

From the Bookshelf

Bud Wilkinson: An Intimate Portrait of an American Legend

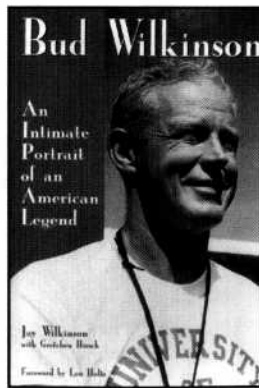
by Jay Wilkinson with Gretchen Hirsch
(Sagamore Publishing, Champaign, Illinois, 248 pages, \$19.95.)

Ever since Christina Crawford did a literary number on her famous mom, parents everywhere have lived in terror of the day their offspring learned to type. Bud Wilkinson had nothing to fear. Jay Wilkinson's tribute is a love story that could have been written only by a son privileged to know and appreciate his father as an adult, respecting his strengths and understanding his shortcomings.

Bud Wilkinson arrived at the University of Oklahoma as assistant to Coach Jim Tatum in 1946. A year later, at age 31, he was head football coach and athletic director. When he resigned in 1964 to run unsuccessfully for the U.S. Senate, OU was an established football power, and Wilkinson, architect of the 47 straight wins, was one of the most admired men in college athletics or elsewhere.

Jay Wilkinson recounts his father's unusual, motherless childhood in Minnesota, World War II service, marriage and family. The Norman chapters recall the glory days the author shared but are filled with more than big games and memorable plays. Bud's philosophy—on the field and off—dominates here, his relationship with his sons and his players, even the occasional failure, notably with the quixotic Joe Don Looney. The story follows Bud from Norman into the world of politics, the Washington bureaucracy, business ventures, divorce and remarriage and his brief return to football as coach of the NFL St. Louis Cardinals.

Jay Wilkinson has done a workman-like job in recording his father's life—readable, informative, filled with affection and loyalty. Joan Crawford should have been so lucky.



3rd Down & Forever: Joe Don Looney & the Rise & Fall of an American Hero

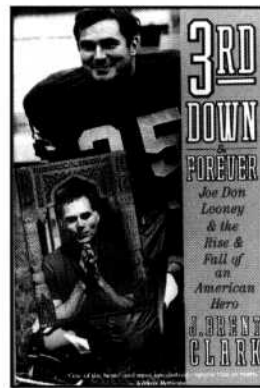
by J. Brent Clark, '71 B.A., '75 J.D.
(St. Martin's Press, 247 pages, \$12.95 paperback, \$21.95 hardcover)

If the life of Bud Wilkinson is punctuated with "what ifs," the tragic tale of Joe Don Looney is overshadowed by the persistent "why." Author Clark spent nearly four years probing for the answers to this human paradox and claims only partial success. Nonetheless his search makes fascinating—albeit uncomfortable—reading.

Joe Don had it all—astounding good looks, the physique of a Greek god, unparalleled athletic abilities, steely determination, intelligence, boyish charm and a charisma that should have given him the world. Yet he threw away success with both hands as fast as it came his way, stubbornly defying any semblance of authority, giving way to outbursts of violence born of his own egocentric frustrations. His life ended at 45, alone amid the tangled wreckage of his motorcycle on a barren west Texas highway.

It's difficult to cheer for Joe Don, even in this book written largely from his viewpoint, but it is easy to mourn for his lost potential. He might have been the greatest football player of his time, but the ultimate individual chose as a coach Bud Wilkinson, to whom the team was everything. The combination was a disaster.

An All-American dismissed in his senior year, Looney's antics with five NFL teams became legend. With the only career he knew in shambles, he experienced a debilitating tour in Vietnam, failure as husband and father, involvement with drugs and drug dealers. Finally his lifelong fascination with mysticism led him to the only



peace he would ever know as a devoted disciple of an Eastern guru.

Kansas City attorney Clark writes very well, and this first book is well worth reading. His current project is a 100-year history of OU football.

Going Public: The OU I Knew

by Ken Farris, '43 B.S.
(Transcript Press, Norman, OK, 341 pages, \$11.95)

Ever wonder what it takes to keep a big-time athletic program going? Or why you can't have two tickets on the 50, half-way up? Those answers and more can be found in Ken Farris' account of his 31 years as OU's athletic business manager.

From 1950 until retirement in 1981, Farris held the purse strings, made the travel arrangements, oversaw the facilities and carried out the myriad details involved in a major intercollegiate athletic program. He kept meticulous records, a trait evident in this book—for the facts and figures are there on everything from scholarship aid to the attendance and weather conditions at the 1979 Orange Bowl to the number of hot dogs sold at athletic events from 1953-80. Ever the diplomat, he even includes a chapter called "Referees Are Good Guys, Too." Yeah. Sure.

Most interesting, however, are Farris' anecdotes about the people he met along the way, the well-known and the little-known, but all part of the Sooner scene.

—CJB

Bud Wilkinson is available in Oklahoma bookstores or by calling 1-800-327-5557. 3rd Down & Forever is available in bookstores nationally. Going Public is available in selected Oklahoma bookstores or by calling in-state 1-800-522-0058 or out-of-state (405) 360-7999.