNOCKED KAPP OUT OF THE GAME



championship game against Cleveland I called a quick-out pattern to Gene Washington, but he was double covered. I looked to John Henderson on the other side, and there was nothing there, so I took off around right end, straight at Jim Houston, the Browns' All-Pro linebacker. I could have gone out of bounds, but instead I put all my moves on Houston, and when neither of them worked I put my head down and crashed into him. The next thing I knew I had done a complete flip through the air and Houston was down and out. My leg hurt like hell, but I didn't rub it. I didn't know what really happened until several weeks later when I ran into Houston on the Coast.

"You know what you did to me that time?" Houston said.

"Yeah," I said. "I hit you with my purse."

Houston said, "You caught me right on the point of the jaw with your knee."

"Well," I said, "that's one of our plays. We practiced it all year."

"Better practice some more next year," Houston said. "I'll be looking for that play." I hope not.

After our 27-7 win in that championship game, I got into a little bit of trouble with Pete Rozelle, but it was all innocent. Without consulting the NFL rules, Dale Hackbart and I had put a case of champagne in the dressing room before the game. I said, "You know, Hack, the front four has been getting all the newspaper space and they deserve it, but we also have a fine offensive line and nobody's writing about them," so we went out and got another case of champagne strictly for our offensive linemen. When the game was over and the television cameras focused on our locker room, all you could see was champagne spurting all over the place—and that's against the rules. We just didn't know, and Rozelle was nice about it. Personally, I'd have rather had tequila anyway, but he probably wouldn't have approved of that either.

In my opinion, what the Vikings needed after that Cleveland win was more partying, not less. But a strange change set in. After we'd spurted a few quarts of champagne on each other, everybody started looking ahead to the Super Bowl. This big bunch of happy-go-lucky warriors, this team of crazy, enthusiastic guys, suddenly changed its personality, and you could almost see it happening.

Right there in the dressing room we began acting like it would be bad luck if we celebrated the NFL championship anymore. We should have. We were wrong! We should have had a party, but we didn't. That was mistake No. 1!

Before I say another word about the Super Bowl, let me be like Mr. Nixon and make one thing perfectly clear: I am not offering excuses. In fact, I'll say it flatly: the better team won that game. The better team on Jan. 11, 1970. Nothing that I say after this is intended to deny that fact. The Kansas City Chiefs played one of the great games in modern football history, and they deserved to win. We made mistakes and they didn't. That's all. They did to us exactly what we'd been doing to everybody else all season long.

In my opinion, somebody should have seen our trouble developing early, right after the NFL championship game when we didn't party enough, didn't have enough fun. But nobody added up the signs. We went down to New Orleans to prepare for the Super Bowl, and they checked us into the Hilton Inn near the airport, and that is exactly nowhere. It's way out on the Delta flats, so far from downtown New Orleans that you can't even see the skyline from there. That only served to emphasize our change in attitude. All year long we'd been winning by having fun and being enthusiastic, and now we were changing into a bunch of certified public accountants. Not for us the bright lights of Bourbon Street. Everybody was thinking about the extra \$7,500 for winning. Each one of us was thinking, "I'm not gonna be the guy who blows that money that everybody's wife has already spent." We were all worried on behalf of our teammates, and instead of swashbuckling around like the Odins that we were, we turned into organization men.

In the middle of our practice week, Gary Cuozzo and I had a little talk. "Something's not right," Gary said.

"We're flat," I said, "and I don't know why." I should have been the guy to diagnose the problem and solve it, but I just didn't have the sense or the experience. How many players are experienced about things like the Super Bowl? Maybe you'll say that Bud Grant should have done something about our personality change. I don't agree. Bud is a serious, dedicated coach who makes rules and expects us to abide by them, but he

has enough good judgment to allow us to act as free spirits within his rules. If we choose not to act like free spirits, it's not up to him to get us out of it—it's up to us, and especially to me, as the quarterback. Well, I blew the assignment. I didn't have the slightest idea what was wrong. All my insight came after the game.

Another thing that was no help to us—although it shouldn't have mattered—was being named 13-point favorites. There wasn't a single Viking who didn't realize how ridiculous that was. We'd tell the newsmen every day, "Listen, you guys, you just don't know pro football if you think we should be 13-point favorites." We had studied the films, and the Chiefs looked tough. And why shouldn't they be tough? Mr. Lamar Hunt had spent enough millions to develop a good team. I don't remember him losing many draft choices. So how could he come up with a marshmallow ball club? We knew better. We had lost to the Jets in the exhibition season, and now it was Kansas City and not New York that had reached the Super Bowl, so we had every reason to rate them high.

I point all this out because there were a lot of reports later that we had underestimated the Chiefs, that we had been too complacent. That theory just happens to be bull. We were anything but complacent or overconfident. We were, however, much too serious about the whole thing. All season long we had been doing our thing, but when the big money was on the line we started doing somebody else's thing, acting like U.S. Steel or the Green Bay Packers. We forgot who we were and we came to that game as uninspired as Lawrence Welk.

Well, I don't propose to replay the Super Bowl here. Everybody knows that Kansas City worked out an intelligent game plan. They doubled and tripled on our great pass catcher, Gene Washington. They played head-up on our great center, Mick Tingelhoff, and kept him from helping out our offensive linemen, his specialty. They put a defensive end instead of a linebacker outside their line to keep me from rambling around too much. And they played a defense called the Kansas City stack, something we didn't see every day in the NFL. But it wasn't just those things that beat us. After all, we had worked out against their formations, and we anticipated them thoroughly. All these stories you

might have read about Hank Stram's magical defenses versus Bud Grant's stolidness, or the AFL's innovativeness against the NFL's rigidity—why, those stories were all exaggerated. What happened was simpler: we came up flat, and we made mistakes. We made more mistakes in the Super Bowl than we made all year. Early in the game Tight End John Beasley and I combined to blow a key pass play that might have moved us in for the first score—and when ball-control teams like Kansas City and Minnesota are playing, that first score can mean the whole game. John came back to the huddle and said, “I dropped it,” and I said, “I underthrew it,” and the truth is that we were both right. But we

And while we were performing all these idiocies, the Chiefs weren't just standing around waiting for the breaks. They were making them. We thought we knew their defensive formations, but they knew them far better than we did, both their strengths and their weaknesses. Their five-man front seemed to invite certain plays; I'd come up to the line and I'd see an apparent weakness in their alignment. I'd call an audible, and by the time the ball would be snapped they'd have covered up. They were talking to one another all through the game. I could hear Bobby Bell and Willie Lanier chattering back and forth, making judgments, making guesses and being right. We had plenty of audibles—we

with anything less than perfect play.

Toward the end of the game I called a play that had worked for us often. The backs go fake-run toward the right and I bootleg to the left, all alone, and throw a pass, or run if I have to. This time some blocks were missed, and Buck Buchanan and Aaron Brown came roaring through. I ran like hell, with Buchanan on my heels and Brown trying to cut me off at the pass, and Aaron got me and whomped me on down to the ground shoulder to shoulder. It was a beautiful, clean shot. The blow must have got the nerve, because the first flash of pain went straight to my head and knocked me out. I came to in a few seconds with this terrible pain in my shoul-



**BENCHED BY AN INJURY FOR THE FIRST TIME, A SAD JOE KAPP SITS OUT THE DYING MINUTES OF THE SUPER BOWL**

had been connecting on passes like that all year long.

That play was the tip-off to what was coming. We hadn't had a really costly fumble in something like 15 straight games, but in the Super Bowl we fumbled three times and lost the ball twice. I threw two interceptions. We took six penalties, including a key penalty for pass interference. We dropped two balls that we should have intercepted. Against a tough team like Kansas City, two turnovers would normally kill you; we made seven.

were prepared. They were counter-prepared.

At halftime we were behind 16-0, but we weren't dead yet. A few weeks before, we had trailed Los Angeles 17-7 at halftime and come back to win. So we weren't demoralized. “Listen,” I said, “at least let's go out there and do our thing.” We did. On the first series of downs, we went 69 yards for a touchdown. But the way the Chiefs were playing that day, it was too late. We made some more mistakes, and nobody was going to beat Kansas City that day

der, and when I got back to the huddle Gary was already there calling the next play. Was I glad to see him! For the first time in all those years of football I was going to have to leave a game because of injury. The doctors found out later that several ligaments and muscles had been torn and there was a slight shoulder separation. A sportswriter gave a simpler diagnosis. He wrote that I suffered a bad case of the aaronbrowns. A dread disease!

Do you know what happens when you lose the Super Bowl? The world ends.

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It just stops. There's been all this build-up, all these bruising games, all this study and preparation and strain, and then it ends. There's not even a fanfare. After the game Dale Hackbart and Trainer Fred Zamberletti led me into the training room and cut my pads and uniform off and gave me some pain-killers. Somebody asked me what happened, and I said, "The full catastrophe." That's the line Anthony Quinn used in *Zorba the Greek* when he described getting married and having children and staying at home as "the full catastrophe." They helped me out to the team bus and we made the long drive to the Hilton Inn, out there with all that interesting marsh grass and those airplanes and neon lights. The fellows helped me to my room and put me in bed and gave me some more pain-killers, and visitors began trooping in. I had invited my father and mother and my three sisters, Joanie, Linda and Suzie, and my brother, Sergeant Larry Kapp, just back from stepping on a grenade in Vietnam. Marcia was there, and after all these years as the wife of a quarterback she's learned how to lose gracefully. My mother came in and said she was just glad the season was over and that I wasn't hurt too bad—if she had been Jewish, she would have offered me chicken soup; that's the way she is. General Manager Jim Finks said we had nothing to be ashamed of, and several of the players came in and just looked glazy-eyed at me as if to say, "Well, what do we do now that the world's stopped turning on its axis?"

The only real problem was my war-veteran brother, Larry. If Larry were 6' 3" instead of 5' 7" he'd be me—and then some. He's a great competitor, and he is not amiable about losing. He was stomping around the room moaning and complaining, as though he was the one with the shoulder separation instead of me. He was cussing the Chiefs and the officials and the crowd and the airport and the Hilton Inn, and he was running over to my bedside every 10 seconds to ask, "You all right, Joe? You all right?" One of the times he came running over I could see the tears streaming out of his eyes, and I reached out with my good arm and patted him on the shoulder and I said, "Don't worry, Larry, you'll get another chance next year."

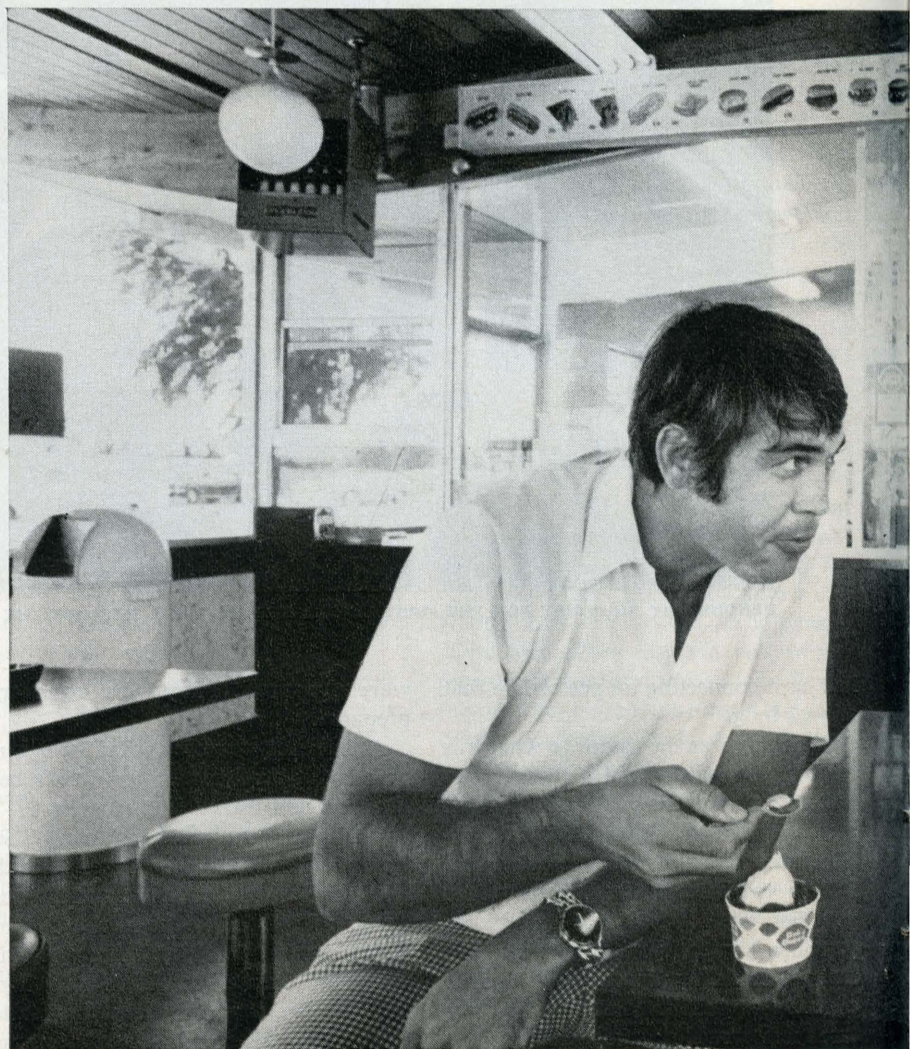
Somebody came in and gave me some more pills, and by this time I was really feeling woozy. Then I remembered that

I had never missed a postgame party, and there was one going on downstairs in one of the banquet rooms. I couldn't stand the idea of missing anything; I had to see what was happening. "Gimme a hand, will you, Larry?" I said, and he helped me to get out of bed and dress. Downstairs the funeral was in full swing, but I could only stay a few minutes. I was making small talk with Marcia and Dale Hackbart when these waves of nausea came over me, and I said, "Hack, see if you and Larry can get me back to the room before I throw up." We just made it.

When Marcia and I got back home to Minnesota we had to confront the problem of our son, J.J. You'd have to know him to understand. J.J. might be only six years old and he might stand only four feet tall counting his thick shock of coal-black hair, but he has thoroughly assimilated the twin ideals of

machismo and victory. "Well, Pop," he said flatly, "you blew it." I turned to look at him, hoping to see a nice smile or the slightest sign of forgiveness, but there was none. J.J. was simply stating a fact; we blew it. I started to explain how it happened. J.J. said he didn't wish to hear any excuses.

Later somebody sent me a clipping from a Ken Jacobsen article in the *Berkeley Daily Gazette*. Jacobsen quoted Dave Meggyesy as saying, "Kapp is the kind of quarterback who attempts to infuse back into the game his own personality and individuality, and who exhibits true qualities of team leadership and produces great élan among his teammates. The Super Bowl was interesting to the extent that it showed that, because of the technical structure of the game, a 'deviant' person like Kapp can't fit in. Len Dawson is an example of the Bart Starr type of technical quarterback who dom-



LOOKING FORWARD TO THE 1970 SEASON, KAPP DIGS INTO AN ICE CREAM SUNDAE.

inates the game. Maybe 20 years ago an individual like Bobby Layne could impress his brand of playing on the game. But when it comes down to it maybe Kapp was destined to lose and is the last of a breed."

Dave Meggyesy is a graduate student in sociology and was a linebacker for the St. Louis Cardinals, and I have a lot of respect for his intelligence, but I can't say that I agree with him on that quote. The way I see it, a football team is like a ship or maybe like an army, and there can only be one big honcho giving the orders. On the Vikings the honcho is Bud Grant, and don't think for a second that he doesn't lay down the rules, and don't think for a second that some of the rules don't bug us. Like the one about haircuts. The length of an athlete's hair is getting to be a bigger issue than it ought to be. Bud will call me over and he'll say, "Time to get

a haircut." Then I'll laugh—and go out and get a haircut. Why? Because he's the honcho, and that's the way it has to be, and maybe there have to be little rules about haircuts and things like that to drive the point home. I don't like it, but I understand it. Bud and I have our little wars of nerves, and hair length is one of the battlefronts. Funny thing, though, the same man always wins the battles.

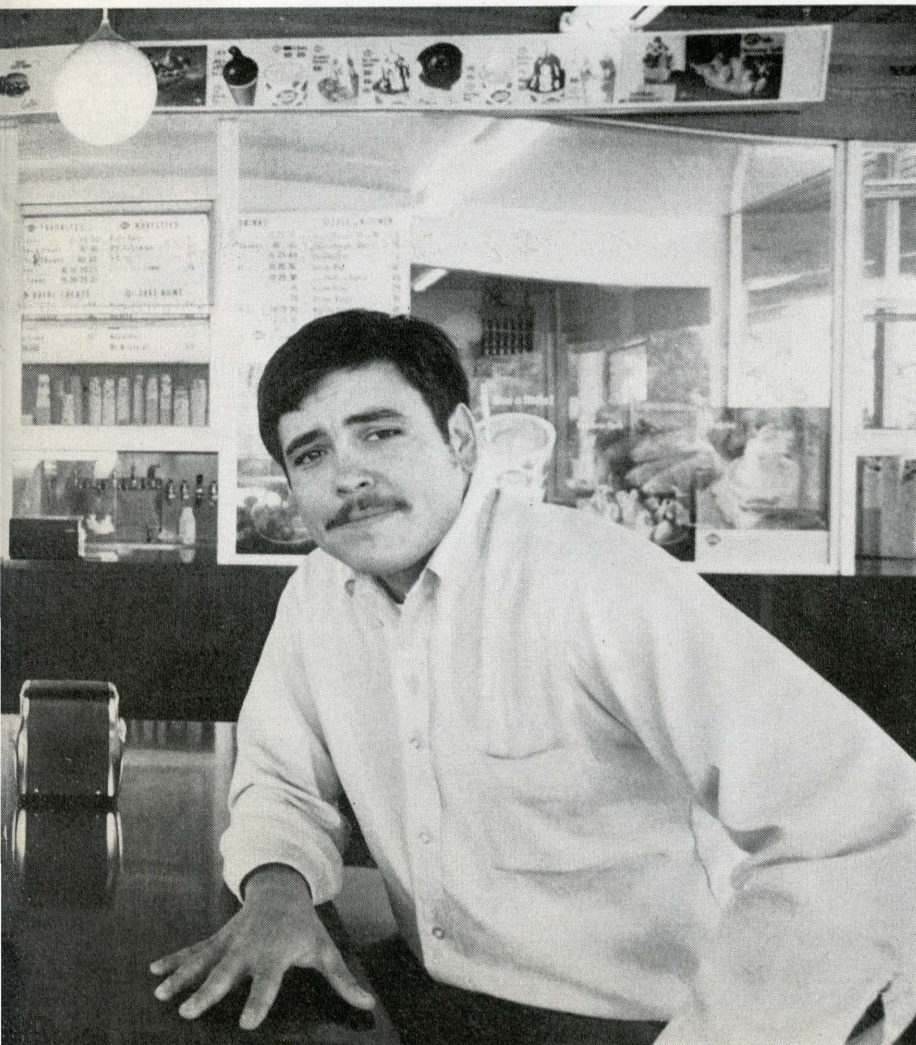
None of this means that Bud refuses to allow the Vikings to act as individuals, or that the color and individuality are going out of the game of professional football. That's just plain not true. In those functions we interlock, of course; we have to perform as team members and not as individual personalities. But there's plenty of room for individuality—in fact, there's a *need* for it. And that's one of the reasons that the Vikings were successful in

1969—because of a bunch of highly individualistic people doing their highly individualistic things. A genuinely skilled coach will allow for this, and Old Stoneface is definitely a winner. I may have to get my hair cut and wear a jacket and a tie on the plane, but within that square outfit I'm still allowed to be Joe Kapp. If Bud were to call me in and say, "Listen, Joe, from now on no more tequila, no more chili beans, no more going to X-rated movies," then I would have to reassess the situation. But he understands football players better than that.

And anyway, Len Dawson's technological skill wasn't what won the Super Bowl, but an overall team effort by the Kansas City individuals. What did I do in that game that was so "deviant," so individualistic? And what did Len Dawson do that was so technologically perfect? His team played better, that's all. If our team had played better, then Meggyesy could have said the reverse: that Dawson was too individualistic and I was too machinelike. If you look at the central gear on a complex drive mechanism it doesn't look like it's doing much, but if it gets off-center it looks individualistic as hell.

Well, that's ancient history—yesterday's enchiladas. Now my attitude is simply that we Vikings will have to go out there and do it all over again—the hard way. I don't mind. Doing things the hard way is almost a life pattern with me—and I'm not complaining, I'm not whining, I revel in it. I like the heat, I like the pressure, I like being on the spot. The last thing I want to be is Mr. Cool out there. I want to get charged up, to hear the crowd, to overcome obstacles. I like being an emergency guy, an innovator, a "deviant." I wouldn't want it any other way. A man doesn't know how these things develop, whether he unknowingly selects a certain lifestyle or whether it's pushed on him. But coming from behind is my way, and I'm glad we get another chance to do it each year. Winning the Super Bowl on our first attempt would have been too easy. Now we'll come back and do it the hard way on our second try.

That's the way life should be lived. There's nothing more unnatural than coasting through life, bowing to left and right and accepting precious gifts. Men and football teams are the same—they both should have to reach a little. **END**



WITH HIM AT HIS MOTHER'S DAIRY QUEEN IN SALINAS IS HIS BROTHER LARRY