



This week I read in the news that one of my former teammates passed away. Except this teammate was far more famous for what he did outside of the game than what he did on the field. Peter Gent was one of the most fascinating guys I ever played with, an extremely talented, intelligent individual.

Peter—he went by Pete in his playing days—didn't play football in college. He was a basketball player, and a pretty good one, too! Although he was drafted, he never played in the NBA. He was an undersized forward, so even though he was Michigan State's leading scorer, he was one of the last players selected that year.

The Dallas Cowboys back in those days were famous for bringing in people who didn't have a football background. They looked for guys who were great athletes, whom they could then turn into football players. The most well-known of those guys was Bob Hayes, who was a Gold Medal sprinter at the Olympics before joining the Cowboys.

Peter made the team as a wide receiver, and played in Dallas for five seasons. After the 1968 season, he was traded to the Giants, and he became my teammate that year. That's when I really got to know him. He was an absolutely brilliant guy, with an incredible mind. He was off the wall crazy, too, a real character. You could tell there was a lot going on in his mind, and he was one of my most memorable teammates.

He really became a star after retiring from football. In 1973 he published a little book called "North Dallas Forty," one of the most famous football novels of all time. If you've never heard of it, it was a big deal at the time. Although the book was technically fiction, it was really a thinly veiled autobiography of his time with the Cowboys, with easily recognizable characters standing in for Dandy Don Meredith, Tom Landry, and others. The book took a look at the personal lives of football players; he was one of the first writers to do that, much like Jim Bouton did for baseball a few years earlier with "Ball Four." It later became a successful movie starring Nick Nolte.

I lost touch with Peter after his playing days, but I was glad to see how successful he was after football. He had great wit and a sharp mind, and he put them to good use.

