

WHAT
HAPPENED

On Sept. 25, 2006, Steve Gleason blocked a punt that symbolized the rebirth of N.O. after Katrina.



From left: Steve Gleason with his son Rivers introducing Pearl Jam in 2016; participating in the New Orleans Marathon in 2013; as Santa Claus at Saints game on Dec. 24, 2016 and with his wife, Michel.



Steve Gleason was — and still is — a symbol of New Orleans' resiliency.

The Spokane, Washington, native moved to New Orleans in 2000 to play for the New Orleans Saints. On Sept. 25, 2006, in the first Saints game in the Superdome since Hurricane Katrina, Gleason blocked a punt from the Atlanta



Falcons. The punt was recovered and taken to the end zone for a touchdown by the Saints' Curtis Deloatch.

The punt block was considered a symbolic rebirth of New Orleans. The statue "Rebirth," of Gleason blocking the punt, was installed outside the Superdome in 2012.

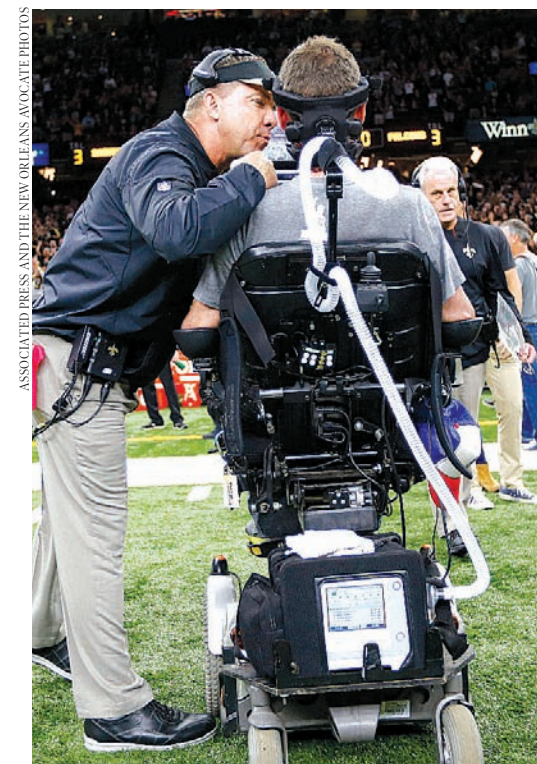
Gleason wrote in 2015 that while he lift-

ed up the city, the city was lifting him up: "When I blocked the punt on that Monday night with the world watching, I was buoyed by a stadium and a city full of preposterous, hair-brained, unyielding and passionate idealists. We call them Who Dats."

Gleason married and chose to remain in New Orleans after he retired from the National Football League in 2008. In 2011, he announced he had amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) but said there would be "No White Flags." He and his wife, Michel Varisco, started a foundation, known as "Team Gleason" to advocate for those with ALS and other neuromuscular injuries. The documentary "Gleason," originally intended as a series of videos for Gleason's son, Rivers, was shown at the Sundance Film Festival in 2016 and details Gleason and his wife's struggles with the disease.



Steve Gleason blocks a punt from Atlanta Falcons punter Michael Koenen in a moment immortalized in the statue 'Rebirth' outside the Superdome.



Steve Gleason rides off the field following a coin toss before the Sept. 26, 2016 game against the Atlanta Falcons.