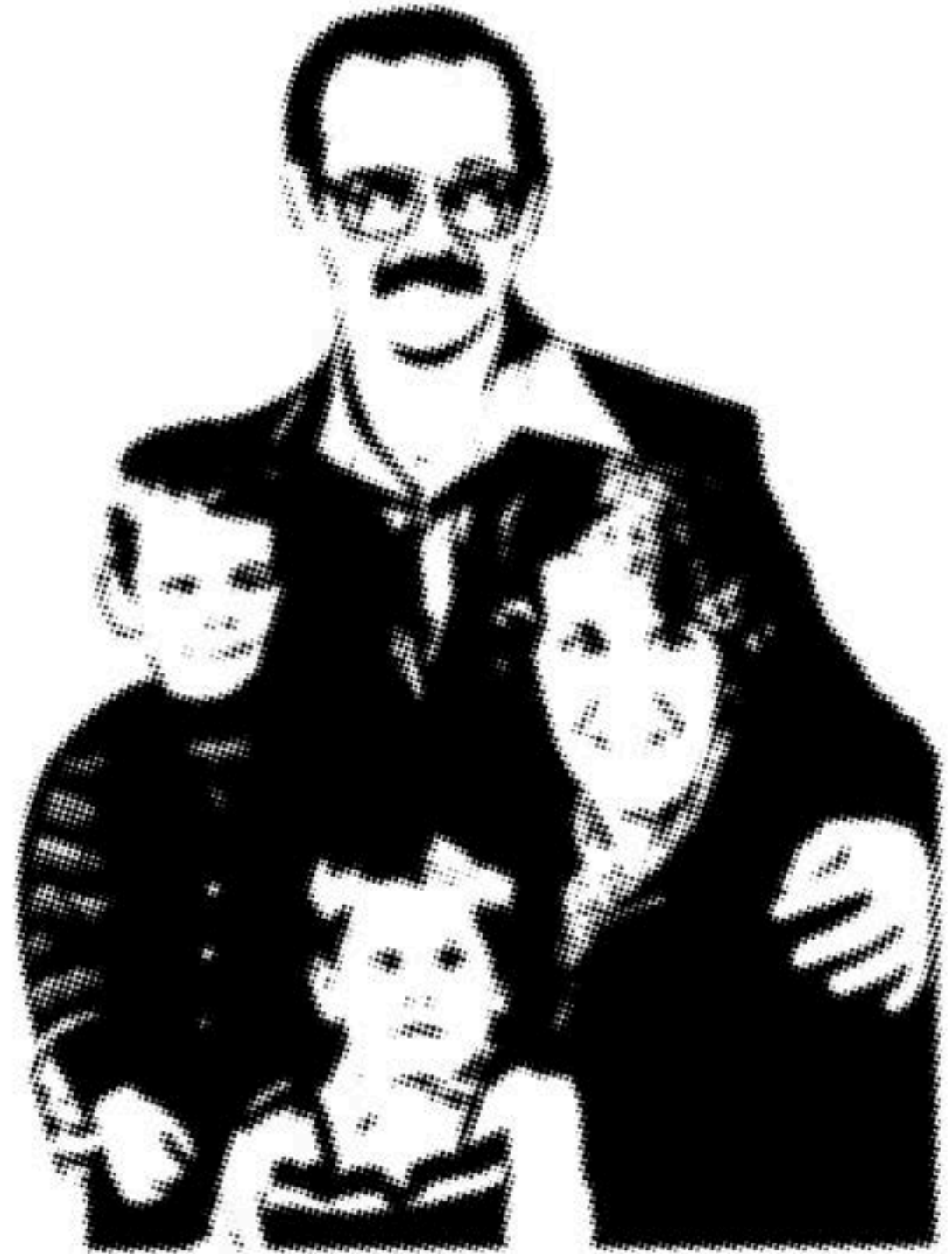
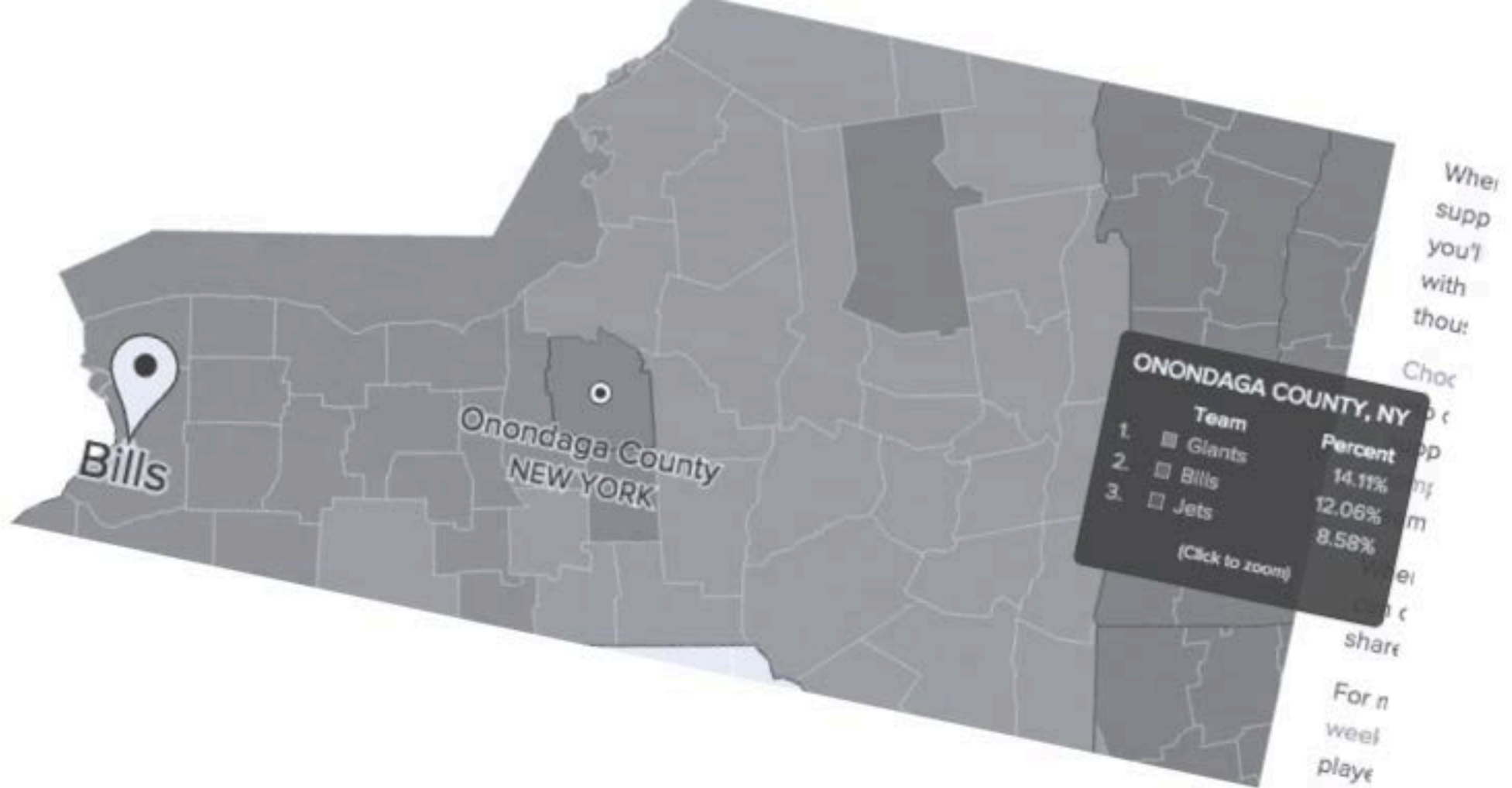


# Hotdogz

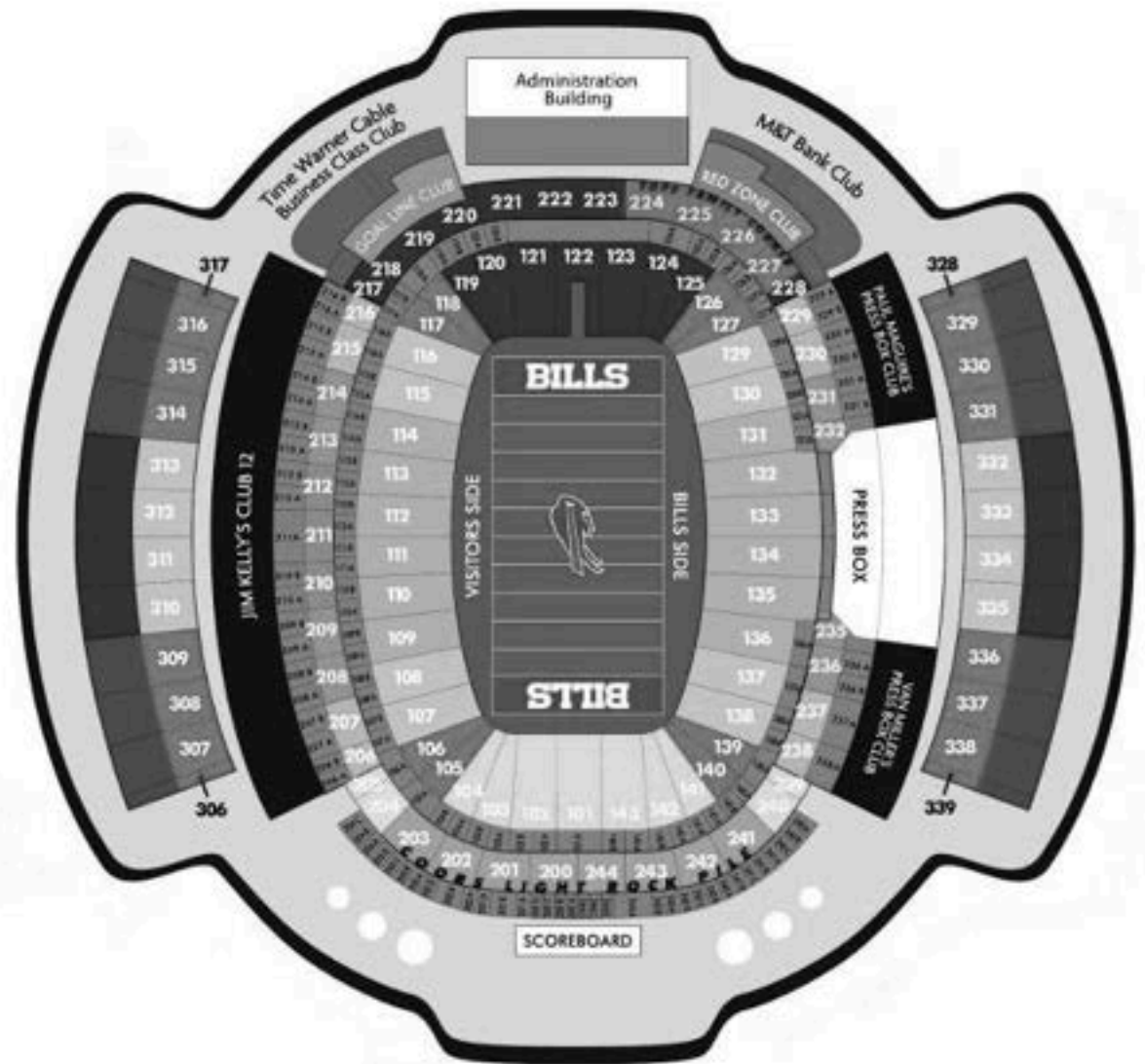
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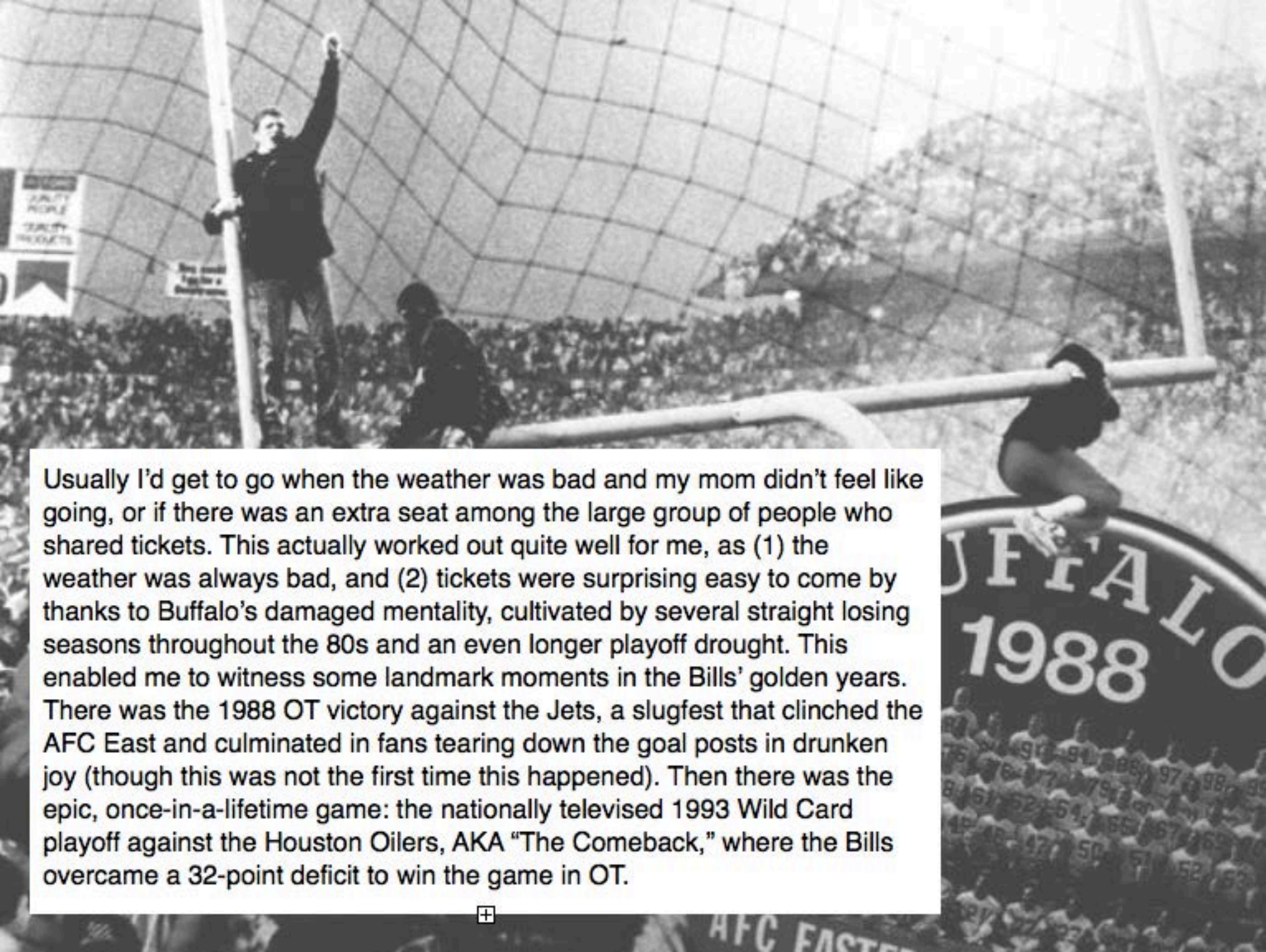


Part of being a dad means figuring out the most rhetorically savvy way to indoctrinate my kids to my Buffalo fandom, introducing them to the “irrational jingoism” of sports (Chomsky™) through the lens of the loser. That’s doubly challenging when you live in a town like Syracuse, which geographically and economically, should be completely aligned with a city like Buffalo, but somehow finds itself bowing in allegiance to teams much farther flung. Of course I see Bills flags flying in my neighborhood or occasionally stitched on the hats of grocery shoppers, but more often than not, Syracuseans choose teams that have harbored SU has-beens (the Eagles or Colts), reflect bandwagon regulars (the Cowboys or Patriots), or make about as fine a choice as building an expensive amphitheater atop a pile of toxic sludge (the 49ers or the Titans).

Really, though, I have no business blaming Syracuse. I have no one to blame by my own parents. Growing up less than five miles from Ralph Wilson Stadium, I was indoctrinated myself. My folks had season tickets and I started going to games when I was ten. These were good seats too — no prepubescent Jason watching his dad punch out a drunken Raiders fan or witnessing an impromptu sex show in the benches behind him. Although far from emulating the pews of Saint Peter and Paul, the antics of the 14th row paled in comparison to the debauchery happening in the 300s (something I wouldn't realize until ten years later).







Usually I'd get to go when the weather was bad and my mom didn't feel like going, or if there was an extra seat among the large group of people who shared tickets. This actually worked out quite well for me, as (1) the weather was always bad, and (2) tickets were surprising easy to come by thanks to Buffalo's damaged mentality, cultivated by several straight losing seasons throughout the 80s and an even longer playoff drought. This enabled me to witness some landmark moments in the Bills' golden years. There was the 1988 OT victory against the Jets, a slugfest that clinched the AFC East and culminated in fans tearing down the goal posts in drunken joy (though this was not the first time this happened). Then there was the epic, once-in-a-lifetime game: the nationally televised 1993 Wild Card playoff against the Houston Oilers, AKA "The Comeback," where the Bills overcame a 32-point deficit to win the game in OT.



Unfortunately for generations of Bills fans that came after me, those days have become nothing but lore, memorialized mostly through unfortunate phrase, “wide right.” I’ll never forget when I was in town for a game a few years ago when a friend of a friend’s son — not all that much older than me when the Bills went to their first of four straight Superbowls — told me that his favorite team was the New England Patriots. *The New England Patriots!* This is a child who grew up closer to the stadium than I did, but idolized Tom Brady. I couldn’t believe his dad had failed him so badly.

But alas, such failure has come full circle as I now struggle to communicate the true meaning of football penance to my own children. I’ve dressed them in jerseys, made them fatty and delicious Buffalo-themed foods, even strapped them down to watch games. Nothing has worked, especially with Annamai, my six-year-old. In fact, it’s gotten worse as she sees how much her *not* liking the Bills aggravates me. My three year-old, Jonny, still impressionable, hesitantly puts on his blue Bills shirt on Sunday mornings after I (fake) cry for about 5 minutes. But soon after kickoff, they are both upstairs in their room building Legos or begging me to take them outside to ride bikes. Over my dead body.

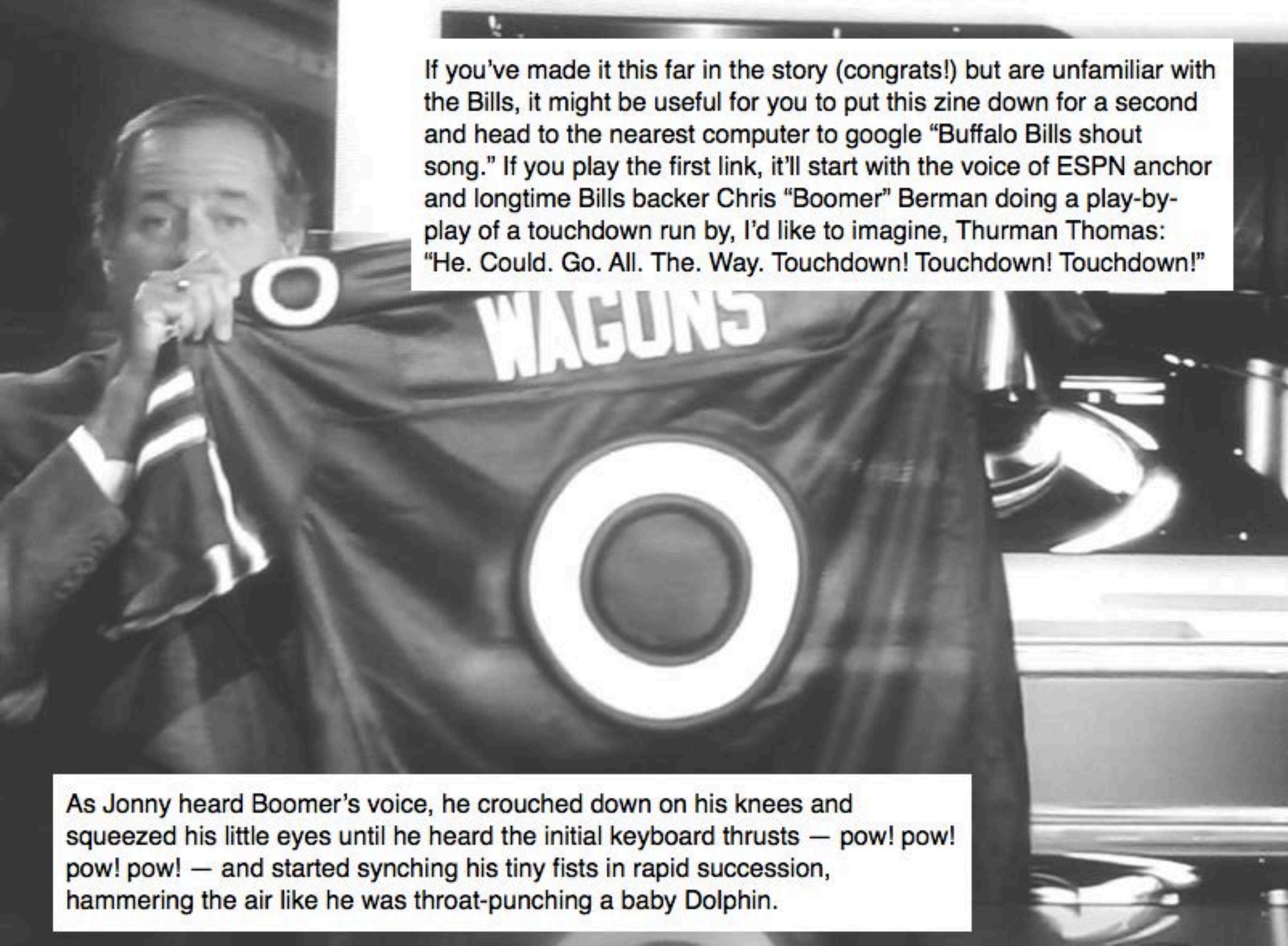


And then, last Sunday, as the Bills were actually beating the ever-living-shit out of the Miami Dolphins, a breakthrough.

**“Heeeey eyyy! Letttt’s  
Gooooo Buff-a-100000!”**

Every time the Bills score, the Shout Song — an adaptation of the enduring call-and-response Isley Brothers tune, “Shout” — is played throughout Ralph Wilson Stadium and everyone sings along. Although the kids have heard this song played from time-to-time when we’ve watched games with company or listened to mixes in the car, for whatever reason when I played it for them last week, something clicked.



A black and white photograph of a man in a suit and tie, holding a Buffalo Bills flag. The flag features the word 'WAGONS' in large white letters and a target logo. The man is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. The background is dark and out of focus.

If you've made it this far in the story (congrats!) but are unfamiliar with the Bills, it might be useful for you to put this zine down for a second and head to the nearest computer to google "Buffalo Bills shout song." If you play the first link, it'll start with the voice of ESPN anchor and longtime Bills backer Chris "Boomer" Berman doing a play-by-play of a touchdown run by, I'd like to imagine, Thurman Thomas: "He. Could. Go. All. The. Way. Touchdown! Touchdown! Touchdown!"

As Jonny heard Boomer's voice, he crouched down on his knees and squeezed his little eyes until he heard the initial keyboard thrusts — pow! pow! pow! pow! — and started synching his tiny fists in rapid succession, hammering the air like he was throat-punching a baby Dolphin.

**The Bills make me wanna SHOUT!**  
**Kick your heels up and SHOUT!**  
**Throw your hands up and SHOUT!**  
**Throw your head back and SHOUT!**

**C'mon now the Bills are makin' it  
happen now...**  
**Stand up c'mon and <sup>+</sup>shout Yeah.....**





Once the verse kicked in, he stopped needling his arms and stood up and started grabbing the room, kicking his heels up, throwing his hand up, throwing his head back, all the while spinning his way around the 8 by 8 foot play area of our living room, his blonde bowl cut spinning to make it flat as a turntable.

**Say you will/Shout it right now baby**

**Say you will/C'mon C'mon**

**Say you will/And shout**

**Say you will/Yeah...**

Jonny swung his legs around in an *Electric Boogaloo*-like move that made my draw drop and inspired his sister to join in with leaps off the toy chest. He slapped his legs and started bringing his fists together in some sort of incredible Hulk Hogan wrestling/dance move all rolled into one.



Realizing he couldn't pull off a headstand, he then awkwardly rolled into a sideways kneel with one hand on the floor and the other first-pumping into the sky for every SHOUT! uttered.



**SHOUT! Buffalo's happen' now**  
**SHOUT! We're on the move now**  
**SHOUT! The Bills are happenin' now**  
**SHOUT! They're makin' it happen now**  
**SHOUT! We've got the spirit**  
**SHOUT! A lotta' spirit, yeah**  
**SHOUT! We've got the spirit**  
**SHOUT! Just watch it happen now**



Although the song isn't terribly long, Jonny's dedication to the song made him continue to move his body, like he was activating some hidden toddler tai chi. He ended with some sort of gunslinger shooter gesture, with his index finger choreographed with the keyboards once again: pow! pow! pow! pow! And once it was over, both Jonny and his sister demanded in unison, "Again!" The game was almost over and so I played it again. And again. And again.

**Heeyyy...Heeeeyyy...**

**(Repeat)**

**Let's go Buffa-lo...Let's go Buffa-lo**

**(Repeat)**

**The Bills make me wanna SHOUT!**





While the Bills may miss the playoffs for the 16th consecutive year and my kids will never understand the essence of the Bills and their role in my crafting my tragic Western New York identity, at least we will always have the Shout Song.

**hotdogzine.com**

**story by Jason Luther**



**drawings by Emily Luther**