

## REPLAY

# The Fearsome Foursome: Good as the Nickname

By Mal Florence

If the Fearsome Foursome had lived in another time, they probably would have been part of a marauding army, sacking cities instead of quarterbacks.

There was something majestic about those four distinct personalities who came

and were always on the attack. And they did it with a flair and elan that were inimitable.

There have been other groups that have called themselves the Fearsome Foursome, such as the San Diego Chargers' line in the early '60s, but there is only *one*

The fourth, Lundy, quietly fought for his life in the early '70s while afflicted with myasthenia gravis, a serious muscle weakness for which there apparently is no cure.

As a group, they made a mighty impression. For starters, there was a Bunyanesque quality about these warriors. Lundy stood 6 feet 7 inches and the others topped out at 6-5. They were said to average 265 pounds, but Jones claims there wasn't a day that Olsen weighed less than 290.

Arguably, this was the definitive front four, but did they really make up the best defensive line of all time?

"Name any other line that



**The original Fearsome Foursome of the Los Angeles Rams (from left): Lamar Lundy, Rosey Grier, Merlin Olsen, and Deacon Jones in 1964.**

Fearsome Foursome, reading from left to right: Deacon Jones, Merlin Olsen, Rosey Grier, and Lamar Lundy.

They have secured their place in professional football history and, perhaps, are as well-known today as they were in their heyday.

Three of the four, Jones, Olsen, and Grier, have kept their names before the public as actors, entertainers, television personalities, and spokesmen for commercial products. In addition, Grier also is an ordained minister.

has two Hall of Famers on it," Jones said.

Jones and Olsen both are members of the Pro Football Hall of Fame. No other defensive-line unit has more than a single inductee.

Curiously, the Fearsome Foursome played together for only four seasons, 1963-66, and were only on one winning team. Yet their identity remains strong.

Lundy began his career with the Rams as a tight end from Purdue in 1957. He was moved to defense in 1960.

together 22 years ago with the Los Angeles Rams to popularize and set the standard for defensive linemen.

They had size and range

Jones was an obscure fourteenth-round draft choice from South Carolina State. He played briefly as an offensive lineman in his rookie season of 1961 before finding his natural niche on defense.

Olsen, from Utah State, was a first-round NFL draft choice in 1962 and became a starter in his rookie season.

Grier had come from Penn State in 1955 to become a fixture on the New York Giants line with Andy Robustelli, Jim Katcavage, and Dick Modzelewski before being traded to the Rams in 1963.

Lundy played for the Rams until 1969. He suffered from a thyroid ailment in 1964 and had diabetes by 1967.

Grier suffered an Achilles tendon injury during the 1967 preseason, which ended his career.

Jones played alongside Olsen for 10 years, then finished his career with the Chargers and Washington Redskins in the early '70s.

Olsen played 15 seasons for the Rams, making the Pro Bowl every year but his last, 1976. He was the last active member of the Fearsome Foursome to retire.

## DEACON JONES

Deacon Jones was snapping pictures of Deacon Jones when interviewed recently at his Studio City apartment. His camera closed in on a replica of his bust that resides in the Pro Football Hall of Fame in Canton, Ohio.

That bust also will be prominent in the Single Wing Shoppes that Deacon and his partners will open in Florida this month. Single Wing will sell Buffalo-style chicken wings and other barbecue selections.

"When you walk in the front door, you'll see a life-

size manikin of me, same height and weight," Jones said. "The only thing different is that a light is projected down and it puts my exact image on the manikin. Looks just like the Deacon."

Jones, 46, always has been a promoter. Flamboyant, audacious, outspoken, and shrewd, he promoted himself as a player, although his actions on the field spoke louder than any message he delivered at press conferences.

"I've always tried to tell Deacon—and he hasn't listened yet—that it is better that other people tell him how great he is," said Grier, who can chide Jones because they're close friends.

Known as the Secretary of Defense in his all-pro years, Jones brought fan recognition, once reserved for backs and ends, to linemen with his slashing, ferocious, and often innovative assaults on quarterbacks.

Jones is credited with bringing the head slap to pro football. He would cuff and daze an offensive tackle, then streak by him to his quarry, the quarterback.

Grier, however, says that he taught Jones the head slap when he joined the Rams in 1963.

"He may have invented it, but I popularized and perfected it," said the Deacon.

In any event, the head slap has been legislated out of pro football.

He was calculating and knew what people wanted to read.

"If you came up to our group to do an interview, you'd stop here," said Jones, pointing to himself. "I'd give you an article that had some juice in it. Now if you wanted a more conservative or intelligent article, you'd talk to Merlin or Lamar.

"But if you came up to me and asked what I was thinking about when I hit so and so,

I'd say, 'I was trying to tear his head off.' People are going to buy that paper rather than someone saying, 'I tried not to hit him.'"

Jones savored his many sacks, and he hit Atlanta's Bob Berry so hard in one game that the quarterback's helmet was jarred loose and rolled aimlessly down field.

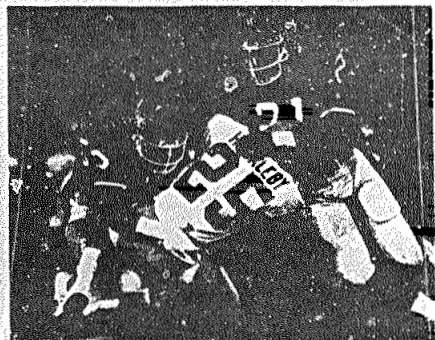
The Deacon said at the time: "If his helmet doesn't go, his head does."

He got some angry letters from Atlanta fans with that quote.

It wasn't unusual for Jones to run down backs who had broken the line of scrimmage. He had great speed. George Menefee, a long-time Rams trainer, would make money every training camp betting on Jones in sprints against the backs and ends.

But as spectacular as Jones was, he had to integrate his

## TRIVIA



## Winning Isn't Everything

The objective, in a preseason game, may not always be to come away with a victory. On any given August weekend, you're likely to hear as many as 14 head coaches say that they really weren't as interested in winning as in looking at new people and getting everyone "on the same page."

So the question comes up: Is there a correlation between preseason success and regular-season success? One team left scratching its head over this phenomenon might be the New York Giants, whose preseason performances in the 1970s and 1980s have included two undefeated records, 6-0 in 1973 and 5-0 in 1985.

"Correlation" time: In 1973, the Giants finished the regular season 2-11-1. In 1985, they went 10-6, beat San Francisco in the NFC Wild Card Game, then lost to eventual Super Bowl XX-champion Chicago in the divisional playoffs.

game with his talented teammates on the line. His analysis of the other three:

"Lundy would grade out better than anyone across the line. The gamblers, like me, don't grade out that high.

"I was quick off the ball, but I wasn't as quick as Rosey. In ten yards, he could run with anyone and that's all a lineman needs. I did copy his ability to slap. But I did it to keep the tackle's eyes closed.

"Merlin had superhuman strength. If I was beating my man inside, he'd hold him up and free me to make the tackle. If he had to make an adjustment to sacrifice his life and limb, he would make it. A lot of the plays I made were because he or the others would make the sacrifice."

It's a familiar story that Jones was discovered by chance. Scouts were interested in some running backs but when they noticed that Jones was outrunning them, he was drafted instead.

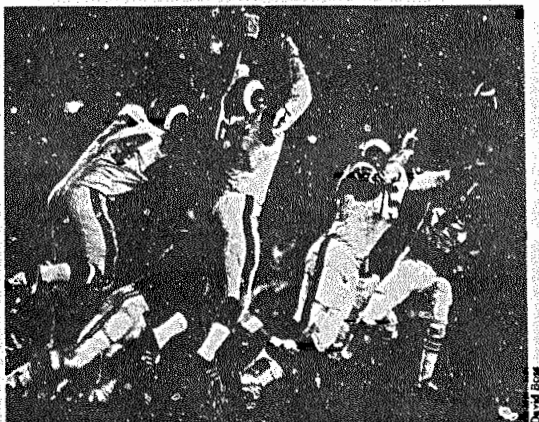
What isn't commonly known, though, is that Jones played under an assumed name, John Collier, at Mississippi Vocational in 1960, his senior season, after transferring from South Carolina State.

"I would have had to red-shirt a year if I hadn't changed my name," he said. "Nobody in the NFL knew about me but the Rams. I left some problems in South Carolina.

"I came into the NFL with hostility in my mind. I went from the depths of despair to the top. That's why I'm so proud of that thing," Jones said, pointing to the replica of his bust that is secure in the Hall of Fame.

#### MERLIN OLSEN

It doesn't seem possible that Merlin Olsen ever will slip into anonymity. His face, his voice, and his presence have been before the public



**If one member of the Fearsome Foursome didn't get to the quarterback, another did—such as Deacon Jones getting to Kansas City's Len Dawson as Merlin Olsen (74) and Lamar Lundy (85) charge in.**

since his rookie season with the Rams in 1962.

Look up quickly while driving and there is Olsen adorning a billboard as the national spokesman for FTD flowers.

Turn on the television on Sunday afternoons and you'll hear his analysis of NFL games on NBC with his long-time partner, Dick Enberg. They're beginning their eighth season together.

He had the lead role in the "Father Murphy" television series after portraying Jonathan Garvey on "Little House on the Prairie."

Look for the 43-year-old Olsen to be in another TV series, a half-hour comedy called "Fathers and Sons."

Seldom has any athlete made such a smooth transition from the playing field to so many visible and rewarding careers as Olsen has.

Ole, as he is known, was the rock of the Fearsome Foursome. Analytical and intelligent, he always managed to put things in perspective.

He never was really a rookie in one sense of the word.

He lined up one day between some pylons in what was called a freeway drill and just destroyed the veterans who opposed him. At 6-5 and 275, he was strong.

In fact, a frustrated veteran lineman, Urban Henry, said that Olsen was nothing more than a flop-eared mule after the giant rookie had beaten him up in the pit. So Olsen was called Mule for a while, but not for long.

He still maintains contact with Jones, his long-time partner on the left side of the line, and Grier.

"I think we did some real pioneering, in essence, on the defensive side of football," Olsen said. "We helped people appreciate for the first time some of the team effort that a defensive line initiates, or a group of linebackers and secondary. A lot of those groups have come forward since that time.

"We were pioneers in another way. We were one of the first teams, if not the first, to incorporate stunts into blitzes and [red] dogs as a regular

part of defensive patterns."

The Fearsome Foursome stopped the run on the move. They defied teams to try to run on them and had the statistics to back them up. Their main objective, though, was to sack the quarterback.

"Our philosophy was that they can't double-team all four of us," Olsen said. "Somebody will be one on one and he'll get the quarterback. There were times, though, when teams would double-team all four of us, or change their blocking patterns just to hold us down—which was a nice compliment.

"It got so bad in Detroit one year that they ran one-man patterns against us, using all the other people to keep out the defensive line. So it was everyone they had except the quarterback and one receiver to keep the four of us off the quarterback."

The Rams either led the league in rushing defense and sacks, or were among the leaders, during the Fearsome Foursome years—yet the team, overall, floundered. The record was 5-9 in 1963, 5-7-2 in 1964, 4-10 in 1965. It wasn't until George Allen became coach in 1966 that the Rams began winning.

Reflecting on those losing years, Olsen said: "I wouldn't put the knock on anyone in particular, but if you analyzed our defensive stats you don't see how it happened. We had so many rookies behind the line who just weren't good football players. If we were blessed with a complete defensive team, as we were later on, we could have dominated people unmercifully. The number of sacks we got came despite the fact that there were always receivers open."

#### ROSEY GRIER

The term gentle giant is a cliché, but there seems to be no other way to describe

Roosevelt Grier, a man who had been searching for something and apparently has found it.

There is Grier, the entertainer, both singer and actor, who had his own television show and had many guest spots on others.

There is Grier the author of "Needlepoint for Men," if you can believe that.

There is Grier, the public servant who has worked for the city of Los Angeles as a consultant in youth and senior citizens' programs.

Then, there is Grier, who wrapped his massive arms around Sirhan Sirhan after Sirhan had assassinated Robert Kennedy in the narrow kitchen corridor of the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles on the night of June 5, 1968.

Now there is Grier, 53, the minister, who sits in his "Are You Committed?" office at 30th and Grand Streets in Los Angeles and talks about his previous frustrations while working with ghetto kids.

"I had another organiza-

tion called 'Giant Step,' working with gang kids in the inner city," Grier said. "I got so depressed working with those kids for so long I just knew why people killed themselves."

That was seven or eight years ago by Grier's recollection. He just turned off. He moved into a swinging singles complex and divorced his wife.

Then, Grier began to read the Bible, and took his 4-year-old son, Rosey, Jr., to church for the first time. Later, he got together with his estranged wife, Margie, and the family came together again.

Grier didn't make the Hall of Fame in football, but he says he's going to make the Hall of Fame in serving mankind.

"I'm going to do something here...." Grier said. "My wife is committed to the inner city to work with the young people to help make their lives change. I see young people with great potential whose lives are snuffed out by booze,

or drugs, or other trouble.

"My commitment is to see people reach their potential and it's not an ego thing with me.... My objective is to make sure that every individual who has an opportunity to influence life will do it."

Grier is a leader. He became one when he was traded to the Rams in 1963, a trade that hurt him because he had thought he was a fixture with the Giants.

"I saw a whole different group of guys who were self-centered and who wanted to do only what would put their own name up there. It didn't set with me," he recalled. "I wasn't going to join any black or white group, and my attitude changed.

"When I was with the Giants, I could be a clown. They had a lot of leaders. We didn't have that many leaders in L.A. I decided that's what they needed. So I took a stand and the Fearsome Foursome came together."

Grier said he began to talk to his teammates, and when

they asked him why New York was a winning team, he said it was because "we loved each other."

That concept seemed to make the Rams uncomfortable, but they eventually understood it, Grier said.

As a member of winning teams in New York, Grier's credentials were already established. The other members of the foursome had not attained that celebrity.

It may be difficult to perceive, considering the violent nature of the game he played, but Grier abhorred unnecessary violence.

"It was just a game to me," he said. "You didn't go out to hurt someone. I had a big fight with my guys in New York because some of them deliberately tried to hurt someone. I said, 'We don't win that way. We win by playing by the rules.'

"They didn't understand why I wouldn't deliberately hurt someone. They always thought you had to play angry. I always wanted to have fun. When I played over a guy that wasn't as good as I was, I wouldn't kill him, or mouth off about how terrible he was. I always respected every guy who was on the field.

"It was very hard for me to realize that guys didn't understand that this man is trying to earn a living for himself and his family. You play the game hard and you play it fair, but when the play is over, you don't try to catch a guy when he's down and try to hurt him. That was very disgusting to me, when guys would deliberately do that, and I spoke up."

Grier still is speaking up. Only this time his message is directed at society.

LAMAR LUNDY

There was a time when Lamar Lundy was so weak

## TRIVIA

### Say That Again?



Jaworski: quotable quarterback.

Former Houston and New Orleans head coach **Bum Phillips**, asked prior to the 1985 season whether linebacker Dennis Winston's hold-out was over money: "We don't supply women, so it must be money."

Philadelphia Eagles quarterback **Ron Jaworski**, in a moment of reflection after telling a reporter that Cleveland quarterback Bernie Kosar looked a little hesitant and stiff in a 1985 preseason appearance: "I can see the headlines now: 'Jaworski Says Kosar Is a Stiff.'"

New York Giants defensive end **Casey Merrill**, on his teammate, 5-foot-7-inch, 195-pound running back **Joe Morris**: "Joe Morris is small, but he's big."

that he could barely walk. He couldn't hold a toothbrush, put on his socks, comb his hair, close his eyes, or scratch his nose.

His former wife, Lilli, now a secretary with "Are You Committed?," once saved his life with mouth-to-mouth resuscitation after he had stopped breathing.

Lundy, a giant of a man, was withering away. He was already suffering from a thyroid ailment and diabetes, and now another disease had invaded his body.

Myasthenia gravis, from the Greek and Latin, means serious muscle weakness. It is a rare ailment that is characterized by varying weakness

of voluntary muscles, which is partially relieved by rest.

Symptoms include blurred or double vision, drooping of the eyelids, loss of facial expression, difficulty in breathing, in moving arms, hands and fingers, in flexing lower limbs, emotional upsets, loss of sleep, and susceptibility to respiratory infections.

"Ever since 1970, it seems the devil has been after me—the disease, ups and downs, and all that," Lundy said by phone from Chicago.

The fact that Lundy still is alive is rather remarkable. But there is even better news.

"I feel better now than I have since I came out of college," he said. "There are so

many new medicines, and doctors have more knowledge of the problems I have. I had a negative reaction from a lot of the medicines I was on. But I'm at the point now that the doctors pretty well know what I need from my past record."

Lundy said he has learned a lot more about myasthenia gravis and is living with it.

"I've been told that myasthenia gravis will make you feel bad and you'll go up and down but, unless things get really bad, it won't kill you," he said. "The thyroid problem goes up and down. But diabetes can cause you a lot of problems from strokes and heart attacks. It can kill you.

"I first had my thyroid problem in 1964. It got so bad that my eyes were kind of bulging out and I had a lot of nerve problems, shaking and quivering, and it wouldn't take much for me to perspire.

"That brought on the diabetes in 1967, and some doctors think the thyroid problem might have had something to do with myasthenia gravis, which came on in 1970.

"So it was just a downward depression. I was being triple-teamed and I had to fight it all by myself. When I was triple-teamed before, I had Merlin, Deacon, and Rosey there to pick up the slack. But, when you're out on that field all by yourself, it's a different thing."

It was when Lundy was at his lowest ebb in a hospital bed in Los Angeles that he rearranged his priorities.

"One time I heard a doctor say, 'Leave him alone,' as if nothing could be done for me," he said. "At that point I was going the other way. I was hooked up to a lot of pumps and being fed through the nose. And they had to put ice on me to keep me from burning up.

"I felt I was down in this

hole and everything was dark and I dug out of it and came out to the light. When you go through that, you go through something in your mind and certain things become important to you.

"At one time I wanted to become a coach. But that wasn't important to me. I just wanted to be with my family. I feel very good now because I'm here with my sons and my grandchildren. At this point in my life, I'm as happy as someone who owned twenty stores."

Lundy, 50, lives in a Chicago apartment complex with his sons Lamar III, 29, and Ronald, 26, and their families. This is the life he envisioned when he was in that dark pit.

He credits Grier with his new outlook on life.

"Rosey is very involved in religion, and a year ago he came to see me and started talking," Lundy said. "I was on the other side of the spectrum as far as religion was concerned. But now that I have accepted Jesus Christ it seems like my world has turned around, the mountains have been moved. I feel good inside."

Lundy played for the Rams for 13 years, longer than any player at that time. He also held an obscure NFL record—most interception touchdowns by a defensive lineman.

Although Lundy was a valued member of the Fearsome Foursome, he never received the acclaim during his playing career that was accorded his more publicized teammates.

"That wasn't a problem with me and it doesn't affect me now," Lundy said. "I was satisfied with the way things were. It really didn't seem important. Whoever got the most publicity of the group, Merlin, Rosey, or Deacon, we were still looked at as a group. The reason we are remembered is that we were successful as a group."

## TRIVIA



John Bivens

Bill Fralic sang a different tune to Falcons.

### Solo in the Key of \$

Ever since anyone can remember, NFL training camps have included a mealtime ritual featuring rookies' solo renditions of their alma maters' fight songs. "On Wisconsin," "Fight For California," "The Eyes Of Texas," and countless other heroic themes have been mastered and butchered in equal helpings, all to the delight of jeering and cajoling veterans...most of the time.

At the Atlanta Falcons' camp last summer, the tradition got a jolt when high-priced guard Bill Fralic stood on a chair at dinner one night. Instead of the University of Pittsburgh fight song, Fralic belted out, "I'm in the money...." then sat down.