

# *The Negro Leagues Courier*

*The newsletter of SABR's Negro Leagues Committee*

*"We are the Ship, all else are the Sea"*

**August 2000**

Copyright 2000 by SABR

**Editor: Sammy J. Miller**

**Send all correspondence, both Committee and newsletter related, to Committee Co-Chairman Dick Clark, 1080 Hull, Ypsilanti, MI 48198-6472 Home (734) 487-5273; Fax (734) 487-0807; e-mail TSTEARNES@aol.com**  
**\*\* Denotes items available for SASE from Committee Co-Chairman Dick Clark - Please affix enough postage (usually 1 stamp/4 pages)**

## *Turkey Trotted Into Hall*

The Hall of Fame Induction Weekend in Cooperstown, July 21-24, 2000 was a fabulous culmination to the months of celebration by the Stearnes Family. The election and induction of Norman "Turkey" Stearnes was a goal of mine, personally for 15 years. Nettie Stearnes and daughters Joyce and Rosilyn had spent 25 years working for his just due. This weekend made it worthwhile, a truly great time.

Myself, as reporter, and Rick Morris, photographer, represented the THE NEGRO LEAGUES COURIER. We were also the guide and videographer for the Stearnes family, for the weekend. The party included Nettie Stearnes, Rosilyn-Stearnes Brown and the Thompson's Malcolm, Joyce and daughter Vanessa ( a really outstanding high school basketball player).

Among the events were Friday night's Caribbean Evening where Nettie won several prizes. Malcolm and Joyce playing in the HOF Tennis Tournament, on Saturday, and doing quite well, just falling short of the championship. A golf and tennis awards reception prior to a wonderful dinner. We all sat with the great nephew (and his wife) of Bid McPhee. The dinner was followed by the private tour of the Hall of Fame for all the guests. At this time the Stearnes family finally saw the terrific Perez painting of Turkey that will be included in the Perez-Steele Card Set for eternity. Also, the display case which has items from all the inductees on display for the next year.

Sunday was the day we all waited for. Nettie did a great job in accepting the plaque for her husband. Only a little too long speech by Carleton Fisk caused any concern. The Stearnes family was off to private dinners while we headed to a SABR meeting that evening at the Tillapaugh Funeral Home.

One of the main things discussed during this meeting was the Hall of Fame press release of July 20th. It was "Baseball Hall Of Fame to Receive Funds From Major League Baseball To Implement African-American Baseball History Study." This one page \*\* release is available. It read in part:

"The National Baseball Hall of Fame today announced that it has been granted \$250,000 from Major League Baseball in order to initiate a comprehensive study of African Americans in baseball from 1860-1960. The funds will allow the Museum to expand the scope and depth of its historical collection on Baseball and American Culture."

The release then went on to say that:

"Researchers, to be led by a Ph.D.-level individual, will submit bids to an advisory committee, which will select the final team to conduct the study. This project is expected to be a multi-year effort with final due dates to be determined by the advisory committee."

Tim Wilds, from the HOF, discussed some of the ideas that may be included in the call for proposals to be issued by the HOF later this year. SABR President Jim Riley and myself had a few questions for Tim, but it is early in the process. I'm sure the Negro Leagues Committee will be involved in the study. The money donated is a godsend and hopefully will complete the entire Negro Leagues history and statistics project, that the NLC has longed to finish.

The Stearnes family headed back to Michigan Monday morning and further family celebrations. On September 2, 2000, the Detroit Tigers will honor Stearnes with a special day. The annual game with the Cleveland Indians and Arizona Diamondbacks was very exciting and capped a great weekend.

Articles available mainly regarding Stearnes are the following:

THE DETROIT FREE PRESS 7/21/00 "Legendary Stearnes finally gets his due"  
\*\*3pp 7/23/00 "Honoring Stearnes" \*\*1pg 7/24/00 "Baseball honors Sparky,  
Turkey" \*\*2pp  
"Stearnes, McPhee also to enter Hall" THE COOPERSTOWN CRIER, \*\*1pg  
Oneonta, NY, THE DAILY STAR 7/21/00, "Hall Of Fame 2000" 4pp " Stearnes was  
no Turkey at Plate".  
Utica, NY OBSERVER-DISPATCH 7/23/00, "Turkey Stearnes gets his due from Hall"  
\*\*2pp 7/24/00 "Stearnes' widow shows great pride" \*\*1pg  
NEW YORK TIMES, 7/23/00, "Hall opens its doors to a star once shunned," \*\*1pg  
not a misprint, really the NY Times.

## NLC Y2K

I arrived at the convention site early Thursday afternoon and was pleased to see that the hotel, the Harrisburg Hilton & Towers, was one of the nicest for any SABR related convention Shortly after checking in I ran into SABR President Jim Riley in the lobby. We made our way to his room where we discussed several SABR and Negro League related topics before he left to see the Field of Dreams Bed & Breakfast and I went looking for other convention goers. I quickly found Dick Clark. After taking care of some committee related business in Clark's room, the two of us made our way down to Todd and Judy Bolton's room where we were eventually joined by Jeff Eastland and Tom Garrett. It ws great to see Tom after his recent medical problems.

After some entertaining conversation Jeff and Tom left to take Eugenia Leonard, Buck Leonard's widow, and Floross Fox, Buck's daughter, out to dinner. Jody, Todd, Dick, and I then headed out in search of food ourselves. Over dinner we discussed the recent grant from Major League baseball for the study of blacks in baseball. It was the first of many times that the topic would come up over the weekend.

After dinner Todd, Dick, and I met Jeff and Tom in their room where Jeff showed us some of his latest purchases. We were later joined by Lou Hunsinger and Ted Knorr. At the stroke of midnight, we adjourned until the next morning.

After breakfast with Dick, Tom, Todd, and Ira Goldfarb, I made my way to the vendor's area to see what Mrs. Leonard and Mrs. Fox had brought to sell. In addition to a wide selection of autographed items, they had brought several of Buck's personal items to sell including a replica Grays hat wore by Buck. After making a purchase myself, I headed for the presentations room. The Friday morning presentations were "Black Baseball In History" by Ted Knorr and Calobe Jackson; "Lazaro Salazar - Baseball's Most Underrated Winner" by Jeff Eastland; and "Clowning Around: The Miami Ethiopian Clowns and Cultural Conflict in Black Baseball" by Robert Mohl.

After the morning session, Jim Overmeyer, Rick Morris, Todd, Tom, Dick, Lou, Jeff, and I went out to lunch where once again the topic of the Negro League grant once again came up. After lunch, Todd and Judy Bolton left for their annual trip to the Poconos and the rest of us returned for the afternoon session. The afternoon started with a Harrisburg Negro League players panel featuring members of the Harrisburg Giants from the 1950's. The players were Willie Fordham, Thomas Hailey, And Russell Royster. The panel was moderated by Mark Green. The research presentations that followed the panel were "James Leslie Wilkinson: The Iowa Years, 1874-1915" by Ralph J. Christian and "Barnstorming in A Parallel Universe" by Fredrico.

After the research presentations were over the trivia contest was held to decide who was going to captain the youth teams in the trivia finals the next day. The winners were Dick Clark (of course) and Jeff Eastland.

At six Friday evening the banquet was held. Harrisburg mayor Stephen J. Reed was present and declared Aug 4-6, 2000 NLC Negro League Days in the city. Reed was then presented with one of the Commtttee's Robert Peterson Recognition Awards for his involvement with our conferences. He was also presented a copy of "Only the Ball Was White" autographed by Robert Peterson then President Jim Riley and new Executive Director George Case III both spoke at the banquet.

After the banquet the ABPA tournament was held. I played APBA for the first time and wound up losing in the first round. The semi finals pitted Lou Hunsinger against Fredrico and Dick Clark against Gene Carney. Fredrico and Dick both pulled off wins to advance to the finals.

With all the scheduled events for the evening completed, several conference goers gathered in the hotel's outdoor lounge for bull sessions which lasted late into the night.

Saturday morning started off with the NLC meeting which was, as always, riveting. The Robert Peterson Recognition Awards for 2000 were awarded to: Todd Bolton for his work on the video "The Man Called Judy", Bill McNeil for his book "The Other Stars", Eddie Bedford for his Negro League History class, Brent Kelley for his book "The Negro Leagues Revisited", Ted Knorr for his work with the Harrisburg Conference, and Dick Clark, Sammy Miller and Larry Lester for their books "Black baseball In Chicago & Detroit". The Tweed Webb Lifetime Achievement Award went to L. Robert Davids.

The main topic at the meeting was the site of next year's conference. The Negro League Baseball Museum in Kansas City has expressed interest in serving as the conference host. A vote was taken and it was decided that the tentative sight for the NLC Conference in 2001 is Kansas City.

After the meeting the Saturday research presentations were given. They were "In The Shadow of Greatness" by Ira Goldfarb; "Questioning Negro Leaguers: A Look At Questionnaires in the Hall of Fame" by Amy Essington; and "Who was A Better Negotiator: Monte Hall or Monte Irvin" by Rick Morris. The presentations were followed by a player's panel the was hosted by Kathleen Kennedy and included Bill Cash, Tom Hailey, Willie Fordham, and Tom Turner.

Once the presentations were over, judging took place and Ira Goldfarb won Best Presentation and a subscription to the Sporting News.

Dick and I made our way over to Island Park to prepare for the afternoon events while others attended the player luncheon at the Pep Grille.

At 1:00 the festivities on Island Park, which were open to the public, began with a talk on how to do Negro League research by Dick and I. That was followed by a dramatic reading of my play "A Victim of the Line" by PenOWL Productions. It was very well received. The "Women and the Negro Leagues: On and Off the Field" panel was next on the agenda. It was moderated by Leroy Hopkins and the panel was made up of Mamie Johnson, Geraldine Day, widow of Leon Day, Lugenia Leonard, Floross Fox, and Mrs. Thomas Turner.

The South Side Steppers, which is the Crspus Attucks Drill and Dance Team put on a wonderufl performance before the trivia finals which were won by Team Clark. The team was made up of Dick, Lawrence Hamm, and Kyle House. Besides Jeff, the members of Team Eastland were Julian DiMatteo and Gregory Pope.

Dick's 1930 St. Louis Stars then battled Fredrico's 1935 Pittsburgh Crawfords for the APBA Championship. At stake were bragging rights and three magazine subscriptions. Things looked bad for Fredrico when Satchel Paige was hit by a line drive and knocked out of the game. Fredrico survived however and went on to defeat Dick and claim the championship.

The Harrisburg Senators Annual Negro League Night followed and everyone present received a limited additon Oscar Charleston card. Charleston was being honored at the game. The Senators, decked out in their Harrisburg Giants uniform, battled the Reading Phillies before a sellout crowd. The final score was Reading 4, Harrisburg 1.

After the game, Fredrico, Jeff Eastland, Tom Garrett, Jim Riley, Lou Hunsinger, Irv Goldfarb and I went out for a light dinner then joined several others, including conference organizer, Marianne DiMatteo, in the hotel lounge where Fredrico joined the band on his bongos for a couple of songs. The discussions lasted until Fredrico, Jeff, Lou, Floross Fox, and I parted company at 1:35 am, finally closing the 2000 NLC conference.

The conference, overall, was a great success and Ted Knorr and Marianne DiMatteo should be congratulated.

Items available from the conference are:

Oscar Charleston card from the Senator's game. \*\*2pgs.

Playbill from "A Victim of the Line" \*\*2 pgs.

Info on "Turn Back The Clock Night" at Sandcastle Stadium in Atlantic City. \*\*1pg.

Event Schedule \*\*4 pgs.

Speaker Biographies \*\*4pgs.

List of Presentations \*\*1pg.

Banquet program \*\*8pgs.

### Co-Chair remarks on NLC Conference.

The Harrisburg Conference was another success. Excellent presentations, the players were very entertaining and informative. The normal Thursday Night Eastland show was another success. Getting together with everyone is a

4

true pleasure. Sammy Miller's play is outstanding and I expect to see more of it in the future. I think Harrisburg would be an excellent site for a future SABR National Convention. Sincere congratulations to Ted Knorr and Marianne DiMatteo for all their efforts which were successful in making the conference a winner.

### **SABR CON 2000**

Bob Davids, Dick Clark, Jan Finkel, Monte Irvin, Jerry Malloy, Joe McGillen, Rod Nelson and Jim Riley were Negro League Committee members in attendance at SABR 30 in West Palm Beach, FL from June 21-25, 2000. We had 26 at our NLC meeting where we covered many of the current research endeavors being undertaken.

Robert Gorman did a presentation on The Jackie Robinson of South Carolina: David Mobley and the Rock Hill Chiefs. It was most informative.

Mark Rucker gave a terrific slide lecture on Negro Leaguers in Cuba/Cubans in the Negro Leagues. A top notch presentation.

Monte Irvin came on Friday and sat in to assist Elden Auken the main speaker at the Awards Ceremony. Congratulations to all award winners. Special note to Lyle Spatz, The Bob Davids Award winner, well deserved.

The convention book was FROM MCGILLICUDDY TO MCGWIRE: Baseball In Florida And The Caribbean. It had a great Latin section. Related to the Negro Leagues was VIRGIN ISLANDS BASEBALL: Floridian Footholds, by Rory Costello \*\*1pg A terrific piece was submitted by David Skinner, TWICE CHAMPIONS: The 1923-24 Santa Clara Leopards. \*\*8pp

A special treat for myself and Jim Riley was meeting with David Pollock, grandson of Syd Pollock, the late owner of the Indianapolis Clowns. We had a great time talking on Thursday evening. David's father, Jerry, joined us on Saturday for lunch with Jim, myself, and Monte Irvin. It was a wonderful meeting. The late Alan Pollock had written a book on the his father and the Clowns and hopefully it will be out later next year.

Next year's convention will be in Milwaukee. Plan to attend, it is always a great time.

Several news books, with Negro League material within, were seen at the convention. The following from McFarland are BASEBALL'S OTHER ALL-STARS by William McNeil (already reviewed in a previous COURIER) \$29.95.

THE COOPERSTOWN SYMPOSIUM ON BASEBALL AND AMERICAN CULTURE 1997 (Jackie Robinson) which has a lot of material on the Negro Leagues 285 pg for \$35.

VOICES FROM THE PASTIME by Nick Wilson has 48 pages on the Negro Leagues and Cuban Baseball. \$29.95 216pages.

An outstanding new addition is Brent Kelley's THE NEGRO LEAGUES REVISITED: Conversations with 66 More Baseball Heroes. 399pp \$45. Call McFarland at 1-800-253-2187 to order.

I also just picked up a 1994 publication by Talmage Boston, 1939: BASEBALL'S PIVOTAL YEAR, which has a 24 page chapter, "Moving Toward The Day". check it out.

A young reader's book is SATCHEL PAIGE by Lesa Cline-Ransome \$16

### **NLC Member Mourned**

We are extremely sad to report the passing of Baylor Butler. Baylor was a member of the Negro Leagues Committee, already, when Dick Clark came aboard in 1985. He was a major contributor to the Organized Baseball Records section of THE NEGRO LEAGUES BOOK. A true "Southern Gentleman" Baylor died of complications from Leukemia on July 15, 2000 in Norfolk, VA. He was 69 years old. It was always a pleasure to speak with Baylor several a year. He will be truly missed. \*\*1page obit available

### **Contributors**

Many people have made this newsletter possible. They are: Todd Bolton, Tim Booker, Rich Bozzone, Adrian Burgos, Dick Clark, Rory Costello, Paul Debono, Larry Hogan, John Holway, Larry Lester, Gary Maurer,

Bob Peterson, Jay Sanford, David Skinner, Lyle Spatz, Eduardo Valero, Ron Van Zant, Lyle Wilson, and Kerry Windham.

### Committee News & Member Updates

Bill McNeil's e-mail address is wmcneil68@aol.com.  
 Jeff Eastland's new phone number is (540) 657-0013.  
 Paul Debono's email is pdebono@cinci.rr.com His mailing address is 1946 Andina, Cincinnati, OH 45237 Phone (513) 242-5634 FAX (720) 222-1434  
 Adrain Burgos recently appeared in a documentary on Cuban baseball that ran on PBS.

### Obituaries

Negro League umpire Percy Reed died in Cincinnati, Ohio on June 18, 2000 at the Meadowbrook Care Center. He was 90 years old. \*\*1pg.  
 A obit on Buster Haywood is available. \*\*1pg.  
 Leonard Wiggs died on June 29 in Tampa, Fl. He was 87 years old. Leonard played second base and outfield for the Cleveland Red Sox in 1934.

### Resting Places Found

Milton Smith Sr. is buried in Greenwood Memorial Park in San Diego, California. Smith played second and third for the Philadelphia Stars from 1949-1951.  
 A list of known burial sites is available. \*\*3pgs.

### Negro League Related Articles

"Laughing On The Outside" is a wonderful article on Josh Gibson from the 6/26/00 issue of *Sports Illustrated*. \*\*11pgs.  
 "Irvin Never Worried About Getting The Call From The Hall" from the 7/21/00 issue of *SCD*. \*\*1pg.  
 "Irvin's Memorabilia On display in HOF's" from the 7/21/00 issue of *SCD*. \*\*1pg.  
 "Professional Pitcher Threw Changeup and Entered The Ministry" from the 2/10/99 issue of *Eastern Shore (VA) News* on Rev. Charles Mapp. \*\*1pg.  
 "To Former Pro (Joe B. Scott), This Ballpark's A Beauty" \*\*1pg.  
 Review of "Black Baseball In Detroit" from the *Detroit Free Press* \*\*1pg.  
 "Legends Among Us: Buddy Guy's Honors Vets of Negro Leagues" from the 2/14/00 issue of the *Chicago Sun times* \*\*1pg.  
 "Park May Be Renamed For Baseball great" from the 6/25/99 issue of *The Chicago Sun Times*. \*\*1pg.  
 "Negro leagues Museum Announces Annual Fund Raiser" from the 7/5/00 issue of *The Kansas City Globe* \*\*1pg.  
 "Baseball Hall of Fame is Missing A Very Special Man (J.L. Wilkinson). from the *Kansas City Star's* website. \*\*3pgs.  
 "Ex Pro Teaches ABC's of Baseball" from the 6/30/00 issue of the *Cincinnati Enquirer* \*\*1pg.  
 "Peanut A Big Deal: Was Negro League Pioneer" from *The Boston Globe* (e-mqil version) \*\*2pgs.  
 "O'Neil Ambassador of Negro Leagues Museum" from Arlington Heights, IL *Daily Herald* of 7/19/00. \*\*1pg.  
 "Newcombe Inducted Into New Jersey's Hall of Fame" from the 6/23/00 issue of *SCD*. \*\*1pg.  
 "Cuban Giants At Middlebury" from the 10/21/99 issue of the *Addison County (VA) Independent*. \*\*1pg.  
 "Baseball History Lives On" from the 6/4/00 issue of the *Seattle Times* \*\*1pg.  
 "Barnstorming Paige Starred At Wrigley" by Ernie Harwell \*\*1pg.

6

"Partnership Between COE and Negro Leagues Baseball Museum" \*\*1pg.  
 "Exhibit Highlights (Jackie) Robinson's Ties To KC" from the *Kansas City Star*. \*\*2pgs.  
 "1999 Wall of Fame Inductees" web version. \*\*2pgs.  
 "Buck O'Neil" from the 5/21/00 issue of the *Kansas City Star*. \*\*1pg.  
 "Henry Mason Baseball League Now Open" \*\*1pg.  
 "Who Knows Who Has The Right Stuff" \*\*2pgs.  
 "Big League Touch Enlivens SABR Conference" from *USA Today's Baseball Weekly*. \*\*1pg.  
 "Negro Leaguers And the Hall of Fame: Too few, Too Many, or Just About Right" from the 7/28/00 issue of SCD. \*\*1pg.  
 "A Game of Their Own" from the 2000 All Star game program. The article was written by our own Eric Enders. \*\*5pgs.  
 "The Fabulous Satchel Paige" from the May 30, 1953 (that's not a typo) issue of *Collier's* \*\*6pgs.  
 "Payback Time For Big-Timers" from the 7/16/00 issue of the *Baltimore Sun* \*\*1pg.

### The Marketplace

A list of the players appearing on the new baseball stamps issued by the United States Postal service is available. \*1pg. You should definitely visit your post office and pick these up. They are very well done. A book of postcards, made up of the same artwork as the stamps, are also available.

A \*\*1pg review of the children's book SACHEL PAIGE by Lesa Cline-Ransome is available.

A listing of the latest offerings from Ebbets Field Flannel is available. \*\*5pgs.

A review of Jules Tygiel's book PASTIME: BASEBALL AS HISTORY. is available. \*\*5pgs

VOICES FROM THE PAST: ORAL HISTORIES OF SURVIVING MAJOR LEAGUERS, NEGRO LEAGUES, CUBAN LEAGUERS AND WRITERS, 1920-1934 by Nick Wilson and published by McFarland has 208 pgs and interviews with Ted Radcliffe, Harold Tinker, Buck O' Neil and others.

### Recent Events

Info regarding the opening of Leon Day Park in Baltimore, MD is avialble. \*\*3pgs. The grand opening took place on June 10 of this year. NLC member Todd Bolton was present as well as Leon Day's widow, Geraldine Day.

William "Bobby" Robinson was inducted into the Mobile AL Sports Hall of Fame on April 5, 2000. Excerpts from the program are available. \*\*4pgs.

A one page flyer concerning the Byron & Christine Johnson Lecture Series is available. \*\*1pg.

### Upcoming Events

Several former Negro League players will be appearing at the mall of America in Bloomington, MN on Sept. 8,9, & 10th. Those scheduled to appear are: Sherwood Brewer, Mamie Johnson, Ira McKnight, and Dennis Biddle.

Judy Johnson Night, held annually at Judy Johnson Field at Frawley Stadium will be held on August 26 this year. Toots Ferrell will be in attendance and everyone attending the game will receive a free Toots Ferrell card. For ticket information call (302) 888-2583.

### Correction

The following information was supplied to us by Larry Lester. We apologize to Mr. Washington for the mistake.

Johnny Washington is alive and well and living in Chicago. Our newsletter reported that Washington

7

was born on May 8, 1914 and died in Chicago on January 26, 1999. Our register shows only one John G. Washington.

The Johnny Washington I talked with said he was born April 20, 1930, and pitched for the Houston Eagles in 1950. He later played in the Pacific Coast League for Oakland (with Artie Wilson, Gene Baker, Ray Noble), then Buffalo (INT) and back to Oakland. He was signed by John Donaldson to a Red Sox (not White Sox) contract.

Jim Ford was his manager in 1950.

The original Johnny Washington (according to player survey he filled out) was born January 9, 1915 in Montgomery, AL and he played for Crawfords in 1936, NYBY in 1938 and BEG in 1941. He batted left and was 6' 2" and 185 lbs.

The living Washington said he is 5' 11" and 170 lbs. Also bats and throws left.

### **The Final Pitch**

I would like to take a moment, if you would be so kind as to allow it, to fill a role that I have seldom filled in my lifetime. That is the role as the voice of reason. Many people at the NLC conference in Harrisburg were troubled by the wording of the press release put out recently by the Hall of Fame. The part that troubled them was the line that said "researchers, to be led by a Ph.D. level individual". Personally I can understand this bothering a person. I myself, in my simple country boy style of thinking, always figured it was better to have a person that can say "I have done this successfully for over thirty years" do a job for you instead of a person that can say "I have a Ph.D. The truth of the matter is though you shouldn't let that requirement in the press release bother you. You should remember that our Committee has three "Ph.D. level individuals" as members; Dr. Larry Hogan, Dr. Leslie Heaphy, and Dr. Adrian Burgos.

With one of these individuals leading us, our committee as a whole can put together a team of researchers in the field of Negro League history that could not be rivaled even if someone had the rest of the world to choose from. Anyone should be able to see that our committee could fill the role the Hall is looking for better than anyone else. If their advisory committee can't see that however, remember one thing. Those researchers will go out looking for the best in the field to assist them and the best in the field all belong to our committee.

**NOTE:** This issue was delayed so that we could include the reports from the SABR Convention, the NLC Conference, and the Hall of Fame induction of Turkey Stearnes. The *Negro Leagues Courier* will return to its normal schedule with the next issue.