Warhol was right. I doubt that he ever played quarterback and probably never even wore shoulder pads, but he knew well the fleeting nature of fame. My 15 minutes came (and went) in the fall of 1969.

From the time I was seven years old I had played football and excelled at it. I had been a running back from grade school until my junior year at Chaminade-Madonna High School in Hollywood, Florida. One of the football coaches saw me throw in gym class and suggested that I try out for quarterback. In my two seasons as quarterback, I set the career passing yardage record for Broward County high schools. In my senior year alone, I threw for 1848 yards and 20 touchdown passes. At that time Chaminade threw more passes in one game than most high school teams did in an entire season.

During my PG year at the Peddie School in Hightstown, New Jersey, I was recruited by various D1 colleges and even offered a scholarship at ACC powerhouse Georgia Tech. Since my brother had just graduated from Penn and was entering medical school in Philadelphia, I opted instead for the Ivy League. My first practice with the Quaker freshman team in August of 1968 was an eye-opener. While my expectation was that I would be the starting freshman quarterback, there were six other quarterbacks competing for that slot. Fortunately, most of them switched to other positions and Mike Hickock and I split time behind center. I also got my share of plays at cornerback and returned punts and kickoffs. While all of our classmates were relegated by Ivy rules to freshman football that season, the Red and Blue varsity, picked by Newsweek, to be the worst team in the country, shocked the East by going 7-2 and upsetting Princeton on Homecoming. The star of that team was a previously unknown junior quarterback, Bernie Zbrzczek.

As I entered my sophomore year and first varsity season in August, 1969, it was apparent that Bernie would be the starting quarterback and no one else was being considered for that slot. In fact, Pancho Micir, a talented junior, left the team because he did not want to be the backup. Since the bench was not appealing to me, I asked the coaches if I could play defensive back and once again also was a kickoff and punt returner. I cannot remember how much I actually played in the first two games but I considered myself to be part of the defense. In the second game, the starting halfback Bill Sudhaus was injured and I also practiced at running back with the offense in the days leading up to our home contest with Brown the following Saturday. Then came my big break(s).

Early in the first quarter, Zbrzczek went down with a separated shoulder. Several plays after Mike Hickock replaced him, Mike dislocated his shoulder as well. Coach Bob Odell quickly approached me on the sideline and asked if I could take over at quarterback. Although I had not taken a snap from center in over a month, I assured him that I was ready to go. I was wrong. I trotted onto the field with the ball deep in our own territory. While the coach had told me to just hand the ball off and get some running room, I was (and still am) a little bit of a maverick and thought I would do it my way. I faked the handoff and decided to run myself, but I was tackled in the end zone for a safety. As I came off the field, I noticed that the only remaining quarterback on the team was warming up. I quickly realized that I had better produce if I wanted to stay in the game. I also knew that I should do what I was best at – running the ball and throwing sprint out passes. The rest of the game went my way. I
threw two touchdown passes and also ran 69 yards for a third score and we went onto beat Brown by a final score of 23-2.

The coaching staff seemed pleasantly surprised, if not totally shocked, by my performance. However, they did not have the same strong relationship with me that they had with Bernie; the task of figuring out how they would use my skill set certainly tempered their enthusiasm. My teammates were also torn between the euphoria of winning the game and the apprehension of moving forward without both Bernie and Mike.

The student body, however, had no such conflict. At least for that night, I became an instant celebrity and, both at my fraternity (ATO) party and others which I visited that Saturday night, I was feted by the brothers. On the following Monday, The Daily Pennsylvanian recognized my new-found fame with a banner headline which proclaimed: “Zbrzeznj out, Procacci in, result the same – Quaker win.”

The euphoria, however, did not last long. While I started at quarterback the following week, we were severely trounced by Dartmouth, 41-0, effectively ending our hopes for an Ivy League championship. The next week was even more painful, at least for me. While we managed to beat Lehigh 13-7, I broke my jaw during the game and my sophomore season came to an abrupt end. It was our last win of the season.

While I continued to play football junior year and even managed to start one game that season I never threw another touchdown pass or ran for another touchdown during my Penn career. By the middle of my senior year, my college football career had petered out and I dropped off the team. There was no headline announcing my departure from the program.

In retrospect, the sudden end to my life as a football player and quarterback was a big disappointment to me. I realized that I was unwilling to make the physical and mental sacrifices necessary to reach my athletic potential. However, perhaps my failure at Penn had a positive impact upon my later life. Upon graduation, I realized that for the sake of my own self esteem I had to prove myself in my professional life. I feel good about my success in the real estate world.

I live in Boca Raton, Florida with my wonderful wife, JoAnn and together we have 4 children (yours, mine and ours). My son, Vincent, 31 years old, is working with me in the real estate business. JoAnn’s son, Michael, 30 works for Facebook and her daughter Julie, 28, is a kindergarten teacher. Our baby, Jacqueline, is 16 and a sophomore in high school. Michael, his wife Evelyn and our first grandson, Wesley live in Austin. We are blessed to have Vincent and Julie and her husband, Alex, all living close by in Boca Raton. My hobby is golf which satisfies my desire to compete.

See below articles of Phil’s 15 minutes of Penn Football fame.
He's Penn's 'Fireball'

Procacci As a Receiver

By RED HAMER

PHIL PROCACCI, who shares Penn's quarterbacking with Panche Micir, has a part-time campus job as a night watchman at the girls' gym.

"I keep out undesirables," said the 5-10, 180-pound junior.

Procacci's job tomorrow will be to guard against a highly undesirable defeat in Providence, R. I.

"This game with Brown," he said last night, "will give us an outlook on the whole season. I've seen them on film and their defense is pretty aggressive. Their secondary is quick and they're tough up front."

If Procacci is instrumental in a victory in the first Ivy League game for both teams, it will happen coming off the bench. And at that he is a master.

Last year as a reserve defensive back, Phil was rushed into action as first Bernie Zbrzezny and then Mike Hickok were felled by injury.

All Procacci did was pass 59 yards to Dave Graham for one touchdown, run 89 yards for another and fire 25 yards to Pete Blumenhal for a fourth period score in a 23-2 victory.

For his trouble, the dark-haired Floridian was named ECAC Sophomore of the Week.

AS A SENIOR at Chaminade High in Miami, Procacci fired close to 250 passes, completed 125 of them for 1,800 yards and 20 touchdowns.

"We had more pass patterns than running plays," he recalled last night.

He went on to the Peddie School where he ran "a lot of sprint-outs" in his one-year prep and led the Hightstown, N. J. school to a 5-3 record.

As a freshman at Penn, the explosive little quarterback led his team in scoring. After almost single-handedly beating Carl Brown last season as a sophomore, he broke his jaw two games later and sat out the rest of the year.

The Sunday Bulletin
PHIL PROCACCI, of Penn, wants to get off a pass.
2 QBs Are Hurt

Proacco Is The Story

shoulder separations— rode the
good arm of sophomore Phil
Proacco of Hollywood, Fla., to a
stunning 23-2 Ivy League vict-
ory over Brown yesterday at
Franklin Field.

The defense-tough Bruins
threw Proacco for a safety early
in the second period, but the
young signal-caller struck back
like a veteran.

He brought the crowd of 21,603 to its feet three minutes
later by tossing a 60-yard bomb
to tight end Dave Graham, then
whipped his team 37 yards in
one minute flat to set up a 34-
yard field goal by Eliot Berry
that gave Penn a 9-2 lead sec-
onds before the half.

Proacco kept up his amazing
performance in the second half
—sprinting 69 yards for one
touchdown and passing 25 yards
Continued on Page 8, Col. 1

Phil Proacco
... sideline student