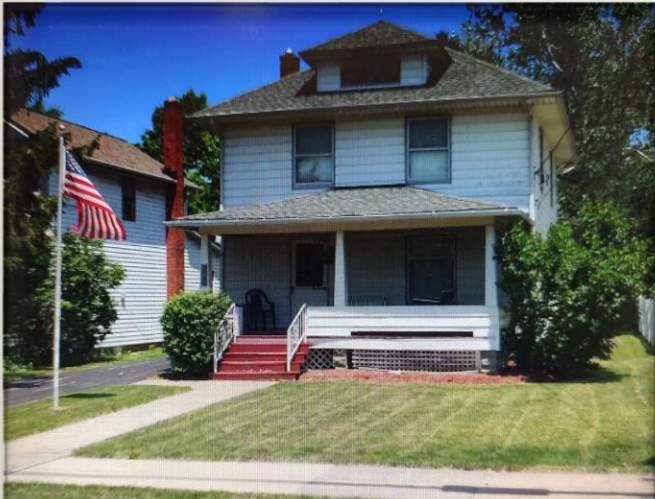


Another Chapter in the Grand River Story: Beloved Small Town Boy Makes It Big

Authors use chapters to tell their stories. When one delves into Lake County's past, they are a key tool for sharing the important history of each of its small towns across many decades. For example, **Fairport Harbor** (*Grandon*) celebrated its bicentennial in 2012, and **Concord Township** hit that milestone in 2022. This month we return to share another highlight in the **Grand River** story. Previous chapters from this

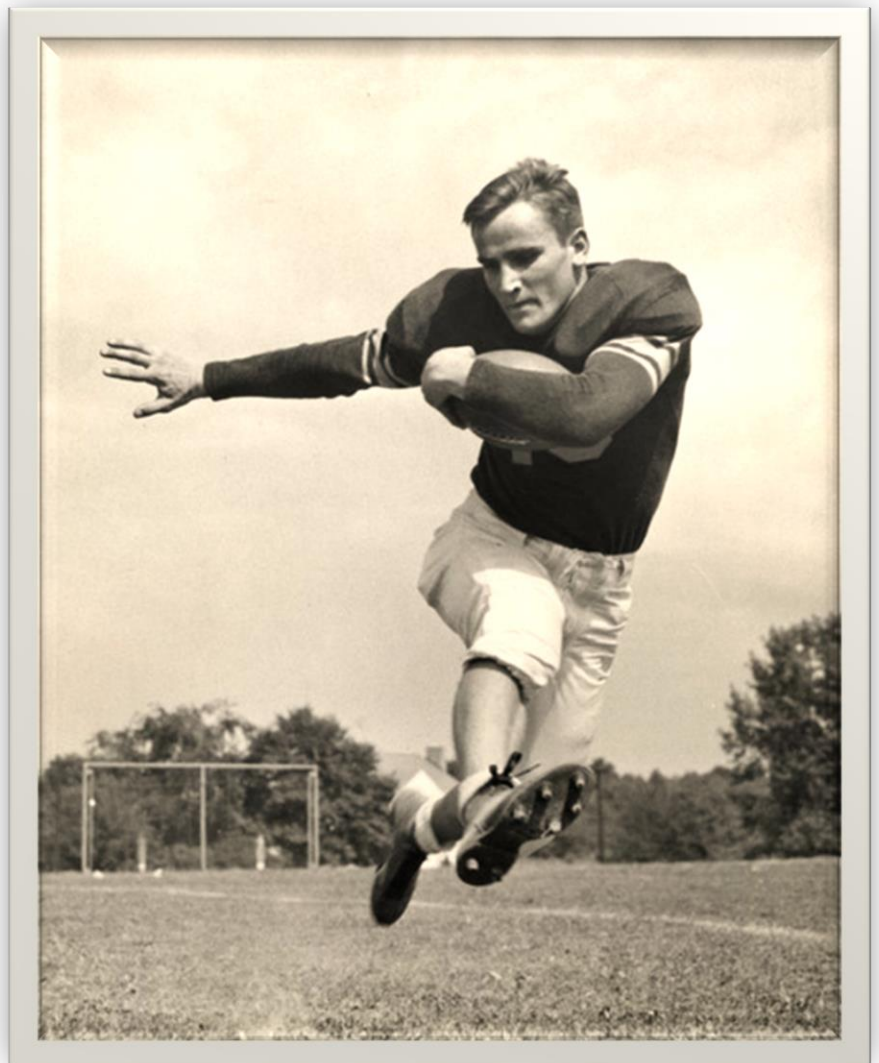


Hall of Fame football coach Don Shula grew up in this house in Grand River, Ohio. He was born next door, Jan. 4, 1930, in a building where the Shula family lived in the back and ran a grocery store in the front. That store now is a diner. Shula played at Painesville Harvey High School and John Carroll University before beginning his pro career as a defensive back for the

little village, once called **Richmond**, have shared tales of fisheries, a salt merchant, and even lost gold bars. Today, the spotlight falls on its most famous resident **Don Shula** (1930-2020).

Pictured above is the childhood Shula home on River Street. Don was the fourth of seven children (which included a set of twins and set of triplets). The family name was '**Sule**' and was of Hungarian descent. Don's father Dan, born in Hungary, was a local fisherman and also worked for the **Storrs & Harrison Nursery**. Don's grandparents ran the grocery store next door. The building is known to locals today as **Sammy's Restaurant**.

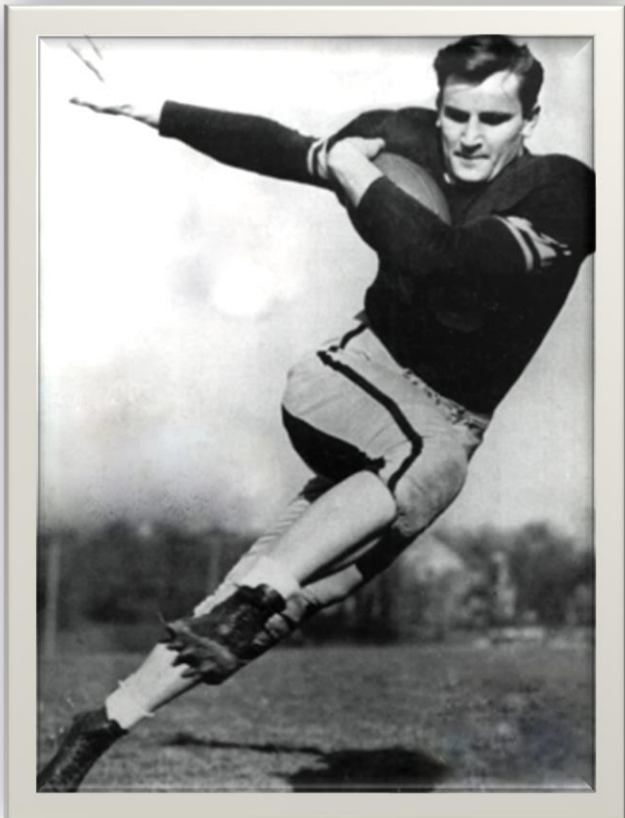
Shula anecdotes, including some from his sister **Jeanette**





Shula Moroz (Concord Township), depict Don as a driven person. One such tale was a report card with all A's in the hardest classes at **Painesville's Thomas A. Harvey High School**. Another mentioned him rising with the sun to run laps before school, while a third shared his playing sports at recess at **St. Mary's in Painesville** yet

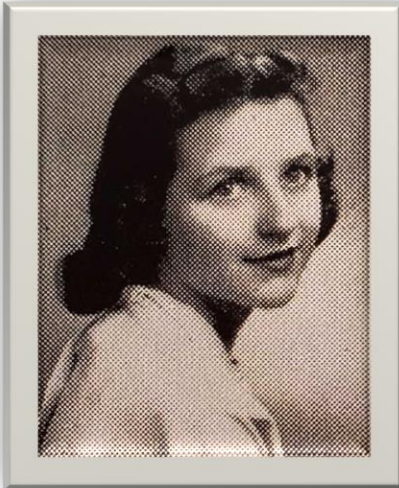




sending classmates down to check on his younger siblings all the while. A brief foray into the life of a priest led him to going to Mass daily starting in high school and continuing for the remainder of his lifetime.

The most notable moment and pivotal event came at about age 12. Coming home from a football contest with a bloody nose led to his mother forbidding Don from playing the game forevermore. This was not to be. A forged signature on a permission slip began a celebrated high school football career and lifelong gridiron journey.

A storied quarterback, running back, linebacker and defensive back at Harvey High, Don's athletic prowess led him to **All-Ohio Quarterback** recognition. After graduation in 1947, a chance encounter at a



gas station, where he met local football coach **Herb Eisele** from **John Carroll University**, led to an offer of a college scholarship. Don, driven as always, attended JCU from 1948-51, graduated in three years and achieved honors on the college gridiron.

The **National Football League** beckoned, and Don Shula played eight full seasons.

He was drafted by the **Cleveland Browns** in 1951, starting as an undersized defensive back and spending his first seven years under **Coach Paul Brown**. His last were for the **Baltimore Colts** and **Washington Redskins**. He had 21 career interceptions.

A brief stop as a coach at the college level catapulted him back to the NFL where, in **33 seasons as a head coach (Colts 1963-69 / Miami Dolphins 1970-1995)**, he won **347 games**. His **1972 Miami** squad went a **perfect 17-0**, the only perfect season in NFL history. He led the Dolphins to two **Super Bowl** victories. All told, he suffered but two losing seasons ever. In 1993, he was named

Sportsman of the Year by **Sports Illustrated**.

Married to his hometown sweetheart, **Dorothy Bartish (1933-1991)**, and father to five, their son **Dave Shula** rose to **Head Coach of the Cincinnati Bengals** and another son **Mike Shula** led **Alabama** to glory



DON SHULA

Halfback—Cleveland Browns
Age: 21; Residence: Cleveland, Ohio
Height: 5-11 Weight: 190

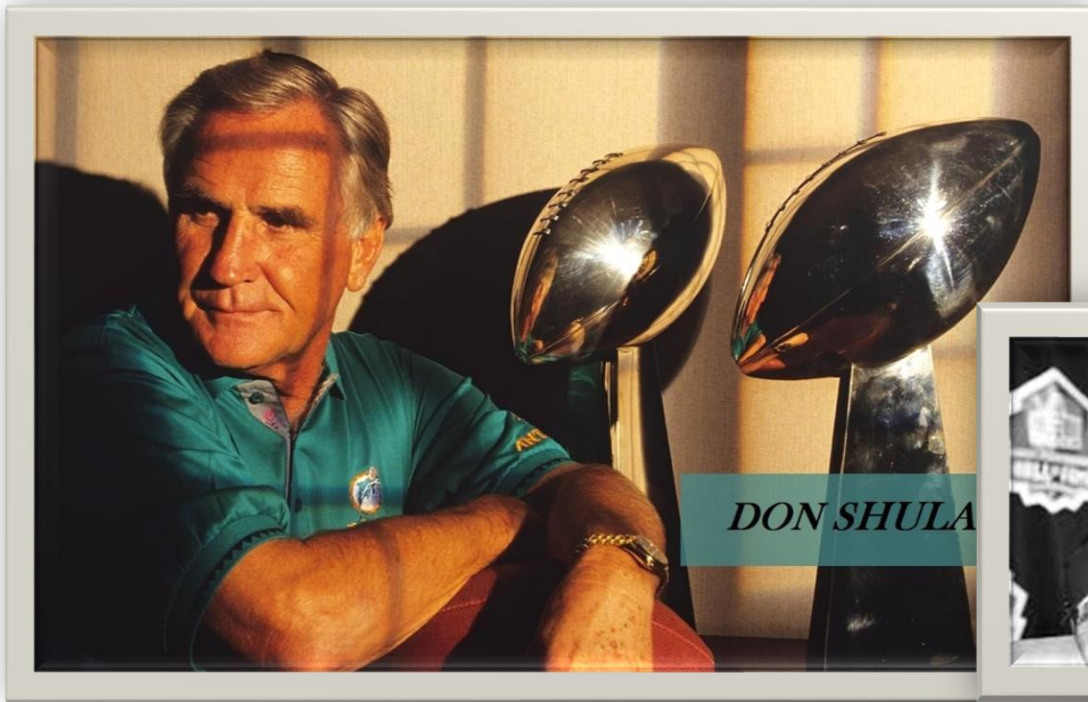
Don is one of only two rookies to make the roster on coach Paul Brown's championship team; the other is his college roommate, Carl Taseff. While the Browns will most likely shift him to defensive back, in college Don was featured as a running back. When his John Carroll University team upset heavily favored Syracuse 21-15 in 1950, Don rushed for 125 yards. Heads-up backfield play will be his NFL hallmark.

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before moving on to the **Denver Broncos**. Their third son, **Chris Shula**, is currently with the **Los Angeles Rams**.

Inducted into the **NFL Hall of Fame**, Don never forgot Grand River or Harvey High, returning often to his Lake County roots. At his alma mater, John Carroll, he endowed the **Don Shula Chair in Philosophy**, which



supports the Philosophy Department by presenting programs of interest to philosophers as well as the general public. Recent JCU **Coach Mike Moran** commented on the impact of the legendary alumnus by saying at John Carroll, “*There’s the Father, the Son, the Holy Ghost and Don Shula.*”

In 2011, Don was awarded the **Ellis Island Medal of Honor** in recognition of his humanitarian efforts. Grand River’s most treasured resident passed away in 2020 at age 90.

Sources: Terry Pluto, cleveland.com, John Carroll University and Cleveland Browns archives.

Submitted by Dan Maxson: Local Lore by Max, 2010-2016 - The News-Herald, Community Media Lab - Volunteer Docent, Curator - FHHS / Fairport Harbor Lighthouse & Marine Museum - Volunteer Curator / Docent - Old Stone School, Concord Township. Additional research: Virginia Jeschelnic

