

# THE NEGRO LEAGUES COURIER

Newsletter of SABR's Negro League Committee

"We are the Ship; All Else Are the Sea"

Feb 2006 Editor: Col. Sammy J. Miller

Send all correspondence, both Committee and newsletter related, to Committee Co-Chair Dick Clark, 1080 Hull, Ypsilanti, MI 48198-6472. Home (734) 487-5273. E-mail: TSTEARNES@aol.com. All \*\* are available for postage and a SASE from Dick Clark. Please be sure to include enough postage, usually 1 stamp/4 pages.

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## Contributors

Despite the fact that I do all the work, I am FORCED by the powers that be to acknowledge EVERYONE that contributes to our humble rag. They are: Bob Allen, Bob Bailey, Tim Booker, Adrian Burgos, Dick Clark, Ira Fischbein, Fredrico, Leslie Heaphy, Ted Knorr, Larry Lester, Jerry Malloy, Gary Maurer, Bob Peterson, John Russell, Lucky Smith, Wayne Stivers, and Gregg Truitt

## Hall of Fame Voter Talks

Unless you have spent the last few weeks with your head in the sand, you are aware that 17 individuals were inducted by the Hall of Fame's Negro and Pre-Negro Leagues Committee and of the resulting furor that Buck O'Neil not being elected caused.

Just so that the truth will finally be known, the following report will answer all the questions you have been asking.

I arrived in Tampa at around 3:15 pm on Saturday and after checking in with Jeff Idelson, the Hall of Fame's Vice President of Communications and Education, I took a stroll through the wildlife preserve that sits on the hotel site.

After unpacking, I met nearly everyone involved with the meetings, including Dale Petrosky and Jane Forbes Clark in the lobby where we boarded a bus that took us to a local Italian restaurant named Donatello. A room had been set aside for us where we were joined by Hall of Famer Robin Roberts and a four course meal awaited us. It consisted of Caesar Salad, and a pasta combination plate. For the main course we were offered either Ossobuco Alla Milanese or Scampi Caprese, which was followed by a choice of several deserts.

It was an extraordinary meal and a fine time was had by all. If you are ever in Tampa, I would suggest you try

this place. You can find more info at [donatellorestaurant.com](http://donatellorestaurant.com)

Oddly enough, at least at the end of the table I was sitting at, there was no real discussion of the upcoming meetings. I found that a little strange.

After dinner we returned to the hotel, where Dick Clark and I discussed some committee related business before heading off to our respective rooms for the night.

The following morning the meetings, which were chaired by former Commissioner of baseball Fay Vincent, began at 9 AM.

I was very curious to see how things were going to be run. We had to cover 39 different candidates in just a day and a half of meetings. I did have a bit more information than most of the committee members. A source of mine (I won't tell you who it is Dick so don't even ask) had told me that during the initial discussions early last year, between the directors of the Negro Leagues Researchers/Authors Group and the Hall of Fame, that the Hall was told to expect about 15 players/individuals to be inducted.

That piece of info did have me wondering what the Hall's reaction would be if more than 15 were elected. I didn't think one or two more would be a big deal but I was of the opinion that as many as 20 or more would get in.

When the meetings began Commissioner Vincent immediately took charge and my fears of not having enough time to cover every candidate vanished completely. The Commissioner, who was a true gentleman throughout the course of both days, quickly showed that he took his role as chairman very seriously and would brook no interference from anyone, including those present from the Hall of Fame.

After laying out how he planned to run the meetings and what was expected of each of us, Hall of Famer Frank

Robinson, who joined via a conference call addressed us and reiterated what that Commissioner has said about upholding the high standards of the Hall of Fame.

After the call from Mr. Robinson had ended, we began to discuss the candidates. This was the first of many times I was surprised during the weekend.

When a supporter of the first candidate began to sing the virtues of the candidate, Commissioner Vincent interrupted and stated that the positives were covered in the bios of the players that were in the voting/information books the Hall had sent to each of us. "What," asked the Commissioner, "are the negatives? Why shouldn't this person be elected?"

This startled me for a moment but then I realized that it was a very sound approach. By having someone play the role of *advocatus diaboli* (devil's advocate) we could be assured that the good, the bad, and even sometimes, the ugly of every candidate would be covered.

We covered a great many candidates before Commissioner Vincent adjourned the meeting at 5 pm.

Once again the Hall out did itself when it came time for dinner. That night we ate at a place named Oyster Catcher's that sat on the hotel grounds on the other side of the above mentioned wildlife preserve. Once again a four course meal awaited us. This time around it was made up of a crab meat cocktail, which was followed by a salad of field greens with roasted peppers, crispy shallots, candied walnuts, and goat cheese sprinkled with a rosemary vinaigrette. Our choice of entrees that night were Atlantic Swordfish or Parmesan Crusted Chicken followed by Key Lime Pie for desert.

After dinner, some of us gathered at the hotel bar for a drink before heading to bed.

The next morning the remaining candidates were all covered. Each and every one of the 39 candidates were discussed. I believe that process itself was completely fair.

As the ballots were being handed out I realized that the politicking I had been anticipating had never happened. Not a single person approached me asking that I vote for their candidate much less that if I voted for their candidate, they would vote for mine. While I had decided not to take part in any such deals, I

was still surprised that I had not been approached.

After we had voted we adjourned for some lunch. After everyone had returned to the meeting room, the names of those that had been elected were announced. When I totaled up the number I was a little surprised by the fact that the number elected and the number the hall had been told to expect were so close.

It was then off to the press conference where the electees were announced.

I can't really comment on the press conference because I had to leave before the question part of it began in order to get to the airport in time to catch my flight.

There it is. I think I covered everything but I could be wrong. After all, what can you expect from an elitist, cowardly, mean-spirited, emotionless, gutless, amateur, crony, nitwit, dunderhead that lacks moral courage? Perhaps there should be an investigation.

THE FRIDAY FLYER, 1/20/06, "Duo Hopes Relative (J.L. Wilkinson) Will Be Named To Baseball Hall of Fame" \*\*2pgs

ST. PETERSBURG TIMES, 2/26/06 "Hall of Fame to Hold Negro Leagues Vote" \*\*1pg

TAMPA TRIBUNE, 2/26/06 "One Shining Moment: Overlooked Negro League, Latino Legends Finally may Get Spot In Hall" \*\*3pgs

THE KANSAS CITY STAR, 2/20/06 "Versatility Buck's Path Into Hall" \*\*2pgs

THE KANSAS CITY STAR, 2/26/06 "Waiting With Fear: There's Some Dread In Anticipation of Hall of Fame Vote" \*\*2pg

KANSAS CITY CALL, 2/24/06 "Wait Nearly Over For Buck O'Neil" \*\*2PGS

THE KANSAS CITY STAR, 2/26/06 "Will Buck Get In? We'll Know Monday" \*\*3pgs

THE KANSAS CITY STAR, 2/27/06 "O'Neil, Other Negro Leaguers Could Get Honor" \*\*3pgs

USA TODAY, 2/28/06 "Negro Leaguers. Predecessors Added to Hall" \*\*2pgs

CINCINNATI ENQUIRER, 2/28/06 "First Woman Elected To Hall" \*\*3pgs

THE NEW YORK TIMES, 2/28/06 "The

Brain Behind the Newark Eagles Is Headed to the Hall of Fame" \*\*2pgs  
 THE NEW YORK TIMES, 2/28/06 "

Woman Among 17 Elected to Hall of Fame" \*\*2pgs  
 DETROIT FREE PRESS 2/28/06  
 "Detroit's 'Lefty' Gets Call From Baseball Hall of Fame" \*\*2pgs  
 DETROIT FREE PRESS 3/3/06 "Manley Had Acumen, Style" \*\*1pg  
 THE KANSAS CITY STAR, 2/28/06  
 "Monarchs Owner Elected" \*\*2pgs  
 THE WASHINGTON POST, 2/28/06  
 "Manley Is First Woman Elected to the hall of Fame" \*\*1pg  
 DELAWARE COUNTY TIMES, 2/28/06  
 "Darby Trio to Enter Hall of Fame" \*\*1pg  
 NEW YORK DAILY NEWS, 2/28/06  
 "Voters made Gutsy But Correct Call With O'Neil, Minoso" \*\*1pg  
 THE KANSAS CITY STAR, 2/28/06  
 "Injustice, and Then a Gutless Committee Clams Up" \*\*2pgs  
 THE KANSAS CITY STAR, 2/28/06 "He's Still the Pride of KC" \*\*2pgs  
 THE KANSAS CITY STAR, 2/28/06  
 "Fittingly, Buck Keeps His Head Up" \*\*1pg  
 THE KANSAS CITY STAR, 2/28/06  
 "Excluding O'Neil Upsets Neighbors" \*\*2pgs  
 THE KANSAS CITY STAR, 3/1/06  
 "Buck's Love Overpowers the Injustice" \*\*1pg  
 THE KANSAS CITY STAR, 3/2/06 "Big Hitters Give Buck Support" \*\*1pg  
 THE KANSAS CITY STAR, 3/5/06 "After Shock, An Out Cry for O'Neil" \*\*3pgs  
 THE PATRIOT-NEWS, 3/5/06 "Hall Should Have Nothing to Hide" \*\*3pgs  
 THE HARDBALL TIME 3/06/06 "When the Hall of Fame and Controversy Collide" \*\*4pgs  
 THE KANSAS CITY GLOBE 3/8/06  
 "Forget Cooperstown, Let's Have A Hometown Parade for Buck O'Neil" \*\*2pgs  
 THE KANSAS CITY GLOBE 3/8/06  
 "Cleaver Cheers O'Neil" \*\*2pgs  
 CINCINNATI ENQUIRER, 3/5/06 "Local Proud to Have Been on Hall Panel" \*\*2pgs  
 THE REPOSITORY (Canton, OH)  
 "Committee's Work place 17 Figures In Baseball Hall of Fame" \*\*2pgs  
 U OF I NEWS BUREAU 2/21/06  
 "research on Minority Stars for baseball Hall of Fame a Revelatory Process" \*\*3pgs  
 JET, 3/20/06 "Negro League Players Elected To Baseball Hall of Fame" \*\*2pgs

### Negro League Articles

DAILY TIMES 3-23-2006 \*\*1pg

"Historical marker approved for site of Hilldales' field"  
 CHICAGO SUN-TIMES 1-23-2006 article on the play FENCES \*\*1pg  
 NEWARK STAR-LEDGER, 2/22/06 "When the eagles Soared: Their Biggest triumph was Their Last Hurrah" \*\*2pgs  
 BELLINGHAM (WA) HERALD, 3/5/06  
 "City Had A Glimpse of Black baseball History" \*\*1pg  
 ST. PAUL PIONEER PRESS, 2/20/06  
 "Black Star's Story Deserves Telling" (John Donaldson) \*\*1pg  
 INDEPENDENT NEWS HERALD, 2/23/06  
 "Donaldson Is Remembered for Fantastic Pitching" \*\*2pgs  
 DELAWARE COUNTY DAILY TIMES, 2/16/06 "Tales of Hilldale Help Bring History to Life" \*\*1pg  
 THE TAMPA TRIBUNE, 2/27/06  
 "Discriminating Talent" on Dirk Gibbons \*\*2pgs  
 THE PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER, 2/17/06  
 "Former Players Aim to Preserve Negro Leagues' History" \*\*1pg  
 BIRMINGHAM WEEKLY, 2/23/06 "  
 Rickwood Field Hosts a Vintage Negro leagues game Starring the Birmingham black Barons" \*\*3pgs

### Obituaries

CHICAGO SUN TIMES, 1/20/06 "Willie Smith" \*\*1pg  
 CHICAGO SUN-TIMES, 2-21-2006  
 Obit on "Negro League Batboy, Real Estate Broker" \*\*1pg

### In The Marketplace

The Negro Leagues are part of a new book TWILIGHT OF THE LONG-BALL GODS: Dispatches From The Disappearing Heart of Baseball by John Schulian published by Nebraska Press. A review from THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE 12-18-2005 \*\*2pp

### Recent Events

From reporter Dick Clark:

On Sunday February 13th, the Saline (MI) public library had a Negro League session. Professor Eddie Bedford of Eastern Michigan University led the presentation with help from Lucky Smith and Louis Manley, of the Michigan Chapter of the Negro League Baseball Players. Plus Tony D's was in attendance selling various NL Memorabilia.

The new book SHADES OF GLORY was discussed along with the upcoming (then) Hall Of Fame voting. A standing

room only crowd (about 70 people) enjoyed a little NL history and listening to Cecil Kaiser, Bee Bop Gordon, and Mel Duncan.

It is always a joy hearing the players speak of their life experiences. I was privileged to also partake in the program.

On Thursday February 23rd, I was involved in a book signing for SHADES OF GLORY in Dearborn, Michigan. Ron Teasley, Bee Bop Gordon, Clarence Jenkins, and Cecil Kaiser and also Lucky Smith were on hand to help out with the presentation. A little NL history and some excellent stories by the players made for an excellent time for all in attendance. On Saturday, the 25th, Ron Teasley, Gordon, and Jenkins were joined by former Tiger Willie Horton at The Shrine Of The Madonna Book Store in Detroit for a signing for SHADES OF GLORY.

The annual Smokey Joe Williams Scholarship Gala was held February 4 at the Seguin-Guadalupe County Coliseum. A copy of the event program is available. \*\*4pgs

### **Upcoming Events**

Carl Long Days will be held May 12-13 in Kingston, North Carolina. They are expecting 12-15 Negro Leaguers to attend. The event will include a Carolina League game and a card show.

Discover Greatness an exhibit from the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum is currently on display at the Mansfield (Ohio) Richand County Public Library Main branch. The exhibit runs from March 12 to April 23, 2006.

Of additional interest is a lecture series sponsored by the Library in conjunction with the exhibit.

The schedule of lectures, of course subject to change, is:

Dr. Leslie Heaphy  
Ohio and the Negro Leagues  
Thursday, March 30, 7 PM,  
Main Library

Dr. Charles Alexander  
Shadowball: Perspectives on the Negro Leagues,  
Thursday, April 6, 7PM  
Main Library

Gates Brown  
Memories of his Father's life in Baseball during the Negro League Era

Sunday, April 9, 2 PM  
Main Library

Peter Rutkoff  
What Was Black About negro Baseball?  
Wednesday, April 12, 7 PM,  
Main Library

Ike Brooks & Ted Toles  
Negro League Baseball in Cleveland  
Thursday, April 13, 7 PM  
Main Library

The link to the library and the exhibit is

<http://www.mrcpl.lib.oh.us/>

Registration forms, which also contains hotel and schedule info, are now in the process of being sent out. All SABR members that receive the electronic newsletter will be receiving via e-mail.

For those that do not receive the electronic newsletter, the registration forms are available from Dick Clark \*\*3pgs

The Milwaukee brewers 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Walls of Honor Ceremony will be held June 2<sup>nd</sup>. Buck O'Neil and others will be inducted this year.

### **The Final Pitch**

"To find the man that knows least, look for the one that complains the loudest." - ancient Chinese proverb

Col. Sammy J. Miller