



**GENTLEMAN:** Steve Serby calls Giants' co-owner Wellington Mara (above) a father figure to every player who ever pulled on a Big Blue jersey.

New York Post Bob Olen

# GIANT OF A MAN

## Mara was always great —

**T**HE SKY turned Big Blue in Canton, Ohio, yesterday, and everywhere else New York Giants live.

Wellington Mara, finally, is in the Hall of Fame.

A wonderful legacy of decency enters with him.

Frank Gifford, who presented The Greatest Giant of Them All, could have been speaking for all Giants, from Tuffy Leemans to Phil Simms and Lawrence Taylor to Dave Brown when he said: "He always was the one I turned to as a friend and adviser after I got to know him. It's kinda hard to say he was like a father ... he was somebody all my life I talked to about confidential matters, personal matters, financial matters. I just trusted his judgment on anything and everything."

They don't make owners and sportsmen like Mara, 81 next month, anymore. They don't make men like Mara, Fordham Class of 1937, anymore. "He is," George Martin said, "an American icon. He's an American Original."

He stands as a towering symbol of a bygone era when our heroes were



made of all the right stuff. "His faith and his spirituality is No. 1," Gifford said. "His family is No. 2, and the Giants are No. 3. That's the order of his life. I've never seen it get out of whack."

Well, maybe sometimes it did, maybe when he had to fire Steve Owen, or when Joe Pisarcik lost The Fumble to Herman Edwards, or when he disagreed with the ill-advised decision to release Simms, but no one, not even Well Mara, is perfect. Mara has 11 children and 30 grandchildren, but he is father and grandfather to every player ever to wear the Giants uniform. Gifford talked about all the Giants and Giant families Mara has helped privately over the years and said: "He just was always doing the right

thing. He's always been there. He's probably the most decent man I've ever known."

Mara: "I don't see any point in patting yourself on the back. You aren't able to help everybody and you don't want to brag on doing something for one guy you can't do for another."

Sam Huff: "He's like a father to anybody that ever played for him. I think he's truly one of the great human beings this country ever produced. Even though they traded me [to the Redskins], I think the world of him."

Martin: "His statement is that there are no former Giants. There are only active Giants and inactive Giants."

Simms: "If you play there and you really try hard, you're really part of their family, you are. Not only Mr. Mara, but the whole family. It was special, and there's not many left out there like that."

Navy's Phil McConkey: "Wellington was in the Navy, so when I got to the

Giants, that first summer he called me Lieutenant. When I came back for training camp he started calling me Commander and he kept promoting me. I was Captain for a while. When we won the Super Bowl, I became Admiral. When I came back after the [player] strike, I was knocked back down to Commander. It took me a while, but I'm back up to Admiral."

Bill Ard: "I can remember whether we won the game, lost the game, won big, lost ugly, after every game, he'd shake everyone's hand and say, 'Thank you very much for your effort. He's one of the good guys. There's not too many guys like him. He's the way you want people to be. He's a good man.'"

Mara never meddled. Former DE and GM Andy Robustelli: "I think he never put himself before other people. He felt like he was always a part of the people he was working with, never above them."

Mara never sought the spotlight.

## Shula comes home for ultimate honor

By THOMAS CULLEN

**CANTON, Ohio** — Don Shula feels at home in the Pro Football Hall of Fame, and with good reason. He won more games than any other coach in NFL history, and he was born a short trip down the road from Canton.

Shula, a native of Grand River, Ohio, was inducted into the Hall of Fame yesterday along with Giants owner Wellington Mara, former Patriot and Raider defensive back Mike Haynes and former Steeler and Chief center Mike Webster.

"I've been able to do something for a lifetime that I've enjoyed doing," Shula said. "Grand River is 30 miles from Canton, but it took me 67 years to get here."

Shula, who coached the Colts and Dolphins, holds the NFL record for most regular-season victories (328), most career victories (347 counting postseason wins) and most Super Bowl appearances as a head coach (six). Shula coached the Dolphins to Super Bowl titles in the 1972 and '73 seasons. He averaged 10 victories per year during his 33 seasons and was the only man to guide a team to an undefeated record (the '72 Dolphins were 17-0).

"There are only two times I have ever been carried off the field," Shula said. "That was after 17-0 and

after 325 (when he surpassed George Halas as the NFL's winningest coach)."

Shula chose his sons Mike and Dave to present him yesterday. This was the first time in the history of the Hall that an inductee had two presenters.

Their love of their father was evident when they introduced him in the words of Larry Csonka, saying in unison, "Some days we love to love him, some days we love to hate him, but we always, always love him."

The elder Shula gave credit to his players, saying, "You win with good people." He then gave a nod to some of those people, such as Larry Little, Bob Griese, Jim Langer and Csonka, all Hall of Famers he coached with the Dolphins. Shula coached two Hall of Fame quarterbacks in Johnny Unitas and Griese, and a future one in Dan Marino.

Haynes, a first-round draft pick of the Patriots in 1976 out of Arizona State, helped the Pats make the

playoffs in his rookie year. They were beaten in the playoffs by the Raiders, with whom he would later win a Super Bowl.

Haynes was presented by his former agent and current assistant to the CEO of Nike, Howard Slusher, who was booed by the impatient crowd when he went over his allotted time of eight minutes.

Webster was presented by former Steeler teammate Terry Bradshaw. As Steeler fans in the crowd chanted, "Here we go Steelers," Webster got off the best line of the day by saying, "Giving Terry Bradshaw a microphone is like giving Visine to a peeping Tom."

Webster, who played in nine Pro Bowls, denied rumors that he had sold his Super Bowl rings won with the Steelers. But he wasn't wearing them yesterday.

"I still have my Super Bowl rings," Webster said. "I don't need to wear the rings to remember how special those teams were. The rings are only a symbol."



**DON'S DAY:** Ex-Dolphin coach Don Shula poses with his bronze bust in Canton, Ohio, yesterday on day he was enshrined in Pro Football Hall of Fame. AP