

R.I.P., Alex Karras

Published October 10th, 2012 I have a personal memoir of Alex Karras, the football player, actor, and unique character, who died today at 77. And no, it has nothing to do with the time in 1963 when he fought Dick the Bruiser at Cobo Arena in Detroit while Karras was serving a one-year suspension from the National Football League — after the Bruiser, in a publicity stunt that got out of hand, tore up a bar Karras owned and put several policemen in the hospital.

In 1971 I got the brilliant idea to write a magazine profile of Karras. Hey, not very original, but what the heck, I was 16. Karras was listed in the Detroit phone book, so I called. His first wife, Joanie, answered (he later would marry actress Susan Clark), and handed the phone to Alex. Karras agreed to meet with me.

On my own dime, I flew to Detroit. It was my first plane ride.

Karras met me in the lobby of the hotel where I was staying. He said he needed a haircut. We found a barber shop nearby.

I conducted the interview while he was getting a haircut. The barber didn't know he was Alex Karras, and I guess the barber wasn't listening that carefully to the conversation. At one point Karras started playing head games with the barber, engaging him in a discussion of Alex Karras of the Detroit Lions. "He's a bum," Karras said. "A complete bum."

Eventually I sold the article to

Sport Scene

, one of the many titles on newsstand racks in that heyday of bimonthly pulp sports magazines.

Irv Muchnick