

# The Courier

A Publication of SABR's Negro Leagues Committee

*"We are the Ship, All Else the Sea"*

Editor, Larry Lester

September, 2010

## In the News

### *"The Best Conference Ever . . ."*

That's the word on the street. **THE JERRY MALLOY NEGRO LEAGUE CONFERENCE** made a whistle stop in Birmingham, Alabama, the friendliest city in the South, as the **GREATER BIRMINGHAM CONVENTION AND VISITORS BUREAU (BCVB)** rolled out the red carpet to welcome visitors arriving at the [Rev. Fred] **Shuttlesworth International Airport**. Volunteers **Bert & Ernie** from the BCVB provided assistance and directions throughout the conference weekend.

The conference kicked-off with our educational symposium on Thursday, July 15, at the **BIRMINGHAM CIVIL RIGHTS INSTITUTE** in the eloquent **Reverend Abraham L. Woods, Jr. Community Meeting Room**. The forum led by **Dr. Leslie Heaphy** of Kent State University and doctoral candidate at Case Western University (Cleveland) **Stephanie Liscio** discussed ideas for how to develop college or high school courses on the Negro Leagues while incorporating disciplines such as math, music, sociology, economics, civil rights, and American history into lesson plans.

During break sessions, attendees viewed the special Negro League exhibit on the second floor of the BCRI from the private collection of **Wayne Stivers** from Plano (IL). This exhibit included a stadium seat from old **COMISKEY PARK**, actual team uniforms and equipment, along with a host of photographs featuring Black Barons stars. There was also the revealing photographic **RICKWOOD FIELD: THE COLOR OF BASEBALL** exhibit by **Bill Chapman** from Harvard Univ. on the first floor.

The afternoon session included an excellent tour of the BCRI by student/scholar **Jordan Croft** en route to the University of Alabama at Birmingham to study History and Anthropology. As the symposium closed, tour buses brought more visitors to the BCRI for our "**Meet & Greet Event**" in the atrium of the BCRI. We opened with words of welcome from their President/CEO, **Dr. Lawrence Pijaux**. While enjoying an array of tasty entrees, we introduced the unique panoramic double-stamp of **Rube Foster** along with a brief overview of upcoming events over the next two days.

The Meet & Greet and the conference provided "*A marvelous opportunity to learn, to share, and to meet like-minded enthusiasts from all over the country,*" boasted **Dick "Big Mo" Mahoney** from Columbus (MS) and a big fan of Monte Irvin.

## FRIDAY

On Friday, the **United States Postal Service** hosted a booth at the Sheraton Hotel to sell first day issue Negro Leagues Baseball stamps designed by award-winning artist **Kadir Nelson** (author of *We Are The Ship*).



We kicked-off the presentations with the journey of Birmingham native and Jackie Robinson's first black Dodger teammate **Dan Bankhead**, by **Bryan Steverson**. Next in the lineup was **Geri Strecker's** presentation on **C.I. Taylor's** Birmingham Giants, followed by **Clarence Watkins' talk** about "Baseball Before Rickwood." Just before lunch, **Dwayne Isgrig** presented on the travels of **Lorenzo "Piper" Davis** and his near miss with integration in 1947 with the St. Louis Browns. Isgrig was joined by Piper's daughter **Faye Davis**, who shared commentary about **Willie Mays' underrated manager**, a former Harlem Globetrotter and perhaps black baseball's premier utility player.

After lunch we enjoyed the Players' Panel with **Sam Allen** and **Willie Lee** from the Kansas City Monarchs and **Tony Lloyd** from the Birmingham Black Barons, as they shared their stories of travel in the Negro Leagues. As always a conference highlight they signed autographs before we departed to historic **RICKWOOD FIELD**.



## RICKWOOD FIELD

After a concise historic overview by Rickwood's Executive Director **David Brewer**, we scattered to run the base paths, visit the dugouts and locker rooms, explore the press box, and roam the outfield, taking as many photos as possible of this one-of-a-kind ballpark. Meanwhile, the local media interviewed former KC Monarch **Sam Allen** for some TV face time on the 10 o'clock news. Photographs of America's oldest baseball park will be uploaded to our **FaceBook** account at a later date.

*"The Rickwood Field tour was the highlight of the weekend,"* claimed **Wes Singletary** from Tallahassee (FL).

*"Rickwood Rocks!"* shouted **Dick Raymo** from Wilmington (VT).

*"Historic, legendary Rickwood Field was off-the-charts in terms of a ballpark and a living museum. You could feel the presence of the great ones in that magnificent venue,"* added **Tom Tuttle**.

Raymo also shared, *"I stayed through Sunday and attended the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Baptist Church service, and then spent the entire afternoon at the Civil Rights Institute and then took in the park where Bull Connor did his dishonor to our nation and the city of Birmingham. It was a day that I am most grateful to have experienced."*

After the Rickwood tour, we boarded the buses to watch the **Barons** beat up on the **West Tennessee Jaxx** at Hoover Stadium. Before the game, Negro League players were introduced on the field. From left to right are **Birmingham Sam Brison, Sam Allen, Ray Haggins, Willie Lee** and **Rendon "the Bull" Marbury**.



The weather was perfect as we enjoyed the food and festivities under the **Frank "Big Hurt" Thomas** Tent.

## SATURDAY

Saturday was also fun-filled, as author **Timothy Gay** started us off with barnstorming tales of **Satchel Paige**, **Dizzy Dean** and **Bob Feller** during the days of Jim Crow. Gay was followed by **Todd Peterson**, a conference veteran who spoke on the **Birmingham**



**Giants**, the champions of the South from 1904 to 1909. Check out Peterson's new book in the Dugout Reading section of this newsletter.

**Elizabeth "Zann" Nelson** provided some insight on researching the genealogy of Hall of Famer, J. Preston "Pete" Hill. More information about re-discovery of **Pete Hill** can be found elsewhere in this newsletter.

Returning from lunch, we had a surprise guest from Decatur,

Alabama: former **Indianapolis Clown Billy Vaughn**, courtesy of **Lucky Smith** and **Louis Manley** from Detroit, Michigan. The diminutive Mr. Vaughn provided some insight on his days as a player and fun maker for the Clowns in the early 1960's.

Afterwards, **Trey Strecker** tackled the controversial 1887 challenge by the **Cuban Giants** to play the **St. Louis Browns**. Did the Browns refuse to play because of pride or cowardice? Only the Malloy attendees know the answer.

No conference is complete without some statistical study, which was provided by economic professor **Michael Hauptert's** presentation in analyzing the impact of racial integration using a five-year model.

After the seventh-inning stretch, we re-convened for the Authors' Panel, moderated by noted bibliophile **Dick Clark**. Authors **Brian Carroll** (*When to Stop the Cheering?*), **Martha Ackmann** (*Curveball*) and **Tim Gay** (*Satch, Dizzy and Rapid Robert*) engaged in some lively banter and provided their insights on how to do research and get published.

Overseers of **The [John] Donaldson Network** **Peter Gorton** and **Sam Sinke** provided a multi-media presentation using stunning visual displays of research techniques. Some of their work can be found at:

<http://johndonaldson.bravehost.com/>

Closing out the afternoon session was **Mark Harnischfeger**, whose talk on “Teaching Racism” focused on teaching strategies designed to highlight the influence of black baseball on the Civil Rights Movement.

**Tom Tuttle** from Minnetonka (MN) said that “The quality of the presentations made during the event was exceptional. The scholarship was impressive, as was the clear passion for the subject matter exhibited by the presenters.”

With great pleasure, custom hand-carved wooden baseballs engraved with “2010 JMC” were provided by artist **Benjamin Blackburn** as gifts to each presenter. Check out his wonderful work at: <http://wonderboystudios.com/>

“This year’s meeting was better than ever, but what put it far over the top were the visits to Rickwood Field and the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute,” said **Roy Langhans** from Cockeysville (MD). “Wow, what a great experience!”

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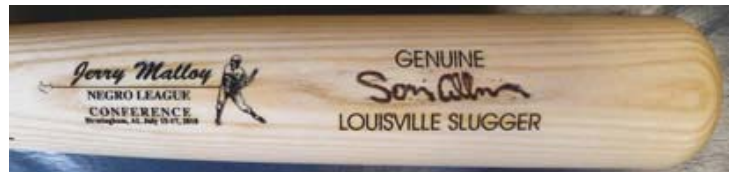
## AWARDS BANQUET

The **NEOJAZZ SCHOOL OF MUSIC**, from Willie Mays’ hometown of Fairfield, Alabama, rocked the house with soulful sounds before, during and after the Awards banquet. The youth group’s mission is to educate, train, and develop gifted music students into professional career musicians. The evening’s quintet consisted of Yah ‘El Yisrael on keyboards, Yirmeyahu Yisrael on drums, Yehosheba Yisrael on bass guitar and Jeronne Ansari on alto sax. Following a Southern cuisine delight, the lovely vocalist **Whitney Mitchell** opened up the awards ceremony with a cappella rendition of the National Anthem, followed by a chorus of “Play Ball” from the crowd. Check out their sounds at [www.neojazz.net](http://www.neojazz.net).



With happy tummies around the room, the first award went to **Roy Langhans** for being the first person to register for the conference. He was followed by winners **Jack and Maureen Anderson**, who came the farthest distance from Dollard-Des-Ormeaux, Quebec, Canada.

Players who participated in the panel discussion were presented with genuine Louisville Sluggers. Also attending the banquet were former players **Jake Sanders, Rendon Marbury, Ray Haggins** and **Sam Hairston, Jr.**



Proving to be smarter than a fifth grader, **Karl Lindholm** took home the Trivia trophy, dethroning last year’s champion **Ted Knorr**. Hopefully the two Jeopardy champions will spar off next year in Indy. As one gentleman exaggerated, “The trivia contest was the centerpiece of the whole conference with a hundred contestants in an exhausting and grueling competition.”

Lindholm added, “I enjoyed the conference immensely. It was very well organized with a nice friendly spirit.”

Other awards winners included the **TWEED WEBB LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD** to **Tony Kissel** for his research on the Cuban Giants in the 1880s and the 1890s. **Zann Nelson** was the newcomer of the year, winning the **JOHN COATES NEXT GENERATION AWARD** for her articles on Pete Hill.

The **ROBERT PETERSON RECOGNITION AWARDS** went to **Martha Ackmann** for her book on Toni Stone, called *Curveball*, and to **Tim Gay**, from PBS’s *History Detectives*, for his account of the barnstorming adventures of Satchel, Dizzy and Rapid Bob Feller.

We also announced the essay winners of our two \$2,500 scholarships. They were **Chad Richardson** from West Chester, Ohio for his essay entitled “*Shattering the Color Barrier*” and **Lewis Pollis** from Cleveland Heights, Ohio for a piece called, “*Guts Enough to Not Fight Back*.” To their credit, our scholarship winners beat competitive essays from 36 states and Germany with the will and skill often exhibited by barrier breakers before Jackie Robinson.

The winners of our two Library Grants went to two schools in the same city, Columbus, Mississippi, the hometown of Hall of Fame announcer **Red Barber** who wrote the book “*In 1947, When All Hell Broke Loose in Baseball*.” **S.D. Lee Middle School**, for “Step Up to the Plate,” and **West Lowndes Elementary** for “Batter Up! Reader Up!” each won \$1,000.

Our art winners were **Phillip Dewey** for his piece on “Hilton Smith” and **Todd Peterson** for his artistic rendering entitled, “Nor Favor to the Men of Skill.”



Another Malloy conference initiative is to raise funds to purchase headstones for unmarked graves of Negro League veterans. Last year we purchased three headstones in Pittsburgh and this year a headstone for **James “Sap” Ivory**. His widow **Wessie Ivory** accepted our donation for installation of a headstone later this year in Birmingham’s Elmwood Cemetery. *“He’d realize that people do care,”* Mrs.

Ivory said. *“It means a lot.”*

More information about our headstone restoration program can be found in this newsletter.

This year’s grand winner was **Gary Mitchem** from McFarland & Company Publishers, who captured the coveted **FAY VINCENT MOST VALUABLE PARTNER (MVP) AWARD**. Mitchem summed up the conference best, *“It’s hard to imagine a group any friendlier or more welcoming than the folks at the Jerry Malloy Negro League Conference. And surely no area of baseball research has more to say about our cultural history.”*



**Thomas Tuttle** salivated, *“I thought the closing evening festivities, including a first-rate southern style barbeque dinner, several former players, great musical entertainment and a marvelous auction event were as good as it gets. Nice job by all and I hope the kitchen staff at the hotel received “Big Ups” for that performance.”*

The Malloy Leadership Team is extremely thankful for the extraordinary efforts by **Dr. Pijeaux**, **Ms. Toni Green**, National Sales Manager of the Greater Birmingham Convention and Visitor Bureau, and **Mrs. Angela Fisher Hall** of the Birmingham Public Library for making the biggest and best black baseball conference in America *the best ever*.

## RICKWOOD ROCKS!

See the next page for a list of Hall of Fame players who played at **Rickwood Field**. Below is the fastest man to every play the game, **James “Cool Papa” Bell**.

