

FORGOTTEN GEM HIDDEN IN DAYTON

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Jim Brown saw the startled look on the rookie's face and later laughed about it with him: "Dave, those eyes of yours, they were as big as saucers." That's how it was the first time Dave Raimey met the Cleveland Browns freight train running back. It happened on the team's practice field in the preseason of 1964. Brown was the league's most awesome force, the perennial rushing leader whose bruising style got more knockouts than most heavyweight champs. Raimey was a first year player out of the University of Michigan and, before that, Dayton Roosevelt High. "As soon as I'd come to camp, the Browns made me a free safety," said Raimey, who had been a standout running back and defensive back for the Wolverines. "At our first scrimmage - on the very first play - they ran a draw play with Jim Brown. The whole middle seemed to open up and my first reaction was to fill that hole. That's when he started toward me. He had always been my idol, but at that moment he scared . . . me. "But as he came barreling through, I went for his legs, hung on and brought him down. He got up and went over to the coaches and played me up real big to 'em. And I think that moment right there - getting endorsed by Jim Brown - is why I made the Cleveland Browns that year." Raimey had to be coaxed into telling a few football tales the other morning as he sat in the West Third Street storefront he's renovating in the Wright Dunbar Historic District. In the next month or so, he said he'll open a shop - Safari Things Interiors - where he'll sell African crafts along with reupholstering furniture. As he talked about his plans - how forgotten treasures will be refitted, padded and covered over - you couldn't help going back to those football memories and thinking this was one forgotten treasure that needs to be uncovered. Raimey is one of the most honored pro athletes Dayton has ever produced and yet most of the general public knows nothing of him. The reasons have to do with time and place and personality. He was a football star in the late 1950s to the early 1970s. Much of his career was played out in Canada and as Jack Jackson, a Roosevelt **Teddies** back then and current community relations advisor for the Dayton Metropolitan Housing Authority, put it: "Dave is a low-key guy, who just does not toot his own horn." That's why few people know that earlier this football season Raimey was inducted in the Canadian Football League Hall of Fame. Before that he played with the Browns' 1964 NFL Championship team, was a special thorn in Woody Hayes' side when he played at Michigan and won All-City and All-State honors at Roosevelt. All this football fame, it turns out, was born in sobering misfortune. Raimey and his three brothers were raised by their mother, Marcia Raimey, in the DeSota Bass projects until she was stricken with tuberculosis and committed to Stillwater Sanitarium. She was 30 when she died and David, second oldest, was just 10. "Our grandparents tried to keep us, but it was tough going for them," Raimey said. "We were poor. Us four boys all slept in one bed. We wore clothes given to my grandmother at the homes she cleaned in Dayton View. When my grandmother developed heart problems and just couldn't handle all of us any more, it got difficult. "By then I was 15. My oldest brother was 16 and they signed him right into the Army. My grandparents kept the youngest and Phillip and I were sent to the Sailors and Soldiers orphans home in Xenia. "It was kind of a shock for me," he said. "I was pulled out of Roosevelt and put in this place where we weren't allowed to leave the grounds. At first I felt like I was locked up for something I didn't do. Our cottages were segregated back then and all the blacks lived in the same place and ate at the same lunch table. The grounds were beautiful and the place was pretty much self contained. They had a farm and we all worked on it. In the end, the experience turned pretty wonderful. For one thing, that was the place where I became a football player." Raimey had gone out for the Roosevelt team as a high school freshman, but quit when he was taunted by older kids, told to forget being a ball carrier and go play the line. At the orphanage, he was made into a running back and became a star for a team that played a high school schedule against schools like Lebanon, Lemon-Monroe and Jefferson. By his senior year, he convinced his grandmother to let him come home so he could play for Roosevelt. After a stand-out season he was recruited by UCLA, Michigan, the Naval Academy and Ohio State. "When Woody heard Michigan was after me, he told me if I went up there I'd never be on a team that beat Ohio State," Raimey said with a laugh. "And he was right." One of his Michigan years, the Wolverines tied Ohio State, but the other two years OSU won. Not that it was

Raimey's fault. His junior season, he scored Michigan's only two touchdowns against the Buckeyes. He was a ninth-round draft pick of the Browns in 1963, but sat out the season with shoulder injuries. The following year he was a rookie alongside future Browns greats Paul Warfield and Leroy Kelly. "We all played for \$10,000 and each of us got a different signing bonus," he said. "I think Paul got another \$10,000 and I got \$5,000. After that, you played for incentives every game. You got \$20 if you made a solo tackle, \$20 for an interception, things like that. I played first string for six games and by the end of the year made \$1,500 extra. Those weren't the days of big money. Even in my best years in Canada, the most I made was \$30,000 one season." He lost his starting job with the Browns, he said, following a fiery on-the-field exchange with teammates Galen Fiss, Paul Wiggin and Vince Costello. "We were playing the New York Giants and I was in a safety blitz. I saw Y.A. Tittle there all by himself and I dove on him. The problem was they ran a draw play and the ball carrier went right by me for 12 yards. That's when those three guys cussed me out and I was a cocky little rookie and cussed 'em right back. I really raised some sand and after the game Art Modell himself told me, 'For the good of the team we can't play you any more.' They put me on the taxi squad. "They tried to vote me and a couple other guys out of our championship shares, too, but that's when Jim Ninowski, the back-up quarterback, stood up in a team meeting and raised hell. And we got our money." Bud Grant, then coaching Winnipeg in the CFL, contacted Raimey and they worked out a three-year deal. Instantly, Raimey paid dividends. He rushed for 1,052 yards his first season and led the Blue Bombers - who had won just 1 of 16 games the previous season - to the 1965 Grey Cup championship game. The following season he rushed for 1,233 yards, played defensive back, won All-Pro honors and was voted most popular Blue Bomber. After four seasons in Winnipeg, he was traded to Toronto where he would play the next six seasons with the likes of Joe Theisman and Jim Stillwagon. In 1971, he helped the Argonauts reach the Grey Cup. In 10 years in the league, he would win All-Pro honors six times on offense and twice as a defender. He averaged 9.3 yards per carry during the decades he was a CFL running back. After retiring from football following the 1974 season, he spent much of the next two decades working a series of jobs in Canada and then South Carolina. Two marriages produced four children and in the early '90s, Raimey returned to Dayton and began to work as a legislative aide for then mayor and lifelong friend, Richard Clay Dixon. Eventually that job came under fire from Dixon's political opponents and Raimey bounced around a couple of other local government jobs before setting off on his own. He had all but forgotten football - "I don't even watch it on TV any more" - when he got an out-of-the-blue call from a Toronto newspaperman, who said the CFL had been looking for him for a couple of years. They wanted to induct him into the Hall of Fame. These days Raimey mostly concerns himself with renovating the old store front: "I think the shop will work because people always like to come in some place and find a treasure." Even though the shop is yet to open, you already can. He stood there the other morning with a bulky Hall of Fame ring on his left hand and a glorious football career in his distant past. * Contact Tom Archdeacon at 225-2156 or e-mail tom_archdeacon@coxohio.com

Illustration: COLOR PHOTO: DAVE RAIMEY was a former standout in the Canadian Football League and voted recently into the league's Hall of Fame. He also played at Roosevelt High School, Michigan and, briefly, with the Cleveland Browns. PHOTO CREDIT: DAMON HIGGINS/DAYTON DAILY NEWS PHOTO: NATIVE DAYTONIAN and former professional football player David Raimey walks by a mural near the site of his new upholstery business on West Third Street. PHOTO CREDIT: DAMON HIGGINS/DAYTON DAILY NEWS *Copyright, 2000, Cox Ohio Publishing. All rights reserved.*