

## CARRUTH NOT THE FIRST

Pittsburgh *Post-Gazette* columnist Bob Smizik was quick to point out that Rae Carruth is not the first active NFL player to be tried for murder. Back in 1951, Pittsburgh Steelers running back Jerry Nuzum was arrested and tried for the murder of a waitress two years earlier in Las Cruces, NM.

Nuzum, a wingback in the Steelers' traditional single-wing, had been tried and all but fried in the New Mexico newspapers by the time he was brought to the bar. The evidence against him seemed to have been that he was seen arguing with the lady on the night of her death. More importantly, the governor was running for re-election.

In the early days of the trial, several witnesses testified that they had seen Nuzum with the victim. Then on the last day of the trial, things took what Smizik called "a Perry Mason turn." A surprise witness came forward to tell that she had been sitting on a bus at a later time than anyone had placed Nuzum with the victim. Through the bus window she saw two police officers accost the victim. One hit her with a black-jack. Then they put her into their car.

The judge threw the case against Nuzum out before it could even go to the jury, citing a "complete lack of evidence."

The crime was never solved. Nuzum moved to Pittsburgh where he became a successful auto dealer. He died in 1997.