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ALL-AMERICA GRIDDER FINDING PLACE IN LAW

By Ron Pierre
UM Information Services

MISSOULA---

Football is far removed from the study of law, but for Edward A. Cummings, a University of Montana law student and former All-America gridiron star at Stanford University, both hold a lot of professional interest.

Cummings attended high school in Anaconda where he was named All-State fullback his senior season. He had offers to attend college in Montana, Colorado and California, and finally decided to attend Stanford University in Palo Alto, Calif., under the coaching of Jack Curtis.

As a Stanford gridder, Cummings was named All-America as middle defensive linebacker in the fall of 1962, his senior year. He was also selected to participate in the collegiate East-West Shrine Football Game, with UM grid standout Terry Dillon. Following the Shrine Game Cummings went to New York to try out with the New York Giants of the National Football League.

"The first day I showed up to practice with the Giants, the competition looked at me and left," Cummings said. "I was trying for the middle linebacker slot, and Sam Huff was holding down that position. He walked out of training and didn't come back for two weeks. I guess he figured I wasn't any competition."

The day Huff returned to the Giants' camp, Cummings was cut from the team. With the outlook for a slot on the pro team poor, he decided to enroll at Columbia University and take graduate credits in social work, but still the urge to play professional football was with him.

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During his first year at Columbia, he worked out with weights and tried to put on additional pounds, hoping to play with some other pro team. Seven months after he had been cut from the Giants, he walked into the office of the New York Jets of the American Football League, and asked to try out as a free agent.

This time, he found himself playing middle linebacker for the Jets. He played with the New York club for one season, and then returned to Columbia to finish his graduate work.

The next season he was traded to the Denver Broncos, also of the AFL, and played with them for a season.

"Football is a brutal game," Cummings said. "However, you just don't realize it when you are out on the field hitting. The emotional effects make you very high and you get a real thrill out of just hitting someone."

Cummings and his wife, Buzzy, are parents of two daughters. Mrs. Cummings is the former Mary Birch Balch, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Glen Balch of Boise, Idaho. Both Ed and Buzzy received undergraduate degrees from Stanford, as well as master's degrees from Columbia University.

"I think education is the best investment a man can make," Cummings said. "If you have the money to invest, educating yourself is the best thing you can do with it."

Courses in the UM School of Law are tough, according to the former gridder, but the competition for grades is comparable to competition on the football field.

Buzzy says she has missed associating with professional football players and their wives since her husband has returned to college. "And Ed was home a lot more when he was playing professional ball," she remarked. "He went to work at 10 a.m. and was home by 3 p.m."

Besides going to classes during the regular academic year, Cummings works part-time at the Missoula County Attorney's Office through a law program which gives UM students a chance to gain professional experience. He works full-time in the county office during summer months.

When he finishes school next year, Cummings says he would like to stay in Montana to practice law.

"In some ways, I often think I would like to return to Anaconda," he said. "I think I owe the people of that town something, and maybe I can repay them by practicing in their community."