

Jack McBride, Pro Football Pioneer

By Michael J Moran ©2022



John F. (Jack) McBride was born in Conshohocken, Pennsylvania, November 30, 1901. In 1924 Jack starred at Syracuse where he finished second in the nation in scoring with 7 touchdowns, 11 field goals, and 15 extra points. The following year he was starting fullback for the NY Giants in their inaugural season. In 1927 when the Giants won the NFL Championship, newspapers reported McBride was picked as the MVP for the league.

He was with the Giants in 1928 then spent a season with the Providence Steam Roller and three seasons with the Brooklyn Dodgers. He was back with the Giants in 1933 and then was player/coach for the Paterson Panthers in 1934 and 1935. He did get called back to play for the Giants in the championship game against the Bears in 1934, winning a second NFL title.

In 1936, 1937, and 1940 he coached the NY Yankees in the AFL. An ownership change at the Yankees led to McBride's dismissal but conflict with the league led to the revocation of the Yankee franchise which was then sold to a syndicate headed by William Cox. Cox renamed the team the Americans and McBride was back as coach in 1941. The war shut down the league and McBride became an officer in the Marines. The last mention I find of him regarding football was October 16, 1949 when members of the Giants 1925 squad gathered at the Polo Grounds for a 25th reunion.



Left to right, front row: Lyman Walbridge, Ed McGinley, Dick Jappe and Harry Nordstrom. Rear row: Jack McBride, Heinie Benkert, Joe Alexander, Arthur Carney and Century Milstead.

The New York Times (by Patrick Burns)

The fact that he was in the Marines during the war came from an article written by Jack Coll on the website Conshystuff.com about Jack's wife, Dorothy Davis McBride, who became a programming executive at NBC, unusual for a woman in that era: "Dorothy's husband John McBride was a football standout at Syracuse University from 1920-1924 where he set national records and went on to play professional football with the New York Giants from 1925-1935. Mr. McBride earned the 1927 National Football League MVP Award. Following his football career McBride joined the Marines where he became a Captain. Dorothy rose quickly thru the ranks at NBC to become the head of programing for New York's top broadcasting station."

Dorothy and Jack show up in the 1930 census as lodgers in Manhattan; he is 28, she's 27, they have been married four years, he works as a promotor in the theatrical business and she as a typist in broadcasting. On Jack's draft card from 1941 he and Dorothy are living at 12 Perry St. in Manhattan and he is employed by Wm. D. Cox. In the 1950 census they are still living at 12 Perry St. and Jack's employment is Stock Broker and Dorothy is a Television Censor. The last mention I find of Dorothy is a photo in a 1956 NBC Chime magazine where she is part of a group being awarded their pins for 25 years of service to the company.

Jack's football career is well documented, but where did he go after that? That's a whole other story.

William Cox, who bought the NY Yankee AFL franchise and changed the name to the Americans, made his money first primarily in lumber and somewhat in mining. After the Yankees shut down he became owner of the MLB Philadelphia Phillies but he was suspended and later banned for life for betting on baseball. He finally found success in sports in the 1960s promoting professional soccer. His mining interests are what lead us to the next chapter in Jack McBride's life. In July, 1964, the Salt Lake Tribune reported that US Lithium Corporation was sold by a group that included William Cox to another group that included John F McBride, now living in Tonopah, Nevada.

The Salt Lake Tribune (Salt Lake City, Utah) · 31 Jul 1964,

U.S. Lithium Corp. Sold in S.L.

Control of U.S. Lithium Corp., a firm formed by Salt Lakers in 1954, has been sold to a group from New York City and Tonapah, Nev., according to Paul T. Walton, former president of the company.

U.S. LITHIUM AIMED AT development of the Brown Derby lepidolite and spodumene (lithium minerals) mine in the vicinity of Gunnison, Colo. But lithium demand faltered. At one time, O. A. Sutton Co., Wichita, Kan., invested \$100,000 in the property.

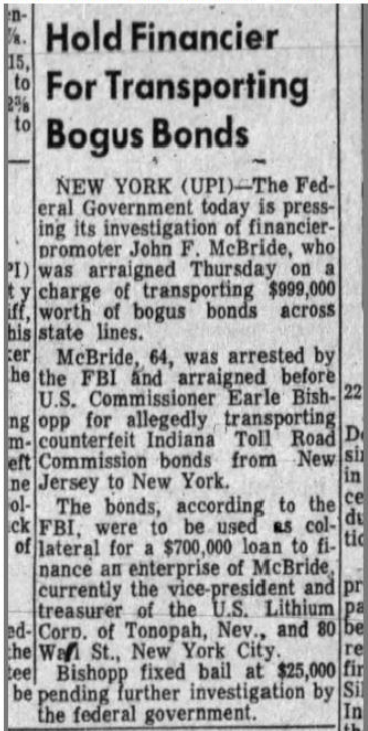
Mr. Walton said it was his understanding that the new management group would put a Tonapah silver property into U.S. Lithium.

AMONG THE PRINCIPAL SELLERS of the stock were Mr. Walton, E. R. Callister Jr., N. G. Morgan Jr., all of Salt Lake City, and William Cox, former New York baseball figure.

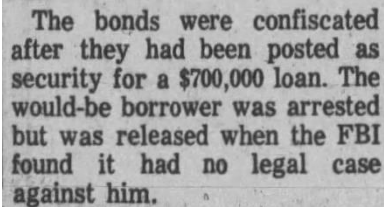
The new officers of the firm include Miles K. Reece, president, and Edward Hadsel, secretary, both of New York, and John F. McBride, vice president and general manager who gives a Tonapah address.

Unfortunately, that business venture was derailed in May of 1966 when newspapers reported that John F. McBride of Tonopah, Nevada, age 64, vice president and treasurer of US Lithium, was arrested by the FBI for transporting \$999,000 worth of phony Indiana Toll Road Commission bonds from New Jersey to New York. McBride took the bonds to a New York bank as collateral for a \$700,000 loan for a “mining processing enterprise.” Bail was set for Jack McBride at \$25,000.

The News (Paterson, New Jersey) · 25 Mar 1966,

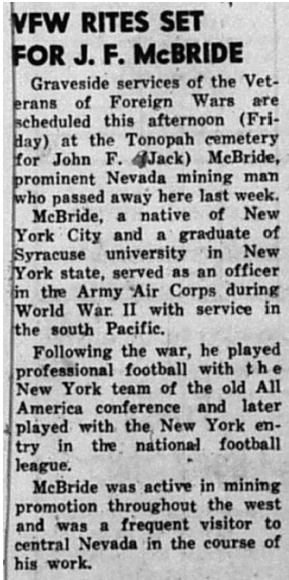
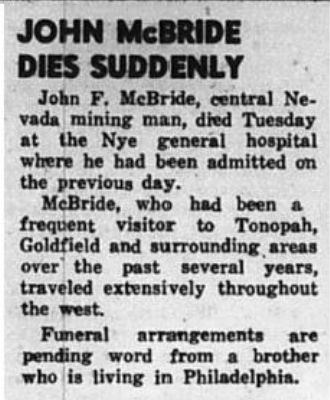


After the arrest and bond hearing, McBride’s name disappears from the papers. The case, however, is not over for the banks or the FBI. The banks and the Indiana Toll Road Commission were in court over who would take the loss for these counterfeit bonds. The articles about a court hearing in July of 1966 note that “The bonds were confiscated after they had been posted as security for a \$700,000 loan. The would-be borrower was arrested but was released when the FBI found they had no legal case against him.” Another article says “There apparently have been no arrests in the investigation; the FBI is still seeking to determine who was responsible for printing the bonds which found their way to the businessman.”



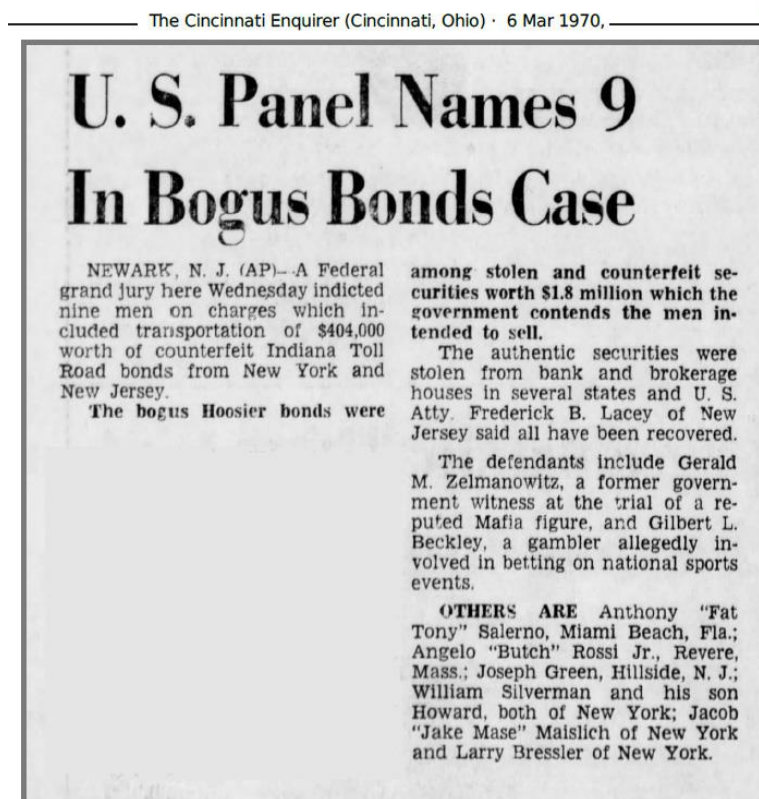
So was Jack a criminal or a victim? Either way, his part in the court proceedings is over and sadly, shortly after, so is his life. McBride died in Nevada on October 11, 1966 at age 64. The question remains open if the financial reversal of fortune involving the bogus bonds contributed in any way to his early death.

Friday, Oct. 14, 1966—Tonopah, Nev.
Tonopah Times-Bonanza and Goldfield News



The case regarding the bonds continued to be investigated and the conclusion of that story would infer that McBride was a victim in a larger operation involving organized crime – and that he was not the only one connected to this scheme to meet an early death.

It wasn't until four years after Jack's arrest that a Federal Grand Jury indicted nine men on charges "which included transportation of \$404,000 worth of Indiana Toll Road Bonds from New York and New Jersey.



The bogus bonds were among stolen and counterfeit securities worth \$1.8 million which the government contends the men intended to sell. The defendants include Gerald M. Zelmanowitz, a former government witness at the trial of a reputed Mafia figure."

That Mafia figure was Angleo "Gyp" DeCarlo, a member of the New York City Genovese crime family who dominated loansharking operations in New Jersey during the 1960s. Zelmanowitz had a long criminal record, became a government informant and ended up in the witness protection program. His work as a government informant offers a possible explanation about how the FBI was aware of the counterfeit bonds crossing state lines and right on the spot to arrest Jack in 1966.

Another man indicted in the scheme was Gilbert Lee Beckley, reputed to be the biggest sports gambler and handicapper in the United States throughout the 1950s and 1960s. In March 1970, Time Magazine reported; "Beckley's value was not limited to the Cosa Nostra; he also worked the legitimate side of the street. He had a deal with National Football League investigators to tip them about point spreads, possible fixes and tampering with games. More recently, he may have been tempted to cooperate with Government agents. Such a double life can be dangerous—even fatal. Last month (he) vanished. His lawyers have not heard from him, and he is "off the boards," or out of the play, in the betting world. Two weeks ago he forfeited a \$10,000 bond by failing to appear for his trial on forgery charges in Atlanta."

Was it stress from the financial loss that killed Jack McBride or something more sinister? The evidence is inconclusive. In either case it is not a happy ending to the biography of a man who was an important figure on and off the field in the development of professional football.

PRICE 15 CENTS

N. Y. FOOTBALL GIANTS
VS.
ERNIE NEVERS ESKIMOS



JACK McBRIDE
Giants Battering Ram

Sunday
November 6, 1927

Polo Grounds
New York

Paterson Panthers

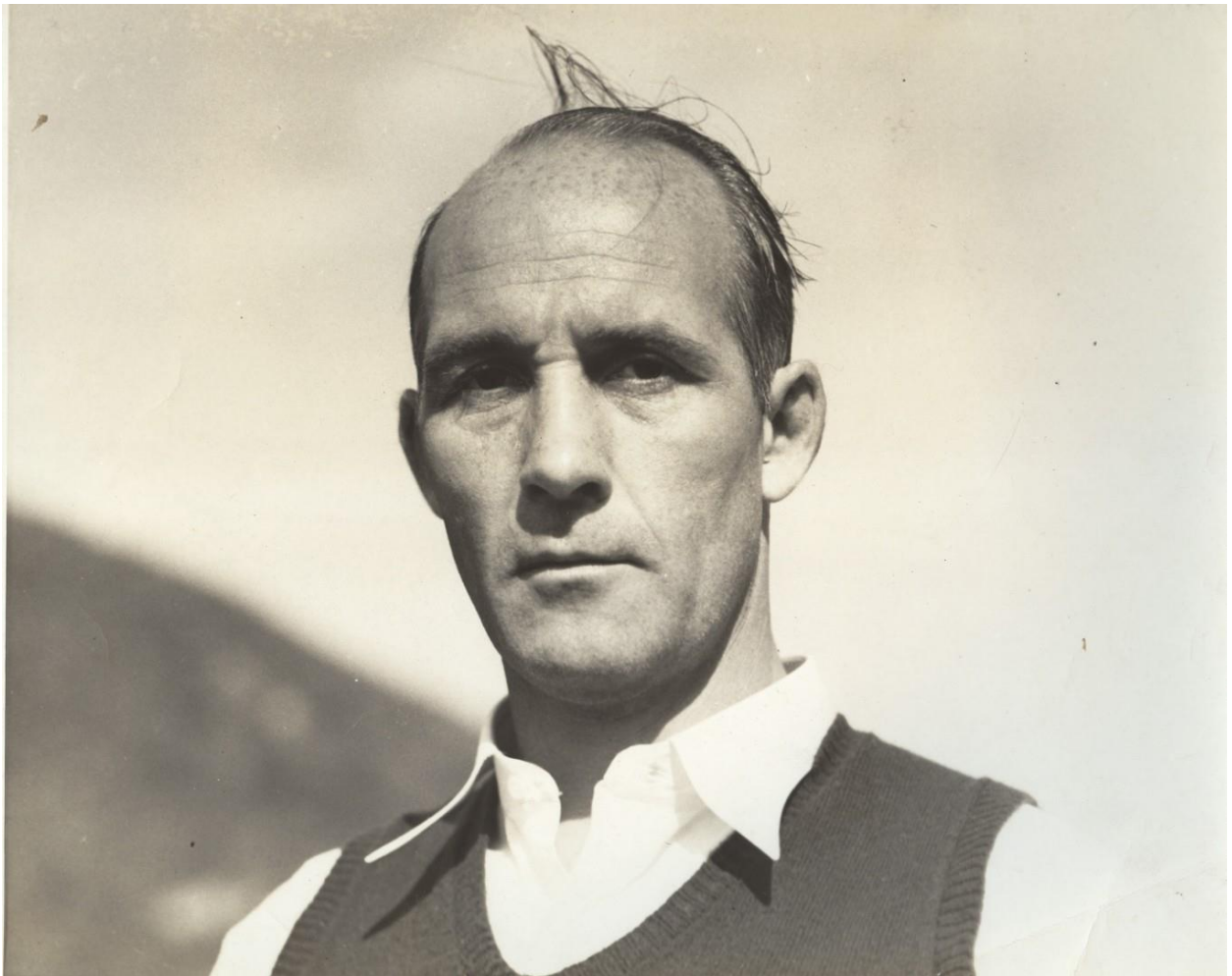
NEW JERSEY 1934 STATE CHAMPIONS



JACK McBRIDE—Coach
Syracuse University

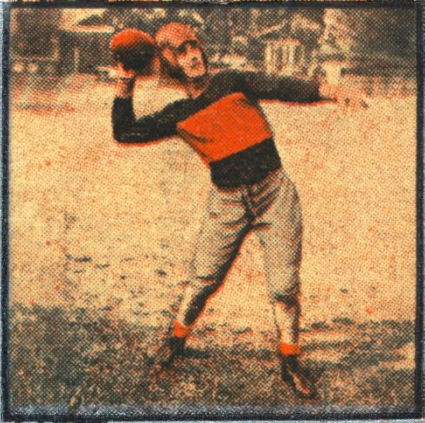
Sunday
November 10, 1935

Hinchliffe Stadium
Paterson, N. J.



JACK McBRIDE

Jack, a product of Syracuse University, is the veteran of the Giant squad. Played with original Giants in 1924; drifted to other teams; then back last year in mid-season to lead the Giants out of a slump, also to set a forward passing record by completing 60 of his throws. Height 5 ft. 11 in., weight 185 lbs. See him this fall at the Polo Grounds on Sunday afternoons.



JACK McBRIDE
NEW YORK GIANTS