REMEMBERING HANK STRAM

2003 HALL OF FAME INDUCTION CLIPS
Stram takes his winning ways to Pro Football Hall of Fame

By RANDY COVITZ
The Kansas City Star

The searing heat easily topped 100 degrees when Hank Stram gathered a ragtag collection of retreads, rejects, prospects and projects at a desolate military complex in southeast New Mexico.

The threadbare dormitory rooms at the New Mexico Military Institute in Roswell had no window screens or air conditioners. The practice field had more dust than grass. The food was awful.

This was the inaugural 1960 training camp for the Dallas Texans of the infant American Football League. Stram, the club's rookie head coach, had few answers for the more than 100 hopefuls on whether the fledgling, eight-team league would survive.

But Stram made one promise to his players.

"There's going to be a lot of speculation about the league," Stram said. "A lot of people say it's going to fold. But when it's all over with, we are going to be the winningest team in the American Football League."

That turned out to be no idle boast.

During the next 10 years, the franchise, which moved to Kansas City in 1963, would win more games and championships than any AFL club.

And today, 80-year-old Henry Louis Stram, the most successful coach in AFL history and driving force behind a team that put Kansas City on the major-league map, will be rewarded with his induction into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in Canton, Ohio.

"I don't know if anyone was more important in the AFL's 10-year battle for credibility that led to the merger with the NFL and the league we now enjoy," said Chiefs founder and owner Lamar Hunt.

Known affectionately by his players as "The Mentor," Stram posted a 124-76-10 regular-season record with the franchise plus a 5-3 mark in the playoffs, which included AFL championships in 1962, 1966 and 1969.

One of the most innovative coaches in pro football history, with his use of shifts and moving pockets on offense and creative defensive packages, Stram led the Chiefs to two Super Bowls -- a 35-10 loss to Green Bay in Super Bowl I, and the watershed 23-7 upset of heavily favored Minnesota in Super Bowl IV, the last game played between the AFL and NFL.

Stram was a shrewd evaluator of talent. Five of his players -- quarterback Len Dawson, linebackers Willie Lanier and Bobby Bell, defensive tackle Buck Buchanan and kicker Jan Stenerud -- preceded him to Canton.

"He was in so many ways the central focus of everything this franchise did in willing it to succeed," Hunt said. "If I could find one word for Hank, it would be resourceful. He wanted to find a way to win and was..."
good at it. He was good at taking players other teams didn't want and made them good players."

III

His name is Henry Wilszek. No one's sure, not even Hank, who came up with the surname Stram. Born in Chicago on Jan. 3, 1923, Hank grew up in Gary, Ind., where his Polish-born father was a tailor and professional wrestler also named Henry Wilszek.

The elder Wilszek, known as The Wrestling Tailor, performed with the Barnum and Bailey circus, taking on challengers from the audience. Young Henry tagged along with his dad and watched him take on all comers until Henry Sr. died of a heart attack in 1934 at age 41. His son was just 11.

Though his parents had discouraged Hank from playing football, he became a star athlete in football, baseball, basketball and track at Lew Wallace High in Gary, Ind., earning all-state honors as a halfback.

His mother, Nellie, eventually learned of Stram's participation in football when she saw his picture in a local newspaper.

"She said, 'You mean to tell me you played football all this time and didn't tell me!' " Stram recalled. "I didn't want to bother her. After that, she never missed a game when I was in high school or at Purdue.

Stram, who stood about 5-feet-8, inherited his athletic ability and sartorial taste from his father.

That carried over to Stram's stylish attire when he became a head coach. Stram was usually nattily dressed in suit and red vest on game day, and when his team traveled, he had the players outfitted in tailor-made blazers.

"I always said, 'If we're going to be a winning team, a big-league team,' " Stram said, " 'everything we do is going to be first class.' "

III

Stram's ambition was to become the head coach at his alma mater, Purdue, or Notre Dame. He spent 12 seasons as an assistant at Purdue, SMU, Notre Dame and Miami when Hunt hired him as head coach of the Texans.

Hunt had pursued legendary Oklahoma coach Bud Wilkinson and interviewed eventual Dallas Cowboys coach Tom Landry but "couldn't find a whole lot of enthusiasm for a job in this new American Football League," he recalled.

In December 1959, just a few months before the franchise would open its first training camp, Hunt interviewed Stram in Miami and found his man. Stram impressed Hunt with his enthusiasm, energy and imaginative way he approached football.

"It was a special feeling because we were involved in the pumping up of the first football," Stram said of the birth of the franchise.

III

Stram's greatest legacy as a coach was as an innovator.
Breaking the mold from the staid NFL teams, Stram devised the "Offense of the 70s" with a moving pocket as a way to keep mammoth defensive linemen such as San Diego's Ernie Ladd and Earl Faison away from Dawson.

He came up with the Tight-I Formation, lining up tight end Fred Arbanas behind the quarterback and by shifting him to one side or the other, it created a moment of indecision for the defense. Stram created the Triple Stack defense, putting tackles Curley Culp and Buchanan over the center, which disguised the front and enabled Culp to manhandle undersized Vikings center Mick Tingelhoff in one of the key matchups of Super Bowl IV.

"He came up with so many new twists and doesn't get the credit he deserves," said Dawson, who will introduce Stram today. "We were playing the West Coast offense before it was the West Coast offense."

That's why Stram was confident that the Chiefs, who were 13-point underdogs to Minnesota in Super Bowl IV, would pull off the upset. Because there was just one week between the league championship games and Super Bowl, he figured the Vikings would be ill-prepared for Kansas City's imaginative strategy.

"We felt because of the traditional things that were happening in the National Football League, everybody basically did the same thing," Stram explained. "They were used to playing against the same things every week. Everybody used man-for-man coverage and the same formations, offensively.

"With our moving pocket, triple-stack defense, Tight-I Formation, we felt we would have an advantage."

During the week of the Minnesota game, NFL Films founder Ed Sabol asked Stram to become the first coach to wear a wireless microphone during a Super Bowl. Stram agreed -- under certain conditions.

He did not want anyone to know he was wired for sound, and he wanted the rights to approve what was shown in the final product. The film was a howling success, and Stram attained national acclaim for his dialogue with players, coaches and officials.

Stram's verbiage, such as imploring Dawson to "matriculate the ball down the field" and his call for "65 Toss Power Trap" that resulted in the game's first touchdown on a 5-yard run by Mike Garrett, are now part of NFL Films and Super Bowl lore.

And the image of the dapper and diminutive Stram, strutting down the sideline with his game plan rolled up in his fist, was frozen in time.

"I didn't really look at it," Stram said of the game plan. "I knew what we were going to do. I used to tell people it was a list to bring groceries home for Phyllis."

III

Stram also was one of the first coaches to devote more than cursory attention to special teams and weight training.

After the Chiefs won the AFL championship in 1966 but lost to Green Bay in Super Bowl I, Stram hired a strength coach, Alvin Roy, and introduced a weight-lifting program, long before weight training became a routine practice.

"We didn't have people who lifted weights," Dawson said, "so the guy Hank had to convince was me. I was the quarterback, and the rest of the players would follow my lead. Hank had to do the sell job on me, and
frankly I don't know how he did it because I didn't lift anything over 12 ounces. He said he had to have me (lift weights) for the good of the team."

Stram's reasoning was if he could sell the weight training to the leader of the team, everyone else would follow.

Stram was not only an innovator on the chalkboard, but he also was progressive in the locker room. The Chiefs encouraged diversity 30 years before it became a significant issue.

In the early 1960s, when NFL teams had an unwritten and unspoken ceiling of black players, Stram culled some of his best talent, including Buchanan, Lanier and wide receiver Otis Taylor from historically black colleges.

Lanier became the first black to start at middle linebacker in the NFL in an era that was dominated by Dick Butkus, Ray Nitschke and Sam Huff.

"He didn't care what color, what creed, whatever," Bell said. "If you could play football and play under his rules and regulations, that was cool."

III

While Super Bowl IV was Stram's crowning achievement, the 1971 Christmas Day playoff loss to Miami in double-overtime was the most bitter defeat. Stenerud missed a 31-yard field goal that could have won the game in regulation, and the Chiefs didn't return to the playoffs for 15 years.

"That '71 team was our best team," Stram said. "What are you going to do? We had the greatest kicker in the business, and we missed it by an inch, and we lost the game."

In 1972, the Chiefs moved into 78,000-seat Arrowhead Stadium. But Stram was unable to replicate his success in the new stadium, and the Chiefs fell on hard times with 8-6, 7-5-2 and 5-9 records during 1972-74.

The Chiefs lost 35-15 to Minnesota in front of 35,480 in the final game of the 1974 season, and Stram was dismissed by Hunt in January 1975.

Stram, who had been given full control in personnel matters as well as a long-term contract, clashed with club president/general manager Jack Steadman on financial issues. Some thought Stram was too loyal to players who were past their prime, and he let the team get old.

"Lamar told me one time, 'I can never imagine me owning this football team without you being the head coach,' " Stram recalled. "In the same breath, he said, 'I cannot imagine owning this team without Jack Steadman, because he handles my financial empire.'

"When he said that, I knew if it ever came to push and shove, you know who's going to get the traveling music."

III

Stram went to work for CBS Sports in 1975 as an NFL game analyst and left the network in 1976 when he took over as head coach of the moribund New Orleans Saints.
Stram had considered an offer from Philadelphia but chose the Saints because he saw great possibilities in fifth-year quarterback Archie Manning, so the Eagles hired a young coach from UCLA named Dick Vermeil.

The Saints went 4-10 in 1976, doubling their victory output of the previous season even though Manning didn't play a snap because of a shoulder injury. But Stram was fired after a 3-11 season in 1977. Those two seasons tarnished Stram's sterling record in Kansas City and might have been responsible for a 24-year wait before he was enshrined in the Hall of Fame.

But he had no regrets about his time in New Orleans, where he and his wife, Phyllis, continue to live in a palatial home on 54 acres in suburban Covington, across from Lake Pontchartrain.

Stram resumed his broadcasting career with CBS, first on television and then moved into the radio booth calling "Monday Night Football" on the radio for 17 years alongside Jack Buck. Stram, who did radio commentary for four Super Bowls, became the first person to participate in the Super Bowl both as a winning coach and as a broadcaster.

"I've lived a charmed life," Stram said. "I married the only girl I ever loved, and being able to do a job I truly loved with the Chiefs. I'm a lucky fellow."
Hank Stram's five greatest moments

Stram's five greatest moments

1. Super Bowl IV: Chiefs 23, Minnesota Vikings 7

The Chiefs were two-touchdown underdogs, but Kansas City, behind a vicious defense and opportunistic offense, overpowered the NFL champions in the final game between the AFL and NFL. "We sold our team on the idea that we weren't going down there to play the game, we were going down there to win the game," said Stram, who wore a wireless microphone during the game for NFL Films and received rave reviews for his sideline bantering. "It didn't make any difference what anybody said. People who make (point spreads) didn't know what they were talking about."

2. 1969 AFL championship game: Chiefs 17, Oakland Raiders 7

When the Chiefs, who lost both regular-season games to the Western Division champion Raiders, arrived at the Oakland-Alameda County Coliseum, they noticed the Raiders walking in with their bags packed for the following week's Super Bowl IV at New Orleans. But the Chiefs won the final game in the 10-year history of the AFL. "They assumed they were going to win the game," Stram said. "It gave us a boost. Everyone was upset."

3. 1962 AFL championship game: Texans 20, Houston Oilers 17 (2OT)

Tommy Brooker's 25-yard field goal 2 minutes, 54 seconds into the second overtime gave Dallas the AFL title in the franchise's final game before moving to Kansas City. The game, which lasted 77:54 was the longest in pro football history until the Chiefs played more than 82 minutes before losing 27-24 in double overtime to Miami in a 1971 Christmas Day playoff game.

4. 1967 Super Bowl I: Green Bay 35, Chiefs 10

Stram's underdog Chiefs played well for a half, trailing 14-10 at intermission. But the game turned on a second-half interception by Green Bay's Willie Wood that set up a Packers touchdown and an insurmountable 21-10 lead. "We were not as good a team as we expected to be," Stram recalled.

5. 1967 preseason game: Chiefs 66, Chicago Bears 24

It might have been an exhibition game at old Municipal Stadium, but the Chiefs, stung by some postgame criticism by Green Bay coach Vince Lombardi at the Super Bowl, came out blazing against George Halas' Bears in their first competition against an NFL team other than the two Super Bowls. The Chiefs' mascot, Warpaint, a horse that circled the field after every score, was exhausted, prompting Bears middle linebacker Dick Butkus to tell Stram after the game, "Gee, coach, we thought you were going to kill that horse."

Randy Covitz/The Star
Stram and NFL Films provide encore for his induction speech

By RANDY COVITZ
The Kansas City Star

Former Chiefs coach Hank Stram and NFL Films have struck again.

Stram, who attained national acclaim when he wore a wireless microphone for NFL Films during the Chiefs' victory over the Minnesota Vikings in Super Bowl IV, already taped his acceptance speech for today's induction into the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

After former Chiefs quarterback Len Dawson introduces Stram, the coach's remarks will be broadcast over the public-address system, and a video prepared by NFL Films, will accompany the speech on video screens.

Then Stram, 80, who has some health issues, will stand and acknowledge the crowd at Fawcett Stadium in Canton, Ohio.

"It's the first time something like that has ever been done, and it might set a new trend," NFL Films president Steve Sabol said. "Hank felt it might be more dramatic, and I don't know if he was comfortable standing up there in the hot sun and giving this talk.

"We treated it like it's a little movie, matching what Hank said in his speech, to try to come up with the appropriate visuals to capture what Hank is feeling. It was challenging to come up with the right pictures and music to complement the feeling."

It was fitting that Stram asked NFL Films to document his enshrinement. Stram became the first coach to wear a microphone for a Super Bowl, and his candid dialogue with players, assistant coaches and referees was a watershed moment in the marriage of the NFL and its use of video to sell the game and record its history.

"This is a poetic justice," Sabol said. "If you look at NFL Films as the film arm of the league, Hank was our Errol Flynn. He was the first swashbuckler, the first coach who really understood, more than any other coach, that football was also entertainment."

"Hank was such a vibrant, charismatic personality on the sidelines, it's difficult to do this, because you want to go back to the bites that are so famous of Hank on the sidelines."

Because Stram is voicing over the video, Sabol was careful not to splice too much audio from the Super Bowl IV tape, but he couldn't resist a few nuggets.

"We inserted a few of them... `matriculate the ball down the field boys,'...the things people have come to associate with Hank; his unique vocabulary," Sabol said. "That game was a consideration of why Hank is in the Hall of Fame. That one game was so important in the public's mind, and making the Super Bowl super."

Now, Stram, known as an innovative coach, may have created a high-tech format for Hall of Fame
speeches, especially for older inductees who may have difficulty dealing with the strain of the occasion.

"This may set a precedent for future presentations," Sabol said.
Life of a salesman

Stram succeeded by selling the Kansas City Chiefs on themselves and his ideas

08/03/03

By Rick Dean
The Capital-Journal

The Mentor -- the moniker the coach minted for himself only later in his storied career -- wasn't even the first choice of The Kid Owner.

Lamar Hunt, all of 27 years old in 1959 when he founded the Dallas Texans of the startup American Football League, initially had delusions of grandeur when it came to recruiting his first head coach.

"Bud Wilkinson was the big name in American football coaching at the time, and I pursued him for maybe two months," Hunt said of the former University of Oklahoma icon. "But the AFL was nothing at that time. It was too risky for Bud Wilkinson to make the step from the premier college job in America to the AFL."

Hunt also pursued Tom Landry, then an assistant for the New York Giants. Landry also wasn't interested in a franchise that might be around for two, three years tops.

It was only then that Hunt turned to a young, hungry assistant coach at the University of Miami.

"Coaching in the AFL wasn't a risk for a Hank Stram," Hunt said. "One of the biggest reasons I hired Hank was that he really wanted the job.

"It turned out to be a very lucky selection on my part."

Hunt's "lucky selection" was a different dude, to be sure. A perfect choice, as it turned out, for a different kind of pro football league.

"Hank was symbolic of the coaching style and personality of the AFL," Hunt said. "Maybe he wouldn't have gotten a chance anywhere else. But he personified the old AFL because he was a salesman, he was an innovator, he wasn't afraid to try new things."
"He was more reserved then, but he always had that Hank Stram language. I don't think I actually heard him say, 'Matriculate the ball down the field,' until later on, which was good because I was just out of college myself. I'd have needed a dictionary to understand him."

Hunt couldn't have known then what he'd hired in 35-year-old Hank Stram. How could he have imagined that he'd acquired a coach who over the course of 15 seasons would guide his Texans, later to become the Kansas City Chiefs, to three AFL championships, nine straight winning seasons, victories in 61 percent of his games and two appearances in something that came to be known as the Super Bowl.

How could Hunt have guessed that he'd hired a coach who would be inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame this weekend, some 31 years after Hunt's own induction and a generation removed from the induction of five Chiefs players who benefited from Stram's innovations and guidance.

The Chief benefactor of that guidance, quarterback Len Dawson, knew better than Hunt what was coming when he joined Stram in 1962 after spending five seasons as a little-used backup at Pittsburgh and Cleveland.

"He was always enthusiastic, especially about the passing game," Dawson said of the assistant coach who recruited him out of Alliance, Ohio -- in Ohio State's backyard -- to Purdue University. "I was a passing quarterback, and I still remember a highlight film he showed of the Purdue passing game. At one point I had to ask, 'Doesn't anyone throw an incomplete pass in your offense?' "

The film was vintage Stram, the consummate coach and salesman.

"He was actually more of a salesman than a motivator," said Dawson, who fashioned his own Hall of Fame career under Stram. "He sold you on the way he did things by showing you why things would work.

"He was the best quarterback coach I ever had, which made him perfect for the early days of the AFL. We had guys like (coach) Sid Gillman at San Diego and (quarterback) George Blanda at Houston who liked to throw 50 passes a game -- unheard of at the time."

The legend of The Mentor, as Stram liked to call himself, began to grow in 1962, the year Hunt's Texans won the second AFL championship game behind Dawson, the league's Player of the Year.

But it wasn't until the Texans moved to Kansas City in 1963 and the AFL found a permanent home on NBC television that the sports world took notice of Hank Stram, the cocky, animated, meticulously dressed head coach who pranced the sideline resplendent in a coat, tie and red vest with his ever-present game plan rolled up in his hand.

To his players, Stram was a coach who saw possibilities other coaches might not envision.

"He looked at a guy like me, a lifelong defensive end, and had the idea
that I could be a linebacker who could throw off opposing offenses," said Bobby Bell, another of Stram's Hall of Fame players. "He gave me the freedom to rush the passer, cover backs, do it all.

"The things Lawrence Taylor did that made him famous in the '80s? We were doing those same things in the '60s.

"He always had these ideas that seemed a little crazy, but then he'd explain them and say, 'Give this a try. This will work.' In time we saw he was right.

"He probably had more faith in his players than we had in ourselves," Bell added. "He brought out the best in us."

Stram's moving pocket offense and quick-strike passing game were predecessors of today's West Coast offense. His "triple stack" defense was the forerunner of the 3-4 defense in vogue through much of the the 70s and 80s. His "tight I" offense first lined the tight end up in the backfield to confuse defenses. He once upset arch-rival Oakland with a three-man backfield when Dawson threw only three passes all day.

"Nobody ran the I formation in pro football back then," recalled current Chiefs coach Dick Vermeil, an assistant with the Los Angeles Rams at the height of Stram's career. "But he lined up Mike Garrett as an I back and kicked the living hell out of us."

Stram's innovations helped the Chiefs win their second AFL title in 1966 and advance to the first Super Bowl -- Hunt's name for the first NFL-AFL clash in January of '67. The underdog Chiefs stayed on the field with the mighty Green Bay Packers for a half before eventually falling by a 35-10 count.

Revenge came in the 1969 season. The Chiefs won their third AFL championship -- the last before the two leagues merged into the NFL we know today -- and faced the haughty Minnesota Vikings in Super Bowl IV. With Stram wired for sound by NFL Films -- the first coach to wear a mike -- the Chiefs won 23-7, and Stram's candid captured comments became a classic piece of NFL video.

The Chiefs came close one more time, but lost the 1971 AFC Championship game in a six-period home game against Miami. They wouldn't reach another championship game until 1993.

Five players from that team -- Dawson, Bell, Buck Buchanan, Willie Lanier and Jan Stenerud -- and Hunt joined the Hall of Fame before their coach. Hunt thinks he knows why.

"Had we won that Christmas Day game to Miami and been in three of the first six Super Bowls, I think people would have looked at Hank differently," Hunt said. "I always thought that '71 team was our best team. We would have been the dominant team of the first six years of the Super Bowl."

But time catches all coaches. Stram had two more winning seasons after
the 10-3-1 campaign of '71. But after a 5-9 season in 1974, with his Super Chiefs growing old and Stram unable to replenish the talent, Hunt looked at declining attendance figures and fired Stram. The coach spent two frustrating seasons in New Orleans before retiring to the broadcast booth where he had another successful career doing radio on Monday Night Football games with Jack Buck.

"He was extremely sharp, glib and always had a sense of humor," said Chiefs president Carl Peterson. "When he and Buck called a game on radio, you could close your eyes and visualize it."

The last few years, however, have not been so good for Stram.

Now 79 and no longer in good health -- the result of a long-time battle with diabetes and other ailments -- the once glib, articulate Stram now chooses his public appearances carefully. He still gives occasional interviews, but he tends to ramble or lose his train of thought easily.

It is not the image Hank Stram wants people to remember. He consequently has taped his Hall of Fame acceptance speech rather than deliver his remarks live.

"He's so proud that he doesn't want anyone to know about his health," said Dawson, who will formally introduce Stram at Sunday's induction in Canton, Ohio. "He has good days and bad days, but that's tough on a man who always looked immaculate on the sideline, who was always organized and knew exactly what was going on. Now his memory isn't what it was, and that embarrasses him."

Even so, the Hall of Fame induction still means the world to Stram, according to those who know him best.

"This might be keeping him alive right now," Dawson said. "I really believe this fulfills his life. Football, after all, has been his life, either as a coach or a broadcaster."

Added Hunt: "I'm just sorry it's come this late for him. I'd like to think that having the best record in the AFL and having the best winning percentage would have been rewarded earlier."

HANK STRAM

Milestones: Born January 3, 1924... Posted regular-season record of 124-76-10 (.614 winning percentage) as Texans/Chiefs coach from 1960-74)... Compiled 5-3 record in post-season... Took teams to three AFL championships (1962, '66, '69) and two Super Bowl appearances, winning one (Super Bowl IV after '69 season)... Had nine straight winning seasons from 1965-73)... Credited with innovations of moving pocket, two tight end offense and triple stack defense... After two seasons at New Orleans finished with career coaching record of 131-97-10... Served as analyst on popular radio broadcasts of Monday Night Football.

CAREER COACHING LOG
Year Team W-L-T Div.
1960 Dallas 8-6-0 2nd
1961 Dallas 6-8-0 2nd
1962 Dallas 11-3-0 1st AFL champion
1963 Kansas City 5-7-2 3rd
1964 Kansas City 7-7-0 2nd
1965 Kansas City 7-5-2 3rd
1966 Kansas City 11-2-1 1st Lost Super Bowl I
1967 Kansas City 9-5-0 2nd
1968 Kansas City 12-2-0 2nd Lost division playoff
1969 Kansas City 11-3-0 2nd Won Super Bowl IV
1970 Kansas City 7-5-2 2nd
1971 Kansas City 10-3-1 1st Lost division playoff
1972 Kansas City 8-6-0 2nd
1973 Kansas City 7-5-2 3rd
1974 Kansas City 5-9-0 3rd
1976 New Orleans 4-10-0 3rd
1977 New Orleans 3-11-0 4th
Showman Stram steps into spotlight

Innovative coach had own vocabulary and style
By Marla Ridenour
Beacon Journal staff writer

Hank Stram won’t mind dressing like everyone else for his induction into the Pro Football Hall of Fame. But if his choice of the cherished yellow blazer wasn’t predetermined, who knows what he’d put on?

The former coach of the Kansas City Chiefs and New Orleans Saints had a vocabulary, style and football imagination all his own. He didn’t listen when George Halas and Tom Landry told him he couldn’t play zone defense and win. He didn't worry about whom he offended when he was miked in Super Bowl IV. He didn't care what people thought of his outrageous wardrobe, some of it self-designed.

``He had this jumpsuit, a combination one piece vest and pants that zipped down the back," his son Dale recalls. "It was unbelievable, some of the outfits."

As Steve Sabol, president of NFL Films and a long-time friend of Stram, describes him, ``He was a showman in the good sense of the word. Hank was like a little ringmaster who could keep the big cats up on their chairs with the snap of a finger.

``Hank always had a certain gleam, a certain energy, a certain aura. Hank was a very ebullient person who loved to be the center of attention. Certain coaches shrink under the spotlight. When the spotlight came onto Hank, he grew.''

Stram, 80, steps back into the spotlight as the five-member Class of 2003 is inducted Sunday at Fawcett Stadium. The senior committee's nominee joins Marcus Allen, Elvin Bethea, James Lofton and Joe DeLamielleure as the roll of the Canton shrine reaches 221. Stram's presenter, Len Dawson, said because of Stram's health problems his acceptance speech has been prerecorded. Chances are Stram will still enjoy himself.

Born in Chicago and a graduate of Purdue, Stram was an assistant at the University of Miami in 1959 when owner Lamar Hunt hired him as the first coach of the Dallas Texans of the new American Football League. The team moved to Kansas City and was renamed the Chiefs in 1963.

As Hunt observed, ``Hank was kind of the maestro of the golden era of the Chiefs."

Stram became the winningest coach in the AFL and the only one to last through all of the league's 10 seasons. Dallas/Kansas City captured AFL titles in 1962, '66 and '69 and the Chiefs won the AFC West crown in 1971. Stram took the Chiefs to Super Bowls I and IV and their stunning 23-7 victory over the Vikings and the "Purple People Eaters" in January 1970, legitimized the triumph of the AFL's New York Jets over the Baltimore Colts the year before.

``Super Bowl III with Joe Namath was a great upset, but people still thought the NFL was superior to the AFL," Sabol said. "The Chiefs delivered an old-fashioned butt-whipping and showed the Jets-Colts was not a fluke. That Super Bowl made the Super Bowl what it is."
All Stram cared about was winning and he succeeded because he was an innovator. He developed the moving pocket for Dawson, the quarterback whom he'd recruited out of high school for Purdue and picked up after Dawson languished on the Cleveland Browns' bench. Stram used a two-tight end offense and a stack defense. He was the first to hire a full-time strength coach and conduct minicamps. He was the offensive and defensive coordinator and also coached special teams. He helped produce five Hall of Famers -- Dawson, linebackers Bobby Bell and Willie Lanier, defensive tackle Buck Buchanan and kicker Jan Stenerud.

``Hank had a great flair for the English language,' Sabol said. ```The rolling pocket, the triple stack defense, they may have been done before but hadn't been given a name. That was part of Hank's charm. He had a way of stating the obvious with a sense of discovery.''

Lanier said, ```No one else had done some of the things he was doing and others did some of these things and gained greater notoriety. The moving pocket, the West Coast offense, he was doing that 30, 35 years ago. His creativity and view was what allowed him to be ahead of his time. Football is a hard game and if a coach isn't creative, if it's 3 yards and a cloud of dust, that would be less fun.''

Hunt discovered Stram's creativity when he attended a Hurricanes' practice in 1959.

```I thought he was a very imaginative offensive-minded coach,' Hunt said. ```I liked his demeanor, I thought he had the personality that could be a winner. You couldn't have found eight proven winners for eight new teams. It worked out pretty darn lucky.

```Hank was not a Vince Lombardi with a reputation of being hard on his players. But he was very demanding from an efficiency and mental standpoint. He was playing a big chess game and he was very good at it.''

Stram said the Chiefs won Super Bowl IV because coach Bud Grant's Vikings couldn't handle that chess game.

```We had Curley Culp on the nose of the center, which was something they had not seen,' Stram said. ```They didn't play against anybody as big as Curley Culp. Our defensive line was able to take advantage of that.

```They were using the 4-3 defense, all the old standard things, and we did just the opposite. They didn't have much time to prepare and we didn't, either. We did a lot of things they hadn't seen before.''

What may have delayed Stram's hall selection was that some writers thought he had so much talent he couldn't help but win.

```Hank was like a card player, when he got a good hand, he could clear the table,' Sabol said. ```That's when his imagination was unparalleled. When he didn't have the talent, he might not have been as good as others like Lombardi. He wasn't the kind of guy who'd take Ray Nitschke or Jerry Kramer and make them go beyond their limits. Hank was more of a magician, utilized his talent to make the most of his system.''

But Stram used his wizardry to discover a few key players. Hunt said Stram brought in running back Bert Coan from Houston and traded with Denver for running back Wendell Hayes and defensive back Goldie Sellers. The poster boy was Dawson, Pittsburgh's first-round pick in 1957 who spent 1960-61 as a Cleveland backup.

```Len was a failure with the Browns and Steelers, a failure in that he didn't get to play,' Hunt said. ```He came to the Chiefs and took us to the Super Bowl.'
Close since their Purdue days, Stram said he knew the ultra-competitive and extremely bright Dawson was the quarterback he needed.

``I called Paul Brown, Paul and I were great friends,'' Stram said. ``He said, 'OK, fine, I'll put him on waivers for you and I'll call everyone in the league and tell them not to take Len Dawson because you wanted him.' That's what made it such a sweet deal.'''

According to one newspaper account, Brown told Stram he'd release Dawson, but added, ``I don't want you to say I gave you damaged goods.'' Dawson won four AFL passing crowns and was named MVP of Super Bowl IV.

Stram also understood the mental side of football sooner than most. When Stenerud was drafted out of Montana State in 1967, he'd played only one year of football and Stram spent time with him before camp began.

``He'd hold the ball for me, he must have done that on at least 12 occasions,'' Stenerud said. ``Only a couple guys kicked soccer style and he was learning the steps. He wanted to see if I struggled what the cause would be.

``He said, 'You've got to have a selective memory in this game. I remember seeing Mickey Mantle strike out several times in the third or sixth inning, but some way in the ninth he managed to get a hit.' He showed me you couldn't let a missed kick cause you to miss another one.'''

He may not have been as demanding as Lombardi, but Stram could be tough. If a player broke his rules, Stenerud said, ``they were punished by the pocketbook.''

``He could be tough on somebody, then he could encourage you,'' Stenerud said. ``He learned the personality of his players. He whipped some players and encouraged some others. He gave the impression to each one they were special and very important.''

Stram's rules included a strict dress code on road trips and no long sideburns, long hair or facial hair.

``This was 1969, the year of Woodstock, people were into drugs and dropping out,'' Dale Stram said. ``Here were these 20-year-old guys with short hair, couldn't have facial hair, all dressed identically. It's a real credit to my father. It wouldn't happen again. No way Bill Parcells would go to the Dallas Cowboys and say, 'I want all your hair to be a certain length.' They respected my dad so much they did it because they knew it would help them win.''

While he got them to knuckle under, Stram also kept the Chiefs entertained.

``He was flamboyant and different, he had a language all his own,'' Hunt said. ``Some of his language is legendary -- 'Matriculate the ball down the field.' He says those things to be funny, but he's a very bright person. Those things manifested the brightness he had.''

Stenerud said Stram's one-liners served a purpose.

``I only had one losing season with him, that's why the humor worked so well,'' Stenerud said. ``It bred confidence. It's OK to have fun when you're winning.''

But Stram's wardrobe was as much his signature as his vocabulary. He needed a walk-in closet for his clothes, including his red vests. Stenerud said Stram wore pants without back pockets when no one had
seen them before.

``When you're one of the most successful coaches in football, he was doing endorsements...'' Dale Stram said. ``(A Kansas City company) was making his clothes for free, he'd design them and pick out the material. Haggar slacks clothed dad, today he still wears Haggar. My brothers and I could never wear blue jeans, before we'd go to school we'd have to have our shoes polished. Dad always wanted us to look presentable.''

It was all part of the package that was Hank Stram.

``He was colorful, he was disciplined, he had a nice flair about him,'' Dale Stram said. ``His team reflected his personality.''

Sabol said Stram was the first coach who understood that his job wasn't just about what happened on the field.

``It was media, it was marketing, promotion, television,''' Sabol said. ``He handled it all with a certain grace.''

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'A perfect gift'

Stram's passion still resonates on tape

08/04/03

By Rick Dean
The Capital-Journal

Hank Stram didn't have to speak live Sunday at his induction into the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

His taped words from Super Bowl IV on Jan. 11, 1970 still resonated with the passion that carried the former Chiefs coach to the enshrinement many felt was long overdue.

Just as he was the first coach to be wired for sound during a championship event, Stram became the first Hall of Fame inductee to pre-record his speech for the induction ceremony at Canton, Ohio.

Now in faltering health -- evident as the 80-year-old coach was brought to the stage in a wheelchair -- Stram's taped remarks were played between the now-famous NFL Films clips of Stram during Kansas City's 23-7 Super Bowl victory over Minnesota.

After a younger, more excitable Stram chortled over the success of "65 Toss Power Trap" -- the play he called that produced a Mike Garrett touchdown against the Vikings -- Stram's older, carefully measured taped remarks thanked Chiefs' players, coaches and owner Lamar Hunt for giving him the chance to become the most successful coach in the history of the old American Football League.

"As I matriculate down the field of life, I will never forget this moment," Stram said. "This is truly a perfect gift."

The same man caught on tape asking a referee, "Mr. Official, how can six of you miss that play?" during the Super Bowl turned to a more heavenly reference when thanking those who helped him win a place in the Hall of Fame almost three decades after he coached his last game.

"Someone once said that friends are angels in disguise," Stram said. "If this is true, I have been surrounded by angels most of my life. Some of them are here today. Many have even better seats in heaven."
The Mentor, as Stram called himself, was credited both for his innovation and his inspiration in lifting his players to three AFL championships and two Super Bowl appearances.

"I have two rings -- a Super Bowl ring on one hand and a Hall of Fame ring on the other -- and I owe them both to Hank Stram," said Len Dawson, the Chiefs quarterback who introduced Stram just as Stram introduced Dawson at his 1987 induction.

"I know this for sure -- he was the best quarterback coach I've ever had," Dawson added. "And he must have known something about talent, too, because five of his players are in this Hall with him."

A large throng of fans wearing Chiefs jerseys traveled to Canton to celebrate the induction of Stram and former Raiders/Chiefs running back Marcus Allen, who were joined in the class of 2003 by receiver James Lofton, defensive end Elvin Bethea and guard Joe DeLamiellure.

After being introduced by his father, Allen gave quick but proper recognition to Raiders owner Al Davis -- a Hall of Fame member with whom Allen frequently clashed -- before emotionally thanking the coaches, teammates and even trainers who helped him play 16 NFL seasons and become the MVP of Super Bowl XXIII.

To the Chiefs, where Allen spent the last five years of his career after finally escaping the wrath of Davis in Allen's native Los Angeles, Allen thanked the team that he said "gave me the shot in the arm I needed at that time in my life."

In his induction remarks, Lofton gave special thanks to former Kansas State and Green Bay quarterback Lynn Dickey.

"He was one of toughest men I've ever been around," Lofton said of the Osawatomie native. "He had hip injuries and broken legs that would have sidelined a lot of other quarterbacks. But I caught a lot of passes when Lynn Dickey was flat on his back."

**Allen's moment**

Marcus Allen knows that many fans recall his 74-yard touchdown run in Super Bowl XVIII when they think of his 16-year career.

But for Allen, that is not his career-defining play.

"Personally, some of my most memorable runs were ones that I had to make 10 guys miss just to get back to the line of scrimmage," said the former Raiders and Chiefs running back. "If you really take pride in playing a total game, things that most people don't see you're extremely proud of."

The run, which is still a Super Bowl record, capped a 191-yard rushing performance that led Los Angeles over Washington 38-9. Allen was the MVP.
CANTON, Ohio -- He is 80 and his health isn't so good. He doesn't walk so well, needing a wheelchair or the sturdy arm of a relative or friend to help him get around. He doesn't see so well, either.

But Hank Stram had waited 25 years for induction into the Pro Football Hall of Fame and he wasn't going to miss his moment in the sun, even if it was hiding behind a thick layer of clouds.

He isn't the Hank Stram we remember at his feistiest best, but that's OK. Just having him here was satisfying enough. Besides, on a day like this, we rely much more on our memories than our eyes. We only really need to hear a name to trigger the play switch on the replay machine in our mind.

And when we hear Hank Stram, we think of that round, beefy face; those natty suit jackets, vests and ties; the energetic way he stalked the sidelines as coach of the Kansas City Chiefs. We think of the rolled up playsheet he clutched during each game.

We think of those NFL Films clips in which he encourages his quarterback, Len Dawson, to "keep matriculating the ball down the field" and accurately predicts that "Sixty-five Toss Power Trap" would break wide open with Mike Garrett's five-yard touchdown run against Minnesota in Super Bowl IV and poses a question to an official that every coach (and probably a few fans) can relate: "How in the world can all six of you miss a play like that?"

We also think of innovation. As master of ceremonies Chris Berman pointed out, Stram was "way, way, way ahead of his time." He was the first to come up with the moving pocket, which helped keep his quarterback in one piece. He was the first to use the two-tight end formation. He was the first to employ the stack defense. He was the first to have offseason minicamps. He was the first to hire a year-round strength-and-conditioning coordinator.

Stram wasn't up to giving a live speech during Sunday's induction ceremonies, so he taped one ahead of time. Another first.

Dawson served as Stram's presenter, which was a natural choice because they have known each other for 50 years. Stram had recruited Dawson out of high school to attend Purdue, where Stram was an assistant coach. Then Stram signed him to play for the Chiefs.

"I don't ever recall any game I ever played I didn't think we were going to win, because I had great confidence that we had the plan," Dawson said. "And that was Hank. Coaches today have, what, about 18 assistants? Hank had four. Hank was the quarterbacks coach. He was the offensive coordinator. He was involved in a lot of the defense. He was involved in special teams.

"And I do mean involved. He was teaching, he was coaching. He didn't give a speech before practice and then go over and stand some place and watch the guys go to work and watch somebody else teach them. Henry Stram was the teacher, because he knew all the techniques and fundamentals of every position on the football team."

Lamar Hunt, the Chiefs' owner, calls Stram "the essence of the American Football League from a coaching standpoint." Hunt, the AFL founder, isn't merely referring to the fact that Stram is the winningest coach in AFL history with 87 victories. He is talking about his flamboyance and dynamic
personality, qualities that defined the wide-open style of play for which was AFL was famous.

"Hank was a master salesman," Hunt said. "First of all, he sold players on coming to play for us. He helped sell the fans on our product. He helped sell the team on the concepts of offense or defense that he wanted to do."

Stram's prerecorded speech was, for him, remarkably brief. His gift of gab, along with tremendous insights, resulted a highly successful post-coaching career as an analyst for CBS Radio's coverage of the NFL. Had Stram been in better health, he might still be talking.

However, he didn't have to say much to express what the honor and the day meant to him. During Saturday night's Enshrinees Dinner, where he and the rest of the Hall's Class of 2003 received their yellow jackets, he broke into tears. Perhaps the most touching moment of the weekend came at the end of the night when Stram managed to stand in the middle of the stage in the Canton Memorial Civic Center while his four other classmates -- Marcus Allen, James Lofton, Joe DeLamielleure and Elvin Bethea -- formed a circle around him for a group hug.

"As I matriculate my way down the field of life, I will never forget this moment and you wonderful people who helped make this day possible," Stram said in his speech. "The 'good book' says all good and perfect gifts come from above, and this is truly a perfect gift."

Actually, the "perfect gift" was that Stram was here to receive it.
Enshrinement arrives better late than never for ‘Mentor’ and students

Presented by Citi Cards

By Jonathan Rand

JUL 31 (morning)--Ed Budde’s only regret about Hank Stram’s Pro Football Hall of Fame induction is that it couldn’t have happened sooner – when Stram’s ability to express himself and delight an audience was still at a peak.

Though Stram, who coached the Chiefs to two Super Bowls, will be on hand for his long-awaited enshrinement Sunday in Canton, Ohio, his acceptance speech will be shown on videotape because he’s in poor health.

“It’s too bad he didn’t get in many years ago because he was such a great communicator,” said Budde, the Chiefs’ former Pro Bowl guard. “He can be funny, he can be serious…and now they have to put it on tape.

“But just as long as he got in – and the ‘Mentor’ will be in.”

Stram, 80, is being inducted 26 years after he finished coaching the New Orleans Saints. But for his former Chiefs players, who called him “the Mentor,” Stram’s induction is well worth the wait. Budde has helped organize a gathering of Stram’s former players for his ceremony and estimates about 20 will attend.

Four of Stram’s former players and owner Lamar Hunt would attend Hall of Fame weekend, anyway, as part of a celebration for the Hall’s 40th anniversary. Quarterback Len Dawson, linebackers Bobby Bell and Willie Lanier and kicker Jan Stenerud will be back and a Chiefs running back of a later generation, Marcus Allen, joins Stram in the Class of 2003. Buck Buchanan, a Hall of Fame defensive tackle for the Chiefs, died in 1992.

Dawson, whose professional career was rescued by Stram when the Chiefs were still the Dallas Texans, will be Stram’s presenter. Dawson will return the favor Stram did for him in 1987, so it won’t be as if a Hall of Fame audience hasn’t heard a Stram speech live.

Stram shouldn’t be at a loss for words Sunday night when he and his wife, Phyllis, hold a private dinner for their family and the former Chiefs. The group will include all living members of the Super Bowl IV line – center E.J. Holub, right tackle Dave Hill, guards Mo Moorman and Budde and tight end Fred Arbanas.

“He’s excited, Phyllis is all excited,” Budde said. “She called and said, ‘How many guys are going to the dinner Sunday night?’ I told her, ‘You better write down about 20.”

Stram’s legacy took a hit when he was fired after the 1974 season with the Chiefs spinning into decline, and he lost for two seasons in New Orleans. But the legacy of his 129-79-10 record with the Chiefs, three American Football League championships and a Super Bowl victory has kept growing as the Chiefs have found just how difficult it’s been to duplicate Stram’s success. They haven’t reached the Super Bowl during the 28 years he’s been gone and just once, in the 1993 season, have they played for the AFC title.

If Hall of Fame officials really want to capture the essence of Stram in his heyday, instead of a taped speech they could show the NFL Films tape of Super Bowl IV. Stram was wired for sound during a 23-7 victory over the Minnesota Vikings and his cockiness, competitiveness and prescient play-calling made for a classic.

Budde can barely wait to get to Canton, though he’s not in such a hurry that he’ll fly. He will drive because he gets claustrophobic on airplanes, a major problem during his 14-year career. When the Chiefs flew, Budde required sedation.

“I always like to joke, ‘There’s no way of knowing how good I could’ve been if they didn’t have to dope me up for every trip,’ “ Budde said.
Stram no longer needs to be concerned with the debate over how good a coach he was, compared to the all-time greats. Hall of Fame enshrinement makes the issue moot.

To send me a question or a comment about the Chiefs, sports, or anything else - sound off!

The opinions offered in this column do not necessarily reflect those of the Kansas City Chiefs.
Bill Lyon | With substance as well as style, Stram takes his place in Canton

By Bill Lyon
Inquirer Columnist

On the sidelines, he was part peacock, part bantam rooster, a barrel-chested dapper dresser who would strut and preen, gloat and chortle, wheedle and scold, and provide altogether entertaining theater.

He lived for the game and he poured all of himself into it, lock, stock, jock and soul.

Oh, yes, his football teams were apt to beat you like a bass drum.

Diabetes has got him in its enervating embrace now, and so the man who once paced up and down a football field in frenzied quick-step, chasing after the zebras and making sure they marked the ball right, is in a wheelchair.

But on Sunday, when he was inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame, Hank Stram, now 80 years old but still full of vinegar, summoned a grand and glorious act of defiance. He hoisted himself upright, and, for a triumphant moment, stood to accept his due.

And men who had played for him, and men who had played against him, large, fierce, fearsome men with battlefield limps and battlefield scars and bent, busted-up bodies, bawled their eyes out.

In the process, a piece of justice was served. He should have been in the Hall long ago. And the men who circled his chair and cried when it was over were grateful that he, and they, had been able to be there for it.

"Someone once said that friends are angels from the sky," Hank Stram said in his acceptance speech. "If that's the case, I've been surrounded by angels all my life.

"The Good Book says that all good and perfect gifts come from above. This is truly a perfect gift."

And so the record thus remains intact - early every August, on a steamy Sunday in Ohio, tears will fall, shed by men who vow they will be the first not to cry. It is the one record in football that we can say with utter certainty will never be broken.

Hank Stram had taped his acceptance speech, and it was played for the Canton crowd against a backdrop of NFL Films' video snippets of the man. No one else had done that, and it seemed fitting he was the first, for it represented a sort of closing of a circle.

He had been the first coach to permit himself to be miked, and on the gaudiest stage of all - in Super Bowl IV, in 1970. He did it partly out of vanity, partly out of showmanship, partly just for... well, just for the heck of it. Henry always had had an adventurous streak. He would have made a good vaudevillian.
The result was great stuff, lines and images that live on.

All puffed up and sartorially turned out, smacking a rolled-up game plan against his palm, Hank Stram was all over the place in Super Bowl IV. Most of it was hilarious - objecting to what he perceived to be a grievously blown call, he asked one of the referees: "Six of you... how could every one of you miss that?"

The Kansas City Chiefs were in the process of upsetting the Minnesota Vikings, the Purple People Eaters, and Hank Stram was savoring every second of it, predicting touchdowns before they were scored, victory before it was a fact, and generally enjoying himself with a glee he didn't bother to disguise.

The line that has endured is this: "Just keep matriculating the ball down the field, boys."

And so they did.

His players seemed to feed off his enthusiasm. Indeed, his presenter in Canton, quarterback Len Dawson, said of his coach: "He could reach his players."

That, in the end, is the essence of coaching, after all. If you get them to believe in you, trust you, then they will rally 'round you like Braveheart's stout band of scruffians.

Hank Stram was just as much innovator as motivator. He is credited with conjuring up the moving pocket, the two-tight-end offensive set, and the stacked defense.

He coached the Chiefs for 14 years, then ended his career in 1977 with the New Orleans Saints. With his love of the spotlight and instant opinion no matter the subject, he was a natural as a TV analyst, and then for several years teamed with Jack Buck on Monday Night Football radio.

You can still remember how he insisted on pronouncing the last name of a certain Eagles quarterback: "Ron Yah-wor-ski."

Uh, that's Jah-wor-ski, Hank.

"Right. Ron Yah-wor-ski."

When he presented Hank Stram on Sunday, Len Dawson said: "He had the ability to make each one of us feel special."

Now that's a perfect gift.

Contact columnist Bill Lyon at 215-854-5508 or blyon@phillynews.com.
Stram was vocal part of Super Bowl history

By JOE POSNANSKI
Columnist

He changed the Super Bowl. There's no doubt about it. Everybody talks about Joe Namath, and absolutely, Broadway Joe deserves his mark in Super Bowl history. But so does Hank Stram. Because it was Stram who ran up and down the sidelines during Super Bowl IV, screaming about his legendary play -- 65 Toss Power Trap -- and that changed the game, too. Made the game personal.

It's some of the best footage in sports history.

There is only one thing that bothers me about it.

Who the heck was Rex?

You've seen the film. Everybody has seen the film. Stram was miked by NFL Films when his Chiefs played the Minnesota Vikings in the Super Bowl. It was the first time a coach had been miked in such a big game. And what followed was sheer magic. Stram finally goes into the Pro Football Hall of Fame today. But he will always be remembered for January 11, 1970. He wore a nice jacket with a Chiefs logo over the pocket. He ran up and down the sidelines like a madman. And he uttered some of the most famous football lines ever.

There was his not-so-politically-correct: "(Minnesota safety Karl) Kassulke was running around like it was a Chinese fire drill."

There was Stram screaming at the officials: "You definitely gave them an extra foot," he said with a disgusted look on his face. "Bad. Very bad."

And, of course, there was his classic: "Come on Lenny, pump it in there. Just keep matriculating the ball down the field, boys."

But his best moment was definitely the 65 Toss Power Trap soliloquy. The 65 Toss Power Trap, like so many plays, was designed by Stram. In it, quarterback Len Dawson faked a pitch to the fullback and then spun and slipped a handoff to Mike Garrett.

For some reason, Stram looked at the Vikings defense and absolutely knew that play would work.

"OK, 65 Toss Power Trap," he said to assistant coach Tommy O'Boyle, who was wearing the headphones. "What does it look like?"

O'Boyle called up to the booth and asked. Of course, when Hank Stram asked what a play looked like, he did not really want opinions. He just wanted them to call that play. The Chiefs were deep in Minnesota territory and they were already up 9-0. The play was called.

"65 Toss Power Trap," Stram said to no one in particular. "It might pop wide open, Rex."
The play did pop wide open. Chiefs guard Mo Moorman smashed into Minnesota's Jim Marshall. The great Alan Page was faked out. And Garrett got the ball, slipped one tackle and was in the clear. He scored. That's when Stram unleashed the single greatest sideline celebration ever captured on film.

"Was it there boys?" he screamed. "Was it there Rex? Nice going, baby. ...Ha ha ha ha ha! Cementer! 65 Toss Power Trap! Ha ha ha! Yeah! ...I told you that baby was there. Yes sir, boys! Ha ha ha ha! Whoo!"

Sure, Stram knew he was miked. Sure, he probably turned up his volume. More than one of his players wondered why he kept talking to himself and basically acting like a kook on the sidelines. Still, this was what Hank Stram was all about. He had a brilliant offensive mind, yes. He had a magnificent eye for talent, sure. He had a genius for preparing teams.

But it was Stram's sideline presence that everybody remembers.

"Even when he wasn't miked, he always had that showmanship," his longtime assistant coach John Beake said. "He was always patting players on the back, shouting to them `Way to go, baby!' Players would see how enthusiastic Hank was, and they would feed off that energy, no doubt about it."

"He would always dress immaculately," his quarterback, Len Dawson said. "And he would be there on the sidelines shouting, `You can do it. Come on, boys, You can do it.' He always believed in us. That meant the world to us."

"Hank made us feel like family," his linebacker Bobby Bell said.

All of that explains why Stram is going into the Pro Football Hall of Fame. He was, after all the winningest coach in American Football League history. But who was Rex? That team overflowed with great players. Hall of Famer Jan Stenrud made the 48-yard field goal that changed the whole complexion of the game. Linebacker Willie Lanier, who many believe was better than Butkus, along with Bell and Buck Buchanan helped shut down the Vikings' running game. Jim Tyrer and Ed Budde, both members of the all-time AFL Team, opened up huge holes for the Chiefs running backs.

And Otis Taylor, who should be in the Hall of Fame, made the big catch, ran over Earsell Mackbee, outran Kassulke, and scored the big touchdown, the one that led Stram to say, "That's it boys! That's it boys!"

None of them are named Rex, though. None of the coaches were named Rex. The strength coach wasn't Rex. The trainer wasn't Rex. Who the heck was Rex?

"Rex?" Beake says. "It's not Rex. He's saying `Rats.'"

"Rats?"

"Yeah, that's what he called us coaches. Rats. That's what he called me and Tom Pratt and Pete Brewster. He always called us Rats."

"Rats? Who calls people `Rats'? What does that mean?"

Beake thought about that for a minute. And he laughed.

"I don't know," he said. "I never really thought about it. He always called us Rats. That was just Hank. He..."
was beautiful."
The culmination of a life’s work and the crowning moment of a coaching career were celebrated in Canton, Ohio on August 3rd when Hank Stram was enshrined into the Pro Football Hall of Fame. Some of the toughest characters and boldest performers to ever wear a Chiefs uniform openly wept tears of joy as “The Mentor” was finally recognized as one of the elite coaches in the game’s history.

You know their names. You know their faces. You know their stories.

There was QB Len Dawson serving as Stram’s presenter, proudly crediting Stram with the rings he bears on each hand – his own Hall of Fame ring, as well as his Super Bowl IV jewelry. There were two of the finest linebackers the game of pro football has ever known in Bobby Bell and Willie Lanier. There was the legendary kicker Jan Stenerud and countless others, including Stram’s fellow Class of 2003 enshrinee, Marcus Allen. There were dignitaries galore and over 120 other Pro Football Hall of Fame enshrinees on hand as the HOF celebrated its 40th Anniversary Reunion.

But above anyone else, there was Lamar and Norma Hunt, along with the rest of the Hunt family.

Hank Stram will receive his Pro Football Hall of Fame ring from HOF Executive Director John Bankert at halftime of today’s game, highlighting a weekend of celebrations in Kansas City.

Could you see their glow? Could you see their pride? Did you feel the same chills? Lamar and Norma simply beamed with parental pride, providing all the light necessary on what was weather-wise, a rain-soaked afternoon in the birthplace of professional football. No precipitation could put a damper on this day for the Hunts and the Chiefs organization. After all, one of their favorite sons had finally come home to receive some well-deserved and long-overdue Hall of Fame recognition.

They all wept. They all cried. And all they’ll do it once again this weekend.

The festivities in Canton were emotion-filled and broadcast to a national television audience. Can you anticipate what it will be like when the Chiefs conduct their own intimate family celebration Arrowhead style as 80,000 strong express their admiration when Coach Stram receives his Hall of Fame ring at halftime of today’s game?

Indeed, Hall of Fame weekend at Arrowhead is always special, but this year the event takes on extra significance. Stram’s name was affixed to Arrowhead back in ’87 when he...
became the 17th member of the Chiefs Hall of Fame, but today’s HOF ring presentation promises to be even more emotional.

_Hank Stram has given our franchise and our city so much. Won’t it send chills down your spine when we collectively show our gratitude for "The Mentor" today?_

In the eyes of the Hunts and Chiefs fans everywhere, Hank and Phyllis Stram and their family unquestionably fall into the category of beloved, and rightly so. It was Stram who helped forge an identity for first the Dallas Texans, and then the Chiefs in the early days of the American Football League. It was Stram who guided the franchise to three AFL titles and a pair of Super Bowl berths. And it was Stram who brought the game’s ultimate prize home to Kansas City with a 23-7 victory over the heavily-favored Minnesota Vikings in Super Bowl IV.

Today represents a great opportunity, Kansas City. As most of us know, Hank’s health isn’t the greatest these days. His vision isn’t that sharp and his hearing may not be as keen as it once was. But Hank will still appreciate the roar of an appreciative Arrowhead crowd when he accepts his Hall of Fame ring on Sunday. It was Hank who encouraged his troops to “keep matriculating the ball down the field” in Super Bowl IV and clamored for his squad to “look for 65 toss power trap.” It was Hank who was the creative genius behind the moving pocket and the stack defense. And it was Hank who harnessed the brains and brawns of one of the greatest football teams ever assembled, his irrepressible Chiefs of the ’60s.

Hank Stram has given our franchise and our city so much. Won’t it send chills down your spine when we collectively show our gratitude for “The Mentor” today? Wouldn’t it be fantastic to see Hank pump his fist into the air one more time, this time bearing a Hall of Fame ring? Can’t you anticipate seeing Lamar and Hank basking in the shimmer of Super Bowl IV greatness along with all the great players who helped make it happen? We’ll all weep. We’ll all cry. And we’ll all do it together with the likes of Len Dawson, Bobby Bell, Willie Lanier, Jan Stenerud, the Hunt family and a host of other distinguished Chiefs alumni at halftime.