

The Courier

A Publication of SABR's Negro Leagues Committee

"We are the Ship, All Else the Sea"

Editor, Larry Lester

September, 2014

In the News

Jerry Malloy goes to Motown

Some folks called it a family reunion. Others called it a party. A few called the Jerry Malloy Negro League Conference a conference. Whatever the case, we enjoyed the camaraderie of like-minded historians, scholars and baseball fans for a weekend of fun. Everybody was there! Great-grandma was there (**Nettie Stearnes**), along with a kettle of kids! Plenty of uncles and aunts of black ball history showed up. Plus the cousins of **Jimmie Crutchfield** and **Hank Aaron** joined us. They came from near and they came from a far (Portland, Oregon), to celebrate "**Turkey Stearnes and Black Baseball in Michigan.**" Wow, what fun!

We kicked off the conference on **Thursday**, August 14, with our educational forum, led by **Leslie Heaphy**, at the Purdy/Kresge Library on the campus of Wayne State University. She shared potential lesson plans with students and teachers. We later traveled to Hamtramck Stadium for the dedication of a new "State of Michigan Historic Marker" with several political figures in attendance, the Stearnes family and several former Negro leaguers. The historic moment was organized by **Gary Gillette**, the president and founder of the **Friends of Historic Hamtramck Stadium**. More information about the Detroit Stars' home field can be found at: <http://www.hamtramckstadium.org/> Also note, a poster showing the home fields of various Detroit Negro League teams was provided by Gillette.

From Hamtramck, we gathered for our Meet & Greet at the **Detroit Historical Museum**, enjoyed a little trivia and the best Coney dog in America

provided by **Lafayette Coney Island** of *Sparkle* movie fame.

FRIDAY

The first presentation came from **Bryan Steverson**, entitled "Motor City Meteor." He took Sabermetrics to a new level with employment of the hypotenuse to calculate the fastest runner on the diamond. For those who stayed awake during geometry class, we found out that **Cool Papa Bell** was faster than **Turkey Stearnes**, **Billy Hamilton** and even Olympian **Usain Bolt**. That's " c equals the square root of $a^2 + b^2$ " for those keeping score. Steverson also wrote an article about "*Tennessee's Best*" (Stearnes) for the conference booklet.



Our next presenter was the always reliable **Todd Peterson**, who talked about information on the well known, but seldom researched **1895-1898 Page Fence Giants** of Adrian, Michigan. The Kansas City-based visual artist, exhibited several unpublished images of this legendary team, including photographs of their private rail car. This was one of Todd's best presentations. Following Peterson was professor **Lawrence Rushing** from New York City, who gave us a thought-provoking side of **Jackie Robinson's** personality. His talk perhaps yielded the most discussion of any presentation, as he examined Robinson's symbiotic relationship with icons Paul Robeson, Adam Clayton Powell, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robinson's quotes from the infamous *Ebony* article. Due to time constraint, we had to dance around the real issues. As we know, guilty feet have no rhythm. We look forward to more presentations from Dr. Rushing.

Karl Lindholm, former trivia champion and a teacher at Middlebury College, mesmerized the audience with his talk about Harvard's famous colored shortstop, **William Clarence Matthews**. Lindholm revealed a portrait of Matthews's life in America between Reconstruction and the Great Depression. We look forward to his biography on this pioneer player and lawyer extraordinaire.

Our next presenter, **Missy Booker**, exclusive of her two cats, "Satchel the Cat" and "Sox the Cat," talked about **Booker T. Washington**, baseball's quiet ambassador. Making her Malloy debut at the 2012 conference in Cleveland, the rookie had offered "The Undefinable Satchel Paige." In her recent email, "I never would have thought that Leroy "Satchel" Paige would have led me to Booker T. Washington, and then to William Clarence Matthews. I have come to learn, though, that the real gift of Satchel Paige and his gigantic personality was to introduce myself (and many others) to the Negro Leagues and black ball. Go [Cincinnati] Reds."



When the knothole gang returned from lunch, we visited with players **Walt "Coach O" Owens**, (right) a former pitcher for the **Detroit Stars**, and **Ron "Schoolboy" Teasley**, (left) an outfielder for the **New York Cubans**, **Detroit Wolves** and others. Both men, college graduates, spoke about their careers and the struggle for acceptance by the masses. Owens coached more than 25 championship teams on various levels of competitions, and tutored the 1962 American league batting champion **Alex Johnson** and Tiger legend **Willie Horton** at Detroit's Northwestern High School. While Teasley, still holder of the highest lifetime batting average at Wayne State, talked

about his races against gold medalist **Jesse Owens**, and time spent with the **Brooklyn Dodgers** organization and his all-star years with the **Carman Cardinals** in the Mandak League. To everyone's surprise, **Alex Johnson** bounced in to sign autographs, take pictures, and talk a little baseball.

A last minute change in the schedule, forced former



players **Pedro Sierra (Detroit Stars)** [right] and **Ernie Nimmons (Indianapolis Clowns)** [left], along with former **Detroit Stars** owner **Minnie Forbes** into the lineup. The always elegant and beautiful Ms. Forbes, hosted the next hour, fielding questions with managerial ease of a winner. After a brief break, we took the PeopleMover to **Comerica Park**, where Forbes, Sierra, Nimmons, Owens, and Teasley were honored on the field under the umbrella of perfect weather.

That evening we received the priceless **Miguel Cabrera** bobble head doll with the typo. A great looking ballpark with gigantic Tigers hovering overhead, the hometown team played like the Kansas City Royals of past years, disappointing a packed house. The Tigers became the first hometown team in conference history to lose, breaking a 16-year streak. It was not a pretty game.

SATURDAY

Our first presentation of the day was by **Donald Spivey**, a University of Miami professor. His down-home talk was about how **Satchel Paige** should be credited for helping extend the New Negro Movement and the coming of age of black self-assertion, along with providing us with a very different - and critical - perspective on the **Civil Rights Movement**. The Spivey style of presentation is fast becoming a favorite among attendees.

Followed by another heavy hitter in the lineup was **James Brunson III** with his piece on "Black Style or Baseball Minstrelsy Reconsidered: Literary & Visual Representations, 1860-1889." He spoke eloquently about how the 19th century "black style" on the baseball diamond remains a highly complicated and misunderstood aspect of the national pastime, scrutinizing both literary and visual images of how blackball minstrelsy emerged.



Batting third that day was **Gary Gillette** with his excellent talk about "*Unearthing a Lost Diamond: Hamtramck Stadium, Lost and Found*." Gillette has been fighting to save the historic park since 2008 when he discovered it was still standing. He successfully led efforts to place **Hamtramck Stadium** on the National Register and secure a state historic marker.

Batting cleanup on Saturday was **Lizz Wilkinson**, a recent grad of Chatham University with a degree in Art History, with an interesting talk about problematic use of white bronze in statues of players at **Washington's Nationals Park** versus the brassy images at **Pittsburgh's PNC Park**. Her speech created a great deal of discussion about the merits of using the proper elements to represent black athletes.

Our next presentation centered on **Homestead Grays** player/manager **Vic Harris**. **George Skornickel**, an educator from Pittsburgh, promoted Harris as "The Greatest Manager in Negro League History." And he made a very strong case, showing that Harris won eight N.L. titles in the 10 years he managed the Grays. His eight pennants are more than twice his closest competitor, the iconic Candy Jim Taylor. Harris was also selected to manage the

East team in the all-star classic eight times, four more than **Oscar Charleston**. With a won-lost percentage of .682, Harris definitely has **Cooperstown** credentials.

After all the insightful presentations, the highlight of the conference, per feedback surveys, was the panel hosted by co-chair **Dick Clark**, featuring 95-year old **Nettie Stearnes** with daughters **Joyce** and **Rosilyn**, along with family members; grandsons **Gary, Cary** and **Tony**, and granddaughters **Karen** and basketball coach **Vanessa**, also an English teacher at Bloomfield Hills High School, as they shared their special moments about dad and grandpa. Joyce sang "*Wishing You Were Somehow Here Again*," from the *Phantom of the Opera*. The lyrics reminded Joyce of special times with Dad and how much she misses him. Joyce also provided a PowerPoint presentation of vintage family photographs. The **Norman "Turkey" Stearnes** family provided attendees with unforgettable insights into one of black baseball's greatest dads.



The Stearnes family celebration was followed by the authors' panel, moderated by Dick Clark, featured **Lisa Doris Alexander** (*When Baseball Isn't White, Straight and Male: The Media and Difference in the National Pastime*), **Adrian Burgos, Jr.**, (*Playing America's Game: Baseball, Latinos and the Color Line*), **Joel Nathan Rosen** and **Roberta J. Newman** (*Black Baseball, Black Business: Race Enterprise and the Fate of the Segregated Dollar*), and **Donald Spivey** (*If You Were Only White: the Life of Leroy 'Satchel' Paige*). They provided insight on how to research and identify primary source material.

Local historian and chairman of the Scouts Committee **Rod Nelson** rocked the field and won his first Malloy Conference trivia contest. Using a new College Bowl format, the tough questions came from the daily presentations and local history, and were developed by moderator & quiz master **Ted Knorr**. Nelson needed an extra inning to nip former champion **Karl Lindholm**. While **Josh Salvner** took the Bronze and **Dan D'Addona** took fourth, as everyone took home a goldmine of prizes.



Before the awards banquet, we enjoyed the intoxicating sounds of **Beth Griffith**, a backup singer for award-winning soul singer Kem, accompanied by her all-star ensemble. They performed soulful sounds from the songbooks of **Stevie Wonder, Martha & the Vandellas, the Miracles, the Temptations, the Beatles** and **Anita Baker**. To see 95-year old Nettie Stearnes jamming to Baker's "*Giving You the Best That I Got*" go to our Jerry Malloy Negro League Conference [Facebook](#) page. She truly gave it her best.



At the Awards Banquet we announced winners of our scholarships, library grants and several individual awards. A list of winners and more photographs can be found at:

<http://www.larrylester42.com/detroit---2014.html>

Of special note, **Louis Manley, Jr.**, an UPS man, was the winner of the coveted **Fay Vincent Most Valuable Partner** award, raising several thousands of dollars to help fund several programs. Super effort, Louis!

Also a great big Thank You to **Tom Tuttle, Bryan Steverson** and **Rick Meister** for their financial contributions.

One note of special interest, at the Awards Banquet, **Roy Langhans**, a member of the **Bob Davids Chapter**, and regular conference attendee, made a very generous donation to the Malloy checkbook, when he won a special poster featuring more than 100 Negro League autographs (many of whom are deceased) at the live auction. The poster, which will be framed and displayed at the SABR office in Phoenix, was donated by former Vincent MVP award winner **Wayne Stivers** from Plano, Illinois. Executive Director, **Marc Appleman**, accepted the donation on behalf of the SABR office.



And lastly, on Sunday morning, we closed out the conference with a tour of **Comerica Park** by **Ron Wade**, Director of Marketing for the Tigers.

At press time, we don't know where the next family reunion will take place, but be prepared for another majestic ride in the Jerry Malloy DeLorean time machine. Are we there yet?



For comments about the Conference visit:

<http://www.larrylester42.com/testimonials.html>

Photographs courtesy of James Brunson III, Rick Meister and Larry Lester

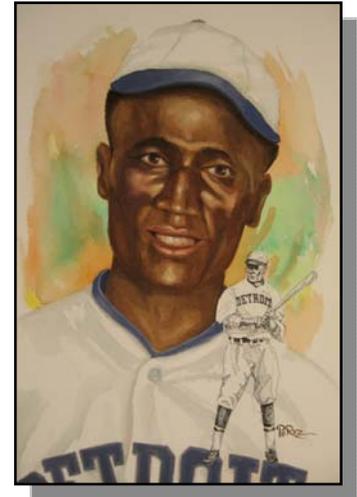
STEARNS (sic) HITS 4 HOMERS:
TURKEY DOES HIS ACT AS ELITE GIANTS WIN WINTER LOOP
TITLE

Courtesy of *The Chicago Defender* (National Edition), February 2, 1935, page 16.

Los Angeles, Calif., Feb. 1 - In what was asserted to be the breaking of all single game records for Southern California baseball, Turkey Stearns of the Royal Colored Giants hit four home runs in a game against the **Pirrone's** and **White King's All-Stars** yesterday at the **White Sox Park**. To do this he made four hits in five times up and batted in nine runs. The two home runs were in succession, happening in the first and second innings.

The Giants won the first game of the double-header closing the season with a score of 20 to 8, with 24 hits to 5. Regardless of the big score, it was sensational throughout.

[Hank] McDonald and [Hugh] McMullen started for the All-Stars with [Andy] Porter and [Larry] Brown batteries for the Giants. But the heavy hitting of the Giants drove McDonald off the mound in the fourth to be replaced by [Larry] French. French was replaced in the eighth by Johnson. Other home runs were hit by [Les] Powers, Fern Bell, and [Sammy T.] Hughes. Two-base hits by [Carl] Sawyer, Fern Bell, [Andy] Porter, J. [Cool Papa] Bell, and two by [Mule] Suttles. Double plays made were Colbern to Powers. McDonald struck out two, Johnson one, French two, and Porter six. While McDonald walked one, Johnson two, and Porter four.



Between the first and second games a pennant was presented to the winning Giants by the Morocco Queens Riding Club, and the Frank Ernest Post, Veterans of Foreign Wars. **Nina Mae McKinney**, famous Colored screen actress, **Bill "Bojangles" Robinson**, Herbert Mills of the Mills Brothers, Louise Cook, eastern stage star, "**Sleep 'N Eat**," [aka Willie Best], RKO screen actor, **Princess Wee Wee**, famous midget, and Essie Whitman, head of the Whitman Sisters Comedy company were introduced.

The Giants also won the night cap 8 to 2, with 10 hits to 2. Fern Bell pitched for the All-Stars, while [Willie "the Devil"] Wells took the mound for the Giants. Powers hit a home run, while two baggers were accounted for by J. Bell, Stearns, Snow, Colburn and two by Brown. Stearns also copped a stolen base.

Umpires were Leake (white) and [Josh] Devoe (colored).



Willie Best



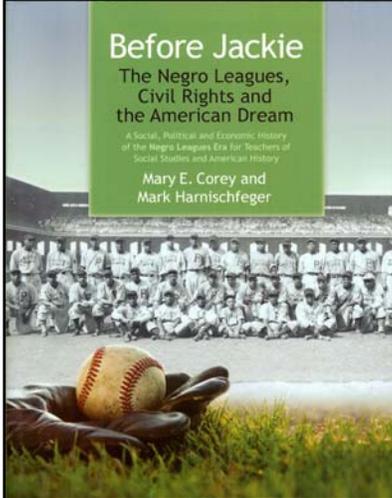
Princess Wee Wee



Editor's note: Stearnes' batting average in 26 games was .423, second to **Wild Bill Wright's** .481. Stearnes also hit 16 home runs, tying Mule Suttles for the lead. Tom Wilson's Elite Giants won 34 of 39 games, tying one to win the championship. They were so dominate, that the combined forces of the Pirrone's All-Stars and the White Kings could not stop these talented tan stars.

Dugout Reading:

Before Jackie: The Negro Leagues, Civil Rights and the American Dream by **Mary E. Corey** and **Mark Harnischfeger**



Between the end of Reconstruction in the 1880s and the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, the players, managers, and owners of the Negro Leagues empowered and inspired the African-American community to resist Jim Crow. Through the lens of baseball, *Before Jackie*

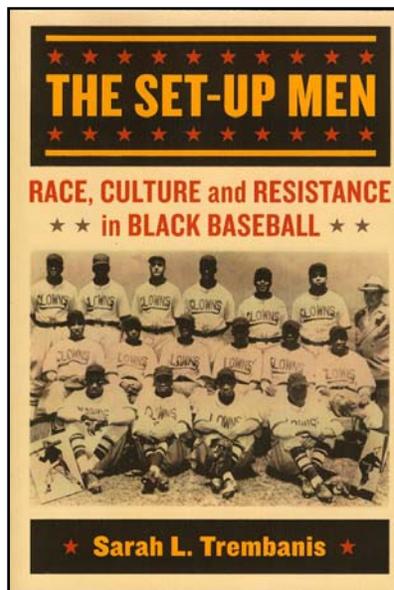
presents this less familiar history of the era's rich tradition of activism to engage students with stores of African American students who too often feel that U.S. social studies and American history has little to do with them. It is an excellent teaching aid for all grade levels. Published by Paramount Market Publishing.

<http://www.paramountbooks.com/negro-leagues-educators-guide>

The Set-Up Men: Race, Culture and Resistance in Black Baseball by **Sarah L. Trembanis**.

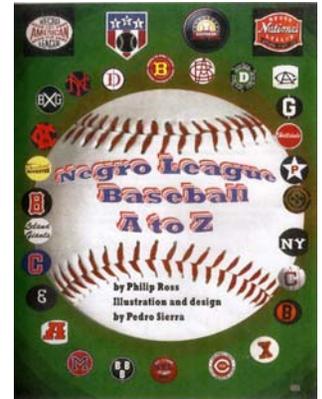
This book is an examination of cultural resistance to segregation in the world of black baseball through an analysis of editorial art, folktales, nicknames, "manhood" and the art of clowning. African Americans worked to dismantle Jim Crow through the creation of a cultural counter-narrative that centered on baseball and the Negro Leagues that celebrated black achievement and that highlighted the contradictions and fallacies of white supremacy in the first half of the 20th century. Get your copy at:

<http://www.mcfarlandbooks.com/book-2.php?id=978-0-7864-7796-8>



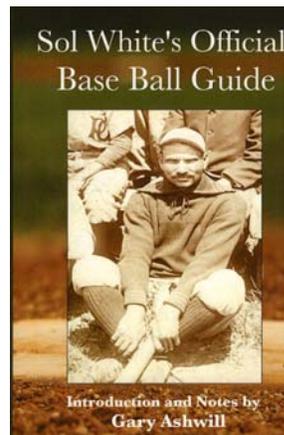
Negro League Baseball A to Z by **Philip Ross**

and illustrated by **Pedro Sierra**. Former Detroit Stars pitcher, Sierra and New York city teacher, Ross have joined forces to produce this exciting alphabetically read about Negro League stars and teams. Contact the authors at: pedrosierrap@aol.com



Sol White's Official Base Ball Guide with

introduction and player notes by **Gary Ashwill**



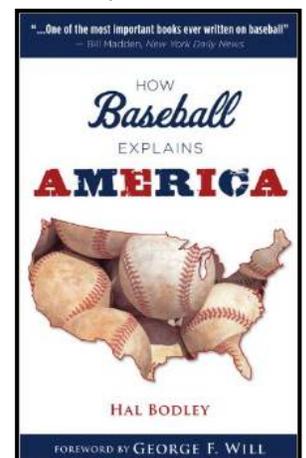
Another superb job by Ashwill in the reprinting of this classic work. The richly annotated text provides fascinating details and sidebars to the narrative, and includes a 14-page Who's Who section filled with career highlights and colorful stories. The Introduction by Ashwill provides an excellent overview of Sol White and his professional career. Published by Summer Game Books at:

<http://www.summertimebooks.com/sol-whites-official-baseball-guide-by-sol-white/>. The eBook version is highly recommended.

How Baseball Explains America by **Hal Bodley**

An unabashedly celebratory explanation of America's love affair with baseball and the men who make it possible, this work sheds light on topics such as **Sam Hairston**, (chapter five) and the role **Jackie Robinson's** signing with the Dodgers played in the civil rights movement (chapter nine), how baseball's westward expansion mirrored the growth of our national economy, labor strife, baseball families, the international explosion of the game, and even the myriad ways in which movies, music, and baseball are intrinsically tied. Bill Madden of the *New York Daily News* calls the book, "One of the most important books ever written on baseball."

<http://www.triumphbooks.com/how-baseball-explains-america-products-9781600789380.php>



SABR 44: Leslie Heaphy selected as Bob Davids Award winner

Leslie Heaphy, a SABR Director since 2010 and a recognized authority on the Negro Leagues and women in baseball, was announced as the winner of the [Bob Davids Award](#) during the SABR 44 Awards Luncheon on Friday, August 1, 2014, in Houston, Texas.

The award — which is the Society's highest honor — honors SABR members whose contributions to SABR and baseball reflect the ingenuity, integrity, and self-sacrifice of the founder and past president of SABR, **L. Robert "Bob" Davids**. "I'm truly humbled by this honor," Heaphy said. "I hope I'm worthy of being part of this wonderful group."

Heaphy is Associate Professor of History at Kent State (Ohio) University at Stark, teaching survey classes along with courses in Asian, 20th-century American, and sports history.

She joined SABR in 1989 and has chaired the [Women in Baseball Research Committee](#) since 1995. Elected to SABR's Board of Directors in 2010, she continues to serve with distinction. "Leslie carries her achievements lightly. Everything she does, she does with good sense, good humor, and good will," said Jan Finkel, a Bob Davids Award recipient in 2012 who served on the award selection committee. "Everyone in SABR knows Leslie for her genuine smile and welcoming hand. To know Leslie is to know why we're in SABR: We get to meet people who share our varied interests in baseball and offer friendship and kindness."



Heaphy is a first-rate scholar and researcher, and program coordinator for the Jerry Malloy Negro League Conference. In 2003, McFarland published her *magnum opus* (so far), *The Negro Leagues, 1869-1960*. Since then, and with McFarland, she has edited or co-edited *The Encyclopedia of Women and Baseball* (2006) and two collections of essays on black baseball in Chicago and Kansas City. In 2008, she became the founding editor of the journal *Black Ball*, a position she holds to this day. She is currently at work editing a team book on the Colorado Silver Bullets.

The Jerry Malloy Collection - Archived in Cooperstown, N.Y.

Greetings from Cooperstown. To follow is a special message from **Jim Gates, Jr.**, library director at the Hall of Fame. "I hope this email finds you all well and enjoying a pleasant summer season. While we have been very busy with a hectic summer at the museum, the library staff has continued to organize and prepare collections for researchers. There is one newly organized archive which may interest some of you. This would be the **Jerry Malloy Papers** which now consist of eight boxes of material that is ready for the research world.

The basic catalog record may be found via this link:

<http://abner.baseballhalloffame.org/search~S1?Xmalloy&searchscope=1&SORT=D/Xmalloy&searchscope=1&SORT=D&SUBKEY=malloy/1%2C19%2C19%2CB/frameset&FF=Xmalloy&searchscope=1&SORT=D&2%2C2%2C>

The more detailed Finding Aid may be found via this link:

http://baseballhall.org/sites/default/files/all/FindingAids/ba_mss_228_jerry_malloy_research_papers.pdf

Please do not hesitate to share this with anyone who may have an interest in the collection. Best wishes from everyone at the library."

James L. Gates Jr., Library Director,
jgates@baseballhall.org

Please note, much more Jerry Malloy archival material will be coming from Dick Clark, Wayne Stivers and myself in the near future. Many thanks to Hall of Fame archivist **Claudette Scrafford** compiling this initial Finding Aid. Stay tuned!

Research Request

The **SABR's Latino Committee** is looking for stories or articles about Negro Leaguers playing in Latin American Leagues, or Latino players playing in the Negro Leagues. If you have any research you would like to share with the Committee please contact chairman **Anthony Salazar**, at salazar8017@yahoo.com. This is a great opportunity to partnership with another committee for crossover topics, etc.

Sunrises!

SEND YOUR FAVORITE NEGRO LEAGUER A BIRTHDAY CARD.

SEPTEMBER

3RD – REV. BILL GREASON – 90
4TH – JOSE SANTIAGO – 86
5TH – BILLY RAY HAGGINS – 85
7TH – RICKY MAROTO – 82
9TH – JIM PROCTOR – 79
11TH – CLYDE PARRIS – 92
16TH – OLLIE BRANTLEY – 83
21ST – LOUIS CLARIZIO – 83
22ND – SWEET LOU JOHNSON – 80
27TH – MAMIE “PEANUT” JOHNSON – 79
30TH – ARCHIE YOUNG – 84

OCTOBER

7TH – HANK PRESSWOOD –
93, RAY MADDIX – 86
13TH – DIRK GIBBONS – 86
20TH – REV. CLIFF LAYTON – 85

NOVEMBER

4TH – ERNIE “SCHOOLBOY”
JOHNSON – 86
16TH – “SKEETER” BANKS - 94
17TH – ROBERT ROSELL WILLIAMS – 82
18TH – JAMES “RED” MOORE – 98, BOB
“PEACHEAD” MITCHELL – 82
20TH – BUDDY OWENS – 87
23RD – WILLIAM “BABA” RICHARDSON – 80
25TH – CLEO BROWN – 81
28TH – CAL IRVIN – 90
29TH – MINNIE MINOSO – 92
30TH – ERNIE WESTFIELD – 75



Hats Off to . . .

Mo'ne Davis, the first girl to earn a win and to pitch a shutout in Little League World Series history. She led her Philadelphia team to a 4-0 victory over Nashville. ESPN's coverage of the semi-final game brought a 3.4 overnight rating, the highest for a Little League game.

A Shout Out to

The **Jackie Robinson West** team out of Chicago's South Side in winning the National Little League Championship. Hopefully star [Jaheim Benton](#) will find a home soon. They lost the one-game Little League World Series to a team from Seoul, South Korea, 8-4.

Sunsets

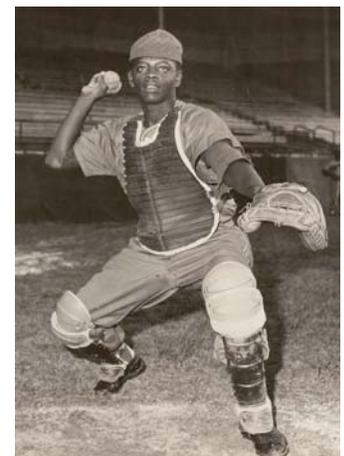
WILLIAM "BILLY" HARRELL, 85, died May 6, 2014, in Albany, NY. The former shortstop for the 1951 **Birmingham Black Barons** made his major league debut with the **Cleveland Indians** in 1955. He was signed by Cleveland in 1952 out of the Siena College. In 1966, Harrell became the third alumnus to be inducted into the Siena Athletics Hall of Fame. On January 13, 2006, Harrell became the first **Siena Saints** basketball player to have his jersey number (#10) retired by the school. After finishing his professional playing career in the Red Sox farm system in 1966, Harrell briefly served as a Boston scout. Harrell is buried in Oakwood Cemetery, Troy, NY.

ROBERTO VARGAS, 84, died May 27, 2014, in Caguas, Puerto Rico. Vargas was one of the first 10 Puerto Ricans to debut in the Major Leagues, making his first appearance with the **Milwaukee Braves**, the same day as fellow Puerto Rican **Roberto Clemente** (Pirates). Vargas pitched for the **Chicago American Giants** and the **Memphis Red Sox** in 1948, making the all-star team that season. He is a member of the **Puerto Rican Sports Museum** (2007). Vargas is buried in Borinquen Memorial Park in Caguas.



WILLIE JAMES "PEE WEE" SHEELOR, 86, died June 12, 2014, in Kannapolis, NC. Sheelor played shortstop and second base from 1951-54, 1956 for the **Chicago American Giants** (four seasons), and the **Memphis Red Sox** (one season). A broken leg in 1954, forced him into early retirement by 1956. Sheelor is buried in the First Baptist Church Cemetery in Kannapolis.

Arthur Lee Hamilton, 79, died July 24, 2014, in Jacksonville, FL. Sometimes called "Pinky," he caught from 1953-54, 1956-60 with the **Indianapolis Clowns**, **Detroit Clowns**, **Detroit Stars**, **Detroit-New Orleans Stars**, & **New York Black Yankees**. Hamilton is buried in Evergreen Cemetery in Jacksonville.



Where is Ted Strong?

By RYAN WHIRTY Special to the South-Bend Tribune
Sherman Jenkins wants answers.

The journalist, interviewer and author practically demands to know why Negro Leagues baseball star and South Bend native Ted Strong, despite serving honorably in the Navy during World War II, was denied a full military funeral and instead lies buried in an unmarked grave in suburban Chicago.

“That still remains a mystery, and I was kind of taken aback by that,” said Jenkins, who is working on a book about Strong, Strong’s father, Ted Sr., and his brother, Othello, also talented athletes. “He was honorably discharged, but why he hadn’t gotten all of that (military pageantry), remains a question, and it’s one of the things I’m trying to work on.”

Jenkins isn’t alone in his desire to finally provide Strong Jr., who died in 1978 at (most likely) age 61, the dignity in death that has so far eluded him. Thanks to the nationally known **Negro Leagues Grave Marker Project**, which has already placed burial stones on the previously unmarked graves of dozens of Negro Leaguers, Strong will receive a marker at his burial site at **Lincoln Cemetery** in Blue Island, Ill. NLBGMP founder **Jeremy Krock** said the stone has arrived at the cemetery and is just waiting for formal dedication.

Ted Jr. was outlived by his father, who died in 1984 at 89. While Ted Strong Jr. was virtually anonymous in death, the start of his life is shrouded in mystery. His maternal grandfather, Alonzo Smith, was born and raised in Georgia, while his grandmother was from Alabama.

His paternal grandfather, Osborne Strong, hailed from Tennessee but moved to Arkansas, where Theodore Strong Sr. was raised. The woman Ted Sr. eventually married, Alonzo Smith’s daughter Vera, grew up in Chattanooga, Tenn.

Jenkins said Ted Strong Sr. was an itinerant laborer and baseball player who moved his ever-burgeoning family around the map before settling in Chicago by 1920.

That included a stop in South Bend competing for the South Bend Colored Giants from 1915-17, according to local baseball historian and Saint Mary’s College archivist John Kovatch. Ted Sr. worked as a porter at the city’s Oliver Hotel.

It was then and there that Theodore Strong Jr. was born, most likely in 1917.

Ted Strong Jr.’s professional baseball career began around 1937, when he suited up for the

Indianapolis A’s, a squad that happened to be managed by his father.

But Junior’s talent was quickly noticed by Negro League bigwigs, who valued his switch-hitting, powerful right arm and prowess at the plate.

By August 1937, Ted Jr. was playing in the prestigious **East-West All-Star Classic**, the centerpiece of each Negro League season. Strong went on to compete for numerous teams and play in several more East-West contests at various positions.

Influential team owner **Cum Posey** penned that Strong “is the best young ball player of Negro baseball” in a September 1937 column, and Strong eventually caught on with the legendary Kansas City Monarchs, where he continued to star.

But such a prominent career couldn’t save Strong from an unmarked grave.

Strong enlisted in the Navy in April 1942 but was able to play the 1942 season with the Monarchs. By the start of the 1943 baseball season, Strong was entered into active Naval service as a Seabee. Ted Strong was discharged from the Navy in January 1946 at the Seattle Naval Receiving Barracks and, according to one report, “immediately joined the **Harlem Globetrotters**, who are on tour out this way.”

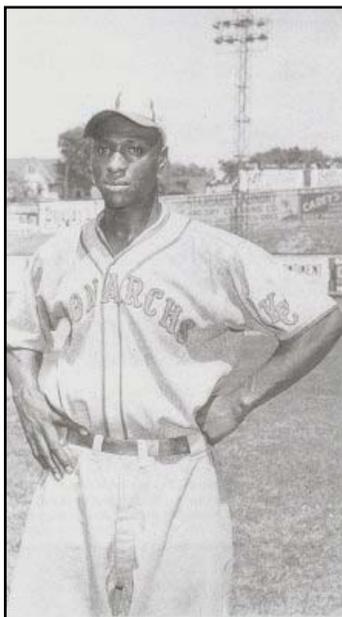
After retirement from sports in Chicago, Strong worked odd jobs and was virtually penniless at the time of his death. Jenkins, in a painfully ironic twist of fate, was scheduled to meet and interview Ted Strong Jr. in 1978, but never got the chance because of Strong’s death.

But now Jenkins and others, such as the Grave Marker Project’s Krock, are working to restore Ted Strong’s legacy by providing a grave marker, publishing a book and highlighting all of Strong’s achievements. Jenkins also wants to unearth nuggets from Strong’s personal life, including his amazing singing voice and his service to the youth of the Chicago community.

“I want to find the good and promote it,” said Aurora, Illinois-based Jenkins. “I’ve discovered so many different things about him and learned a lot. I just want the book to bring attention to the (Strong) family in general and especially Ted (Jr.)”

“I really want to have a ceremony for the headstone, but I also just want to give him more recognition and shed light on him and his family. That’s what I’m looking for, and there are a number of facts still out there that will help him get his just due.”

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Wendell Smith Honored with the Red Smith Award

By the *Tribune-Review*, June 27, 2014.

Arlington, VA — **Wendell Smith**, the celebrated African-American columnist and sports editor of the *Pittsburgh Courier* in the 1940s who campaigned passionately for years to persuade Major League Baseball owners to open their game to black players, was posthumously recognized Friday for his journalistic efforts by the **Associated Press Sports Editors**.

Smith, who introduced the late **Jackie Robinson** to **Branch Rickey** and helped open the doors for Negro League baseball players to compete in the previously all-white major leagues, was named the 2014 recipient of the **Red Smith Award** for his “major contribution to sports journalism.”

On what would have been his 100th birthday on this very day, Wendell Smith was celebrated by Larry Lester, co-chair of SABR's Negro Leagues Committee, who accepted the award on behalf of Smith's niece, **Ann Brockenborough** and his widow **Wyonella Smith**.



After Smith helped Robinson get his break with the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947, becoming the first black player in the major leagues, Smith moved on to Chicago.

There, he became the first black reporter for the *Chicago Herald-American*, a sports anchor for WGN-TV and later a columnist for the *Chicago Sun Times*.

Smith, who died at age 58 in November 1972, one month after Jackie Robinson's death, was praised as a “humble and modest man” by Lester, who said Smith was “serious about his work but never took himself seriously.”

Starting at age 17, he worked tirelessly to right social wrongs. Because of his persistence and perseverance, Smith, Lester said, “was to sports as Martin Luther King was to civil rights.”

The Red Smith Award is named for Walter Wellesley “Red” Smith, one of the nation's more popular sports columnists in the 1970s and the first sports journalist to win a Pulitzer Prize for commentary. Red Smith received APSE's annual award, named for himself, in 1981. Wendell Smith is the 34th recipient of the award, determined by a vote of members.

New Museum to Birmingham

By Solomon Crenshaw Jr. for *AL.com* June 25, 2014

Negro Leagues historian **Layton Revel** expressed tremendous excitement Tuesday night about today's groundbreaking for a Negro baseball museum near Regions Field.

“We've been very impressed with (Birmingham Mayor) **William Bell** and how he's looked at developing the museum,” said Revel, who is in town for the 5th annual Black Baseball Reunion. “The project manager for the city, **Sherri Nielson**, spoke at our breakfast (Tuesday) morning. They had the entire management team. The architects, the contractors, the project managers, the design people were all at our breakfast.

“By this time next year, we'll have a museum in place.”

Revel, founder of the **Center for Negro League Baseball Research** in Dallas, Texas, said the museum in Birmingham will be unique. “The focus of the museum that William Bell is developing here is completely different from any museum you'll see in the United States,” he said. The museum here will tell the story of black baseball from the perspective and through the eyes of Birmingham, Alabama.”

Revel said Birmingham's Negro baseball museum will start with the late 1890s, talking about industrial teams that were developing in the steel industry, factories and mines that were in the area.

“We'll move into the Birmingham Giants, who were the Colored Southern champions in 1907 and 1908,” he said. “When the Negro National League and the Negro Southern League were formed in 1920, **Birmingham Black Barons** were a charter member in the **Negro Southern League**.”

The next focus will be the integration of baseball focused in Birmingham. Finally, Revel said, displays will look at African Americans from the Birmingham area moving into organized baseball.

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