Book Title: JERRY WOLMAN: THE WORLD’S Richest Man

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Publisher: AMERICAN LITERARY PRESS
Heritage Special Edition


Retail Price: $25.95

Categories: Biography & Autobiography
Sports / Real Estate
In 1963, real estate developer Jerry Wolman burst onto the national scene when he bought the NFL’s Philadelphia Eagles for a then-record five and a half million dollars. He was only 35—the youngest team owner in all of sports. In the next few years, Wolman’s empire topped a $100 million dollars—a fortune in any era. Along with the Eagles and his properties in his adopted hometown of Washington, D.C., Wolman owned the Philadelphia Spectrum arena, the Philadelphia Flyers of the NHL, and the crown jewel, the towering John Hancock Center in Chicago. His impact on cities and skylines in his day would’ve made even Donald Trump look like an apprentice. Not to mention his influence and legendary achievements in the sports industry.

Sought by celebrities, a fixture in the media, everyone wanted to be a part of the Wolman universe. Amazingly, it wasn’t his wealth that made him the center of attention; it was his larger-than-life personality. The guy filled every room he entered with a flair for the flamboyant, yet never forgetting a name and making everyone he met feel like family.

He was an entertainer and a prankster, once leaving a (tame) lion in the Eagles front office to surprise staffers. Often he’d send large marching bands to greet friends at the airport. A polite exchange of gifts with an acquaintance quickly escalated into a battle of “can you top this” that only ended when Wolman gave the man a new Rolls Royce.

While talking about his charity work is anathema to Wolman, his generosity is legendary. If you were in need, he was known to pay off your mortgage or buy you a car, never saying a word about it. He gave jobs to friends and relatives and friends of relatives. He did business with a handshake and always picked up the check. Wolman’s probably one of the few people to be lauded for charity work by both the Pope and the B’nai Brith.

For much of the 1960’s, Jerry Wolman was on top of the world. But even he couldn’t defy the laws of gravity. When his fall came, it was as spectacular as it was heartrending.

The lynchpin was the John Hancock Center. Serious construction problems crippled its early development, and left Wolman on the line for millions of dollars in repairs. Overextended and out of cash, Wolman’s empire quickly collapsed into bankruptcy. He lost everything, including his beloved Eagles, his real estate fortune, and worse, many of his closest friends and associates. At rock bottom, he was forced to move from his spectacular home in the affluent D.C. suburbs into a rented apartment in a building he had once owned.

In this new biographical account, Jerry Wolman tells his life story for the first time. From his improbable climb as a high school drop-out from the coal town of Shenandoah, PA, to the height of the NFL’s power elite, and then through his devastating financial setbacks. How high was up?
How hard was the fall? How can you recover when your closest confidents betray you the most? Finally, through all his accomplishments and struggles, how did Jerry Wolman keep his head held high, and his reputation for honesty and integrity, and even his humor, intact?

In many ways, Jerry Wolman embodied America in the 1960’s and ‘70’s. Youthful and exuberant, full of fun and hope, tragically flawed yet eternally optimistic. Through Wolman’s stories and words, readers will be spellbound as they live the emotions.

Biography? Sports? Real Estate? Business? Inspirational? Yes, on all counts. Wolman is an American icon, a self-made millionaire who hobnobbed with such legends as NFL Commissioner Pete Rozelle, Jacqueline Kennedy, Don Rickles, Mike Ditka, and members of the Rat Pack.

As a sports book, Wolman couldn’t get enough of life in the trenches of the NFL. As an owner, he was usually on the field during practice and equally as immersed as his players during their games. He was also a generous father figure to many of the Philadelphia Eagles players he employed. Yet he is still, to this day, reviled by some fans as the man who traded Sonny Jurgensen to the Washington Redskins.

As a business man, he bought and sold real estate like other people buy socks, constantly making headlines with his wheeling and dealing. His stunning financial climbs, collapses and recoveries should be required courses at business schools.

And as inspiration, we’ll hear his secrets for remaining the same jovial, genial and giving spirit whether he was selling fruit in his early days in Shenandoah, PA, sitting in the owner’s box at the Eagles games, or cashing in his last US Savings Bond so he could make even the simplest of ends meet to support his family.

The content of Wolman’s story provides the juicy slice-of-a-great-life stories that readers crave.

A portion of all proceeds from this book will be donated to the Miracle League. Please see the attached document for additional information about this organization.

www.JerryWolman.com
About Jerry Wolman

Jerry Wolman became known as "The Boy Wonder" of real estate, a storybook "rags to riches" builder in the Washington, D.C. area in the mid-1950s through the decade of the 1960s, amassing a personal financial empire.

Jerry Wolman lived the epitome of the Horatio Alger "rags to riches," triumphant American underdog story; though Wolman's remarkable tale had a powerfully dramatic twist. “The World's Richest Man” is the remarkable true story of a man who dreamed of soaring and touched the lives of thousands...

He was born in Shenandoah, Pennsylvania in 1927, the son of a grocer. Wolman had a tremendous passion for football, and as a child he would hitch-hike 100 miles without a ticket and sneak in to see his beloved Philadelphia Eagles play.

Working tirelessly for the family business as a youngster, Wolman had to drop out of school when his father had a stroke, never graduating. After serving in the Merchant Marines as a teenager, he returned home and met his wife-to-be, Anne. Penniless, but determined, the two decided to pick up a hitch-hiker and go wherever their passenger was heading to start their new life: it turned out to be Washington D.C.

During the early 1950's Wolman worked in a paint store, but became transfixed by a construction site across the street. He quit his job and bought a piece of land. Learning as he went along, Jerry built a small apartment unit and sold it. After that, he kept on building. Over the 1950s and early 1960s, Jerry Wolman Construction Company built approximately 30,000 apartment units and 6,000,000 square feet of office space.

Wolman was one of the most successful young self-made men in America. He purchased the famed National Theatre and the Raleigh Hotel in the nation's capital. In no time, he built seven high-rise towers in a one mile radius in the District of Columbia.

In 1963, at the age of 36, he had amassed $36,000,000 and was heralded as "The Boy Wonder" of real estate. That year, he achieved his boyhood dream and purchased the Philadelphia Eagles.

Wolman grew to national fame as an exuberant young football owner with a dynamic personality and a giant heart. His generous deeds for friends and strangers alike became legendary.

In 1964, he began plans for the construction of the tallest residential/commercial building in the world: the John Hancock Center in Chicago. In 1966, he founded the Philadelphia Flyers and built...
the storied Spectrum arena in Philadelphia. He then purchased the Yellow Cab Company, the second largest in the nation.

In August of 1966, construction problems with the John Hancock Center sent his estimated $100 million dollar financial empire into a tailspin.

Wolman's accomplishments were only surpassed by the manner in which he lived his life. His life touched thousands and his never-been-told incredible story is heartfelt, moving and compelling.

Jerry and his story will inspire others to keep pushing forward through all obstacles and hardship. He is exceedingly motivational in character, and from the highest of highs to the lowest of times, his experiences and perspective can serve as a model of inspiration to so many.

Mike Mallowe, a highly respected sports writer in Philadelphia, wrote a piece listing forty people who have left the biggest footprints over the past eighty years in the city of Philadelphia (September 1988 – Philadelphia Magazine's Special 80th Anniversary Issue). Here is an excerpt:

"Wolman was a cheerful, charming dreamer who, more than anyone else, made Philadelphia a big-league town. The pro franchises were in place before Wolman, but it was he who had the vision to merchandize the NFL before the NFL got around to it. And his was also the spirit behind the building of the Spectrum and the creation of the Flyers."

Certainly Wolman left a lasting impression. But younger people of today really don’t know the story about Jerry Wolman, his foresight and ability to look beyond and to the future... as a business man and major league franchise owner.

Wolman was a real estate magnate, “the man” behind the Philadelphia Flyers; the entrepreneur who built the famed Spectrum arena; the man who purchased the Phillies Connie Mack Stadium, and rented it to the club; the owner of the Yellow Cab Company in Philadelphia and Camden.

Yes, Jerry Wolman is the reason why the Flyers exist today. He is the reason the Spectrum became a noted name in sports all over America. And, Jerry was also the driving force behind NFL Films...

Wolman aided Steve Sabol in his quest to build yet another NFL cash-cow, NFL Films, who is now responsible for the filming of National Football League games throughout the league on Sundays.

Surely this man could be called The Godfather of Philadelphia Sports, and Innovator of the Spectrum, and The Man who made Philadelphia a Big-League Town.
Written by authors Joseph Bockol and Richard Bockol, Jerry Wolman’s newly released and intriguing authorized biography is the remarkable true story about a man who ascended into the business world, and then later into the professional sports world; it is about the man who dreamed of soaring and touched the lives of thousands along the way.

About the Authors

JOSEPH BOCKOL has worked in the entertainment industry since 2003 as a client of Paradigm Talent Agency in Los Angeles. He has worked on the creation and assisted in the development of television shows for NBC Universal and Broadway Video, as well as several cable television movie projects. As a writer, he has been involved with and written for a variety of undertakings ranging from sit-coms, screenplays and musicals; one of which entitled "Queen of the Ritz" is currently in development for Broadway. Bockol is also an accomplished musician and composer.

RICHARD BOCKOL, a former Assistant District Attorney in Philadelphia, has practiced law privately for the past twenty-seven years. Since 1976, Bockol has been the Restaurant Reviewer, Travel Writer and Contributing Editor of the Philadelphia Bar Association's Bar Reporter. He is also the author of a book entitled "Fatty R. Bockol Ate Here," a compilation of his most successful and admired early articles and reviews. Recently he has edited several books, most notably "Rubin Hurricane Carter and the American Justice System," a biography of the life of Hurricane Carter written by Dr. Paul Wice of Drew University. Bockol was also a former host of the restaurant portions of "Live at Five" on WCAU-TV in Philadelphia with Matt Lauer, and wrote and recorded "legal updates" for KYW-1060 Radio for the Bar Association. He has also written many hundreds of legal Briefs throughout all the Courts of Pennsylvania and its Federal Courts.

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