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JULY | AUGUST 2008

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ROAD TRIPPIN'

# THE QUEST



By Hans Steiniger

**I AM A HUGE FAN OF THE** product the National Football League puts out on the field each Sunday during the fall. (That may be a bit of an understatement.) So, as a tribute to the great American pastime known as professional football, I've challenged myself to attend an NFL game in each stadium in the National Football League - a feat I've dubbed the Quest for 31 (32 NFL teams, but the Jets and Giants share

the Meadowlands).

However, the Quest for 31 is more than just attending a football game. It is an all-encompassing NFL fan experience that includes pre and post game tailgating, the sampling of local cuisines, taking a stadium tour, wearing the home team's jersey, meeting home team fans, and of course, hitting the local hot spots. The Quest for 31 has morphed into one of the greatest

experiences of my life. It has become an immersive study, by franchise, of the home team experience across the nation.

Last year's addition to the Quest included a ten game tear through the National Football League bringing my current stadium total to seventeen. Last season's crusade began on Week 2 of the NFL Season with a New England Patriots game on Sunday Night Football. Gillette Stadium was reeling with

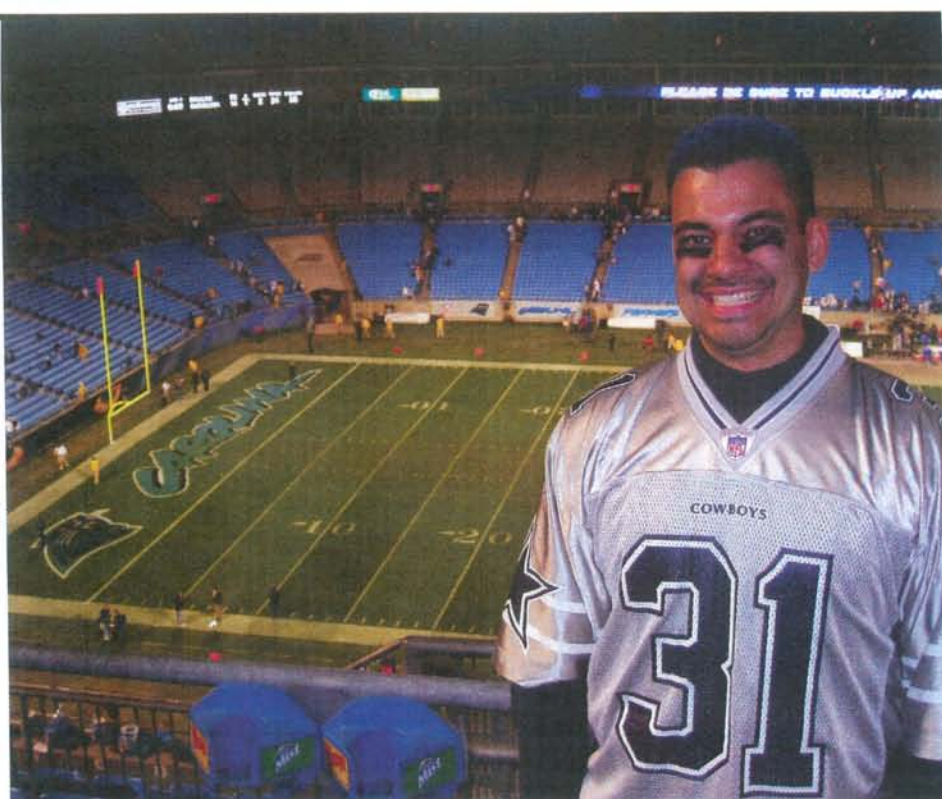
Photos courtesy Hans Steiniger



allegations from the Spygate scandal that broke during the week, but the parking lot was alive with fans that began tailgating at ten in morning in preparation for the 8:30 pm kickoff against the San Diego "Super" Chargers. A makeshift tent community quickly sprung up in parking lot aislesways as soon as I arrived. Apparently once you're parked, you're there to stay. Patriots fans cooked up local clam chowdas and chilis, brats and burgers, with full-sized grills and flatscreen TV's to accessorize the tailgating festivities. Wearing the Lawyer Milloy jersey I'd purchased on Ebay, I assimilated quickly.

Even though I showed up at Gillette Stadium without tickets, just before kickoff, I was able to score seats in row two behind the Chargers bench. The Pats trounced those poor Chargers 38 - 14 and the celebration continued.

A thirteen hour road trip took me to Kansas City, Missouri in November where the Kansas City Chiefs locked horns with the Denver Broncos in a pivotal divisional battle. Chiefs fans turned out to be great tailgaters. The entire parking lot was littered with Kansas City Chiefs fan buses decked out in



red, white, and yellow with a multitude of meat products set to fire on charcoal grills. I found that I was offered beer from every group I approached to talk shop. The fans were extremely friendly and eager to talk to me about the Quest and were more than hospitable. When I actually had to turn down a beer because I needed to find the

nearest port-a-john, they offered to let me use their onboard bathroom. My reward after deposit - another beer. Not bad for a kid from Buffalo, NY.

The highlight of my 2007 experience was easily the road trip to Jacksonville, FL for a shrimp boil with a Jaguars tailgating crew that I had met while taking pictures



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Whether it's your team or the home team, always wear a jersey!



at Jacksonville Municipal Stadium the year before. It was Thanksgiving Weekend, and we arrived at the Stadium parking lot at 10:30 in the morning. The festivities were in full swing including a percolating, propane-fueled, aluminum barrel boiler. Our hosts had flown in several pounds of New Orleans Shrimp that was set to boil with chunks of Italian sausage, broccoli, potatoes and onions and accentuated with a spicy staple they called "Slap Ya Mama" Cajun spices. The conglomeration was drained and poured onto a custom-made shrimp-boil table. Participants quickly attacked the mound of steaming seafood, stopping only briefly to swill beer ... an experience not to be missed by the true NFL fan.

I've even found a way to keep the quest alive during the NFL offseason, as I discovered that most NFL stadiums offer tours of their facilities throughout the year. Tours generally cover the locker room, press box, suite level, practice facilities, and in many cases, time down on the field. The

tours I've taken have allowed me to walk the tunnel that led Joe Montana and the 49er dynasty out onto the field at Candlestick Park, to hoist the mainsail on the Pirate



Ship in Tampa Bay, and even stand on the Dallas Cowboys star at the 50 yard line to look through the infamous hole in the roof at Texas Stadium. The Quest for 31 has been an amazing journey for me and I'm only halfway to the end. Feel free to check on my progress at Questfor31.com and if you see me in your city, pull me aside for a beer! 🍷





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- Jacksonville Municipal Stadium
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- Lucas Oil Stadium
- M&T Bank Stadium
- McAfee Coliseum
- Paul Brown Stadium
- Qualcomm Stadium
- Ralph Wilson Stadium
- Reliant Stadium

## NATIONAL FOOTBALL CONFERENCE

- Bank of America Stadium
- Candlestick Park
- Edward Jones Dome
- FedExField
- Ford Field
- Georgia Dome
- The Meadowlands
- Hubert H. Humphrey Metrodome
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