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PLAYER BIOGRAPHY

George Ratterman

Position: Quarterback

Height: 6'1"

Weight: 185

High School: St. Xavier (Cincinnati, OH)

College: Notre Dame

Born: 11/12/1926, Cincinnati, OH

Deceased: 11/3/2007, Centennial, CO

Teams: 1947-49 Buffalo Bills, 1950-51 New York Yanks, 1952-56 Cleveland Browns

By Ken Crippen

Born November 12, 1926 to Leander F. and Claribel (Cahill) Ratterman, George William Ratterman was the youngest of three children. His sister Claribel married Ray Katzenberger of Indianapolis. His brother Fred was an excellent athlete at both Withrow High School (Cincinnati, OH) and at the University of Michigan. After graduation, Fred played one game for the 1934 Cincinnati Reds of the National Football League, but his career came to a quick end after receiving a serious knee injury. George's other brother, Pat, was a Jesuit priest who became the Dean of Students and later the Vice-President of Student Affairs at Xavier University.

Since George's siblings were at least ten years older than him, he spent most of his childhood as essentially an only child. His father was a lawyer and an accountant, so they had money to travel. They took family vacations to Alaska and Cuba, as well as send him to summer camp near Traverse City, Michigan. He was a gifted student, finishing second in his class in high school. He also spent his time playing the piano. Later, while he was in Buffalo, he played piano with the Buffalo Symphony Orchestra on the same night that President Harry Truman was in town. More people went to see Ratterman and the Symphony than to see the president.

George started playing organized football in grade school while at St. Mary's in Cincinnati. He continued into high school, where he was a classmate of Charlie Wolf,

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who later became the head coach of the Cincinnati Royals of the NBA. The St. Xavier High School team changed their name to the Bombers, in part due to their passing attack. Ratterman was part of that attack, playing both quarterback and tailback on the team. George had a choice to make regarding his collegiate education: He could either attend the University of Michigan or Notre Dame. He used an interesting method to make the decision. According to his book, *Confessions of a Gypsy Quarterback: Inside the Wacky World of Pro Football*, Ratterman explained,

“To choose between the two, I drove to Ann Arbor for the Notre Dame-Michigan game. At the end of sixty minutes of black-and-blue football, I carefully focused my field glasses and surveyed the backsides of three vital participants. [Angelo] Bertelli’s satin pants still looked bright gold, while the two Michigan quarterbacks’ britches matched the dull green stadium turf. As a quarterback myself, I had seen the advantages of a Notre Dame education.”

Once at Notre Dame, the 6’0” 149-pound Ratterman saw little action until his junior year. His size was an issue. According to Ratterman, when commenting on George’s diminutive frame, the Notre Dame equipment manager quipped, “Well, all right, but I’ll have to give you a single-digit jersey number. You aren’t wide enough to carry two digits on your back.” As a freshman, George broke his collarbone during an intra-squad scrimmage. In his sophomore season, Ratterman threw just four passes, with two of them being intercepted. In his junior year, Ratterman helped his team to the national championship. George was suspended for a semester in his senior year at Notre Dame. This suspension lasted through part of the football season. The Buffalo Bills offered him a two-year contract and he became a professional football player at 19 years of age. After the 1948 season, however, Bills owner Jim Breuil did not offer Ratterman a contract and he went back to Notre Dame. He also signed a contract to play with the New York Yankees of the National Football League in 1950. In that contract, Ratterman demanded that if the team were to move, he was released from his obligations. There was a rumor that the team was moving to Texas. When the team moved in 1952, Ratterman went to the Cleveland Browns, where he finished his professional football career.

After retiring from football, Ratterman worked as the sheriff of Campbell County, Kentucky. The focus of his energy was on ridding the county of organized crime. During his campaign, George was drugged with chloral hydrate and photographed with a stripper

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named April Flowers in an attempt to get him to drop out of the race. The blackmail attempt failed, as the plot was uncovered and made public. His political career also included failed campaigns for county judge and the United States Congress.

From 1960 through 1973, Ratterman worked in broadcasting. The first five years were with ABC and the remainder was with NBC.

In 1967, George moved his family to Denver, Colorado, where he worked in the financial services field. He eventually worked a short time as executive director of the International Association of Financial Planners. While playing football, Ratterman had earned his law degree. He passed the bar exam in Kentucky and Ohio, but never set up a law practice. He later earned his CLU, CFP and LLM degrees. With that, he worked as general counsel for the American Football League's Player's Association, while another Buffalo quarterback – Jack Kemp – was the union president. From 1976 through 2001, Ratterman wrote and taught real estate classes. He was active in the Catholic Church and in the schools of his children. According to his son Matt, "His only job in retirement was first-base coach on the family co-ed softball team. *Sports Illustrated* ran a story on him and the family softball team in its 'Catching Up With ...' segment around 2004. Dad still wanted to win at that time of his life and did not tolerate his adult kids screwing around on the field. We won several championships."

On December 27, 1947, George married Anne Hengelbrok. In their over 60 years of marriage, they had ten children: Beth, Mark, Sally, Mollie, Matt, Julie, Tim, Dave, Ned and Amy. At the time of his passing in 2007, he had 23 grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren, with two more great-grandchildren on the way.

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