

## ■ AND IN THIS CORNER . . .

## Honoring Jackie Robinson and his long overdue dream

On Tuesday, April 15, 1947, 50 years ago from today, for the first time in the 20th century a black man played baseball on the same field as a professional white team in the United States. By the end of his first month as a Brooklyn Dodger, Jack Roosevelt Robinson heard every racial slur and epithet imaginable; by the end of his second month, he was a national hero.

## Matthew Apple

The names of Jackie Robinson and Branch Rickey, the Dodger owner who defied a secret 15-1 owner vote against integration, are forever linked as the duo who broke the color barrier known as the "gentlemen's agreement" of America's national pastime. In a time when it was said that to know American culture you had to know baseball, Robinson's debut was hailed by anti-apartheid activists and decried by segregationists, both factions knowing the inestimable influence Jackie Robinson would have on American society.

The insults and degradations Robinson had to endure have become legendary. Every pitcher threw at his head, every runner attempted to slice his arms and legs. Teams threatened to boycott their games with the Dodgers rather than play against a black man. Hotels would not let him stay with his teammates; or if they did, he was not allowed to be seen in public areas or use the swimming pool. Death threats accompanied his games in St. Louis and Cincinnati. His own trainer refused to touch his sore muscles because of his skin color. And Jackie Robinson took it all in silence, for three years.

In the separate and unequal societies of apartheid America, writers for the New York Age and the Pittsburgh Courier, influential newspapers of the black press, understood far better than the mainstream press what Robinson was going through. Wrote Edgar T. Rouzeau, "The hopes and anxieties of the Negro race were placed squarely on the shoulders of Jack Roosevelt Robinson, the first of his clan to land a place in organized baseball."

Ludlow Werner added, "He will be haunted by the expectations of his race. To 15,000,000 Negroes he will symbolize not only their prowess in baseball, but their ability to rise to an opportunity. Unlike white players, he can never afford

an off-day or an off-night. His private life will be watched, too, because white America will judge the Negro race by everything he does."

But although Robinson remained outwardly tolerant and calm, inside he seethed with fury and would not talk to even his wife about his withheld emotions. The pacifist, turn-the-other-cheek exterior only thinly veiled the man who as a child had been in and out of jail as a gang member; the star athlete of UCLA who was arrogant, brash and sullenly angry; the Army lieutenant who refused to move to the back of a military bus and was court-martialed by bigoted superiors; the infielder for the Negro League Kansas City Monarchs who, forbidden to use the "white" bathroom, once knocked a gas attendant senseless.

He was the object of derision, scorn, abuse upon abuse of white players, umpires and fans as a representative of black America. He suffered through weeks of nauseous sleeplessness. His own teammates at first wrote up a petition saying they'd rather be traded than play with him, backing down and accepting him only because of the money he might bring in helping them to a pennant and World Series. He was utterly determined to represent all the dreams, hopes and fears of every player in the Negro Leagues and every one of the millions of blacks living in the United States. In essence, Jackie Robinson became the scapegoat for an entire race of human beings. His roommate on the Monarchs, Gene Benson, would later say of Robinson, "He went out and gave his life for black athletes."

Although he was primarily known for his prowess as a baseball player, Jackie Robinson's life went far beyond the baseball diamond. Once his three year vow of silence had ended, Robinson became the most vocal civil rights spokesperson in the country. In a time when riots and lynchings were commonplace, Robinson's voice joined the growing civil rights movement started by leaders such as Marcus Garvey and Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., of the Harlem Renaissance. Robinson was friends with Thurgood Marshall and Kenneth B. Clark, both instrumental in winning the landmark Brown v. Board of Education which in 1954 struck down "Jim Crow" laws. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., openly admitted that without Robinson the civil rights movement of the 1950s and '60s never would have been possible.

But increasingly throughout Robinson's later career he came to blows with management in baseball and in the work force over civil rights issues. He refused to remain silent about segregated housing in spring training camps and a series of church bombings in Miami that followed Brown v. Board. In the mid-1960s his

anger at church bombings and racially motivated killings caused the press and former political allies to label him as raging or out of control. As the Vietnam War escalated, suspecting ties to the "subversive threat" of civil rights organizations, the FBI continued keeping files on Robinson, Branch Rickey and the Dodgers, and in 1948 all but demanded Robinson denounce the outspoken black politician Paul Robeson as a communist.

In his increasingly public social activities, Jackie Robinson ignored advice not to press the issues of fair play, human dignity and brotherhood. Though Robinson occasionally supported such diverse political figures as Richard Nixon, Nelson Rockefeller, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X, leaders didn't seem to realize that it was not a specific political cause but an essentially human cause which Robinson supported. Regardless of financial hardship or popular disapproval of his non-sports role in a rapidly integrating American society, Jackie Robinson always chose to stand firmly by his principles.

Yet Robinson was not the only black ballplayer who had to endure racial indignities, slurs and outright violence wherever he went in America. It is only recently that the Hall of Fame recognized the long-neglected stars of the Negro Leagues such as Cool Papa Bell, Buck O'Neill, the great Satchel Paige and, perhaps the greatest ballplayer of all time, Josh Gibson, who, when someone called him the Black Babe Ruth, responded that Babe Ruth was the White Josh Gibson. Many Negro League players alive today remember the hardships they had while barnstorming for a living, paying for gas at stations whose bathrooms they couldn't use, being forced to go around back to eat at restaurants, playing local ballplayers who wouldn't even shake their hands. While some such as Larry Doby, Hank Aaron and Satchel Paige eventually made it to white baseball, hundreds of others never made it, dying in poverty and obscurity.

Others followed in his wake, but Jackie Robinson always felt that he had been chosen to break societal barriers wherever he saw them. Great players such as Joe DiMaggio, Ted Williams and Stan Musial were known for their athletic ability, but only Jackie Robinson was known for his tireless work both on and off the field; however, many of Robinson's former admirers didn't appreciate his efforts.

After the 1949 season, when Robinson no longer held himself bound to silence and began to respond to insults, an umpire told Jackie that he preferred the less aggressive '47 Robinson. Jackie responded, "I'm not concerned with your liking or disliking me. All I ask is that you respect me as a human being." Despite his status as folk hero, Jackie Robinson simply could not rest on his laurels, know-

ing that millions of people not blessed with his legendary athlete status were treated as second-class citizens every day of their lives.

Who were you, Jackie Robinson? Were you the hero we still worship these 50 years later? Were you the gang member with a vicious streak a mile wide? Were you the officer the army branded as a troublemaker? Or were you just a man who had had enough of injustice and was determined that no longer would you live in fear? Were you all these things, Jackie, or have you now become in our memories something even higher?

Today barriers still exist, less on paper in blatant words than buried deep in the subtle prejudice of the human heart. The Negro Baseball Leagues' World Wide Web site has this dedication: "This web site is dedicated to the generation of ballplayers who were denied the opportunity to play in the major leagues because of factors other than their ability to play the game of baseball." But the quote is not inclusive: in 1952, fearful of the success of the All-American Girls' Professional Baseball League, major league baseball in the United States officially banned the signing of any female ballplayers.

Since 1994, the Colorado Silver Bullets have been proving that women can play baseball just as well as any man; in 1995 Ila Borders became the first woman ever awarded a collegiate baseball scholarship, and she stated her goal was no less than to pitch in the majors. Half a century it took a Jackie Robinson to teach America to see past a man's skin, the sad reflection of a society that needed a Jackie Robinson to sacrifice himself for what we were ourselves afraid to do. It may be that, as we stand on the edge of a new century, someone will need to step forward and take up his legacy and his message — that love is color-blind, dignity universal, and soul an unrestricted free agent — someone that, like Jackie Robinson, will proudly say, "I am in this fight to stay."

Unrelated note: This Thursday, at 7:30 p.m. in 120 DeBartolo, at the Graduate Student Reading I will be reading my short story which appeared a few weeks ago in Scholastic Magazine, as well as singing a few bars in Irish. My colleagues Cynthia Vander Ven and Amy Wray will also be reading from their work in the master's of fine arts creative writing program.

*Matthew Apple is a graduate student in the English department. Contact him at mapple@skynet.net or <http://www.skynet.net/~mapple>, and be sure to watch ESPN's official Jackie Robinson tribute today at 6:30 p.m. with President Clinton on hand to celebrate.*

## ■ LETTER TO THE EDITOR

## Interrogations an affront to sibling visitors

Dear Editor,

On the evening of Thursday, April 3, I drove with my girlfriend to the airport in order to pick up her younger sister who was staying for a few days. When approaching the campus on the return trip, I glanced in my rear-view and was able to see this sibling's eyes widen as she saw the Golden Dome in all of its glory sparkling boldly against the cloudless blue sky. She was in awe, thrilled to be at Notre Dame for what was guaranteed to be a fun-filled "Sophomore Sibs" weekend.

I pulled up to the temporary east gate at 6:50 p.m. and lowered my window. In a cheery and polite voice I said to the guard, "Good evening, how are you, sir?" No reply — I continued, "May I please take this young woman and her wonderful sibling to Lewis Hall? We are coming from the airport."

As you can probably tell, I was in a damn good mood, which resulted in a greater shock when the guard replied in a smug manner, "You know, it's a beautiful day to walk..." I kid you not when I say "smug." He was obviously not enjoying my presence there. Actually, at this point neither was I. "Yes, I know, but we have luggage, and it is fairly sizeable," I answered, still being nothing but polite.

The guard took a step closer. He looked at me. He looked at my girlfriend. He looked at her sister. He stared at the back floor. He stared at the front floor. I began to wonder if I resembled a drug smuggler or the like. He paused, removed his sunglasses, and said, "I'll bet!" rather sharply. I glanced in my rear-view again,

our guest was turning red, feeling like she was the cause of this interrogation.

Was I the only one delivering a sibling from the airport? (Should you be wondering, I found out later in the weekend the answer was definitely "no.") I was stunned and I am sure it showed because he turned and tapped quickly on my trunk. He did not ask me to open it, just boldly smacked it twice. The sibling found this hurtful, I was annoyed, we were all on a tight schedule, and the Stepan Gestapo was giving me the third degree for something that is very routine. Do alumni put up with this?

I released the lever and he inspected the contents of the trunk. Much to his chagrin he found only luggage. At this point he slammed my trunk closed and approached me again. After glaring at me for a good few seconds he said, "Make it quick!!! [Muttering] Damn quick..." Had I troubled him that much? Was this some kind of monumental favor to me or some great sacrifice to him? Does this make him some kink of martyr because he let me on campus?

After arriving at Lewis, the sibling called her parents at home to let them know she arrived O.K. from the airport and that everything was fine. I sat by and listened as she briefed them on her trip. Right after saying "Hi Mom, Hi Dad!" she immediately began to tell them about the incident with security. One would have thought that this travel-worn sibling would have begun by talking about her various flights, the beautiful campus, all the people on the quads, or the nice people at Lewis. However, she recounted the episode in its entirety from her point of

view and appeared rather disturbed by the whole affair.

Later in the weekend she brought it up at a dinner table when surrounded by other siblings. Apparently one of them had a similar experience. Consider what the other visitors at the table must have thought.

Over the past year I have had various encounters with security in which I was treated in a manner much ruder than that day. However, I was shocked that an officer would act in such a surly manner with a visitor present. Does a security officer not represent this great University as much as any student? Would the administration tolerate it if a visiting sibling was harassed by a resident in one of the dorms? Certainly not! Yet our security force feels they have carte blanche to say whatever they like to whoever they like.

On a weekend that also functions as a "sales pitch" to prospective students, is it a good idea to permit this sort of behavior from employees of the University? This sibling has now been given an impression, one that she will most likely never forget.

It is too late to mend the situation now, but I urge the Office of Student Affairs to prevent this from happening in the future. Take the necessary actions to make sure those that represent the University of Notre Dame epitomize the traditions and values we have been recognized for — it is a matter of the integrity.

TIMOTHY J. MALIN

Sophomore  
Keough Hall

## ■ WEB SITE OF THE WEEK

### In Leagues of Their Own Across the Web

By MATTHEW APPLE  
Special Web Site Correspondent

Fifty years after the integration of Major League baseball by Jackie Robinson, facts continue to come to light concerning "black baseball" and women's baseball leagues that existed at intervals throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.

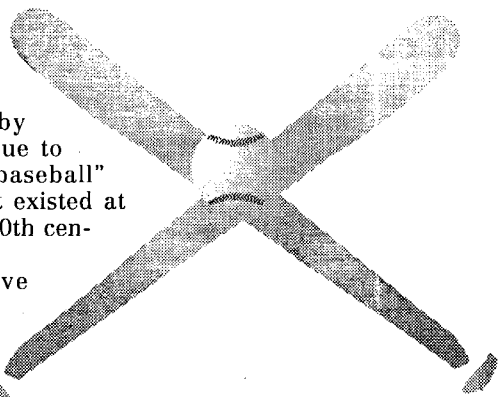
Several web site archives have appeared in the past two years concerning the Negro Baseball Leagues and their previously unrecognized innovations in baseball, such as the introduction of shin guards, bat weights and night lights.

Negro Baseball Leagues (<http://www.blackbaseball.com>) is edited by the director of research at the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum in Kansas City and purports to have the largest archives of Negro Baseball League information in the country. A snazzy new site, still under construction, is A Brief Tour of the Negro Leagues (<http://web.syr.edu/~adtodd/nlb/home.html>)

The Official Jackie Robinson web site, located at <http://www.cmgwww.com/baseball/jrobin/jrobin.html>, has all the info on this year's slew of Jackie Robinson tributes. Smaller Robinson tribute pages, such as <http://www.sound.net/~vivian/jackie.html>, abound throughout the Net.

Baseball fans can also find a few pages devoted to women's baseball, professional and amateur, past and present. The Colorado Silver Bullets site (<http://www.lifetimetv.com/sports/SilverBullets/index.html>) has schedules of the Silver Bullets for the upcoming year and features a brief history of women in baseball.

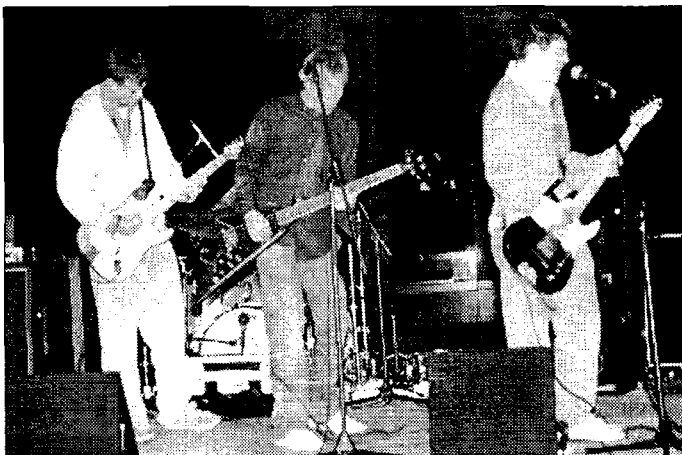
The All-American Girls Professional Baseball League, featured in the blockbuster movie A League of Their Own, has an official home page at <http://www.dlcwest.com/~smudge/index.html> which features the history, stats, and rosters of AAGPBL teams such as the South Bend Blue Sox, Rockford Peaches, and Racine Belles. The Women's National Adult Baseball Federation (<http://www.wnaba.com/>) is an amateur women's baseball league linking teams old and new across the country.



## BAND TOSTAL



As the campus defrosts and prepares for next week's AnTostal festivities, BandTostal events warm things up in anticipation. Yesterday, the eclectic instrumental trio, Cod in Salsa, got things going at Fieldhouse Mall. The Wrens (above) and Commander Venus (below) followed for sparse yet enthusiastic crowds. Notre Dame's campus bands compete at NAZZ on Wednesday night, and Lounge Night will make audiences swoon with live swing tunes in the LaFortune Ballroom on Thursday.



The Observer/Katy Soby

## ■ MEDICAL MINUTE

# Where There's No Smoke, There's Danger: Smokeless Tobacco

By LARRY WARD  
Medical Minute Correspondent

In the spring of 1996, Brett Butler was once again in the papers. However, this time the news wasn't good. Butler, the former star outfielder of the Los Angeles Dodgers turned ESPN sports reporter, had been diagnosed with throat cancer. Butler had used smokeless tobacco, or chew as it is often referred to, during the early years of his outstanding baseball career. Butler only used the product for about three years. He had quit "dipping" about 15 years before being diagnosed with a malignant tumor known as squamous cell carcinoma.

Doctors disagree as to whether or not Butler's use of smokeless tobacco is the direct cause of his cancer. However, Butler's surgeon, Dr. Robert Gadlage, reported that "this is the type of cancer...that does show up specifically with people who have nicotine exposure. The only other exposure he had was second-hand smoke. Both of his parents smoked, and he said he had second-hand smoke exposure as a child growing up."

In addition, Dr. R. Thomas Glass, chairman and professor of oral and maxillofacial pathology at the University of Oklahoma College of Dentistry and College of Medicine, stated that, "You can't completely rule out that Butler's three-year smokeless tobacco is the cause of his tumor. Even if his last dip was 15 years ago, he was still exposed to the cancer-causing agents."

Thus, Butler's tumor sparked a new controversy about an often ignored health problem: smokeless tobacco.

Tobacco itself is a substance that is composed of the dried leaves and stems of the plant *nicotiana glauca*, which contains the potent drug nicotine. This plant is native to North America and is grown throughout the world. Nicotine is a very powerful nerve stimulant and is extremely toxic. In fact, two

or three drops of pure nicotine taken at once is enough to kill the average person. Accordingly, nicotine has been classified as one of the most powerful drugs in existence. Tobacco can be consumed via smoking, chewing or dipping, and snuffing. All three of the methods produce approximately equal levels of nicotine in the blood.

Contrary to popular belief, smokeless tobacco is just as dangerous as cigarette smoke. Smokeless tobacco contains powerful chemicals, including nicotine, nitrosamines, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, and dozens of other carcinogens, that can injure the sensitive tissues of the throat and mouth.

Smokeless tobacco contains tobacco leaf and a variety of sweeteners, flavorings, and scents. A portion of such tobacco is either chewed or held in place in the cheek or between the lower lip and the gum.

Use of smokeless tobacco in America is more frequent than you might think. In reality, 2.1 percent of all American adults use smokeless tobacco. In addition, 4 percent of all men over the age of 18 use smokeless tobacco and a surprising .4 percent of all women over the age of 18 use smokeless tobacco. What is even more surprising is the use of smokeless tobacco among youth between the grades of nine and 12: Approximately 11.5 percent of such teenagers use smokeless tobacco on a regular basis.

Users of smokeless tobacco may suffer several short term physical effects, among them an increase in heart rate and blood pressure, constricted blood vessels, and reduced physical performance and productivity.

A host of dental health problems is also associated with smokeless tobacco. Tooth abrasion can occur when the grit and sand from the tobacco scratches against the teeth and wears away the hard surface or enamel. Premature loss of enamel can cause added sensitivity and may require corrective treatment. Constant irritation to the spot in the mouth

where a small wad of chewing tobacco is placed can result in gum recession. Increased tooth decay, tooth discoloration and, most obviously, bad breath can also result from prolonged use of the product. More dangerous side effects of use of the product include nicotine dependence and unhealthy eating habits.

However, the most serious and dangerous of smokeless tobacco's side effects is oral cancer. Chewing and dipping cause tobacco and its irritating juices to be left in contact with gums, cheeks, and lips for a prolonged period of time. This eventually can result in a condition called leukoplakia which manifests itself either as a smooth, white patch or as a leathery-looking wrinkled skin. It results in cancer in 3 to 5 percent of all cases. Smokeless tobacco can also result in cancers of the pharynx, larynx, and esophagus.

Warning signs of oral cancer include but are not limited to: a sore throat that does not heal, a lump or white patch in the mouth, and restricted movement of the tongue and jaw.

Quitting the use of smokeless tobacco is easier said than done. However, to quit using smokeless tobacco you could follow these steps.

First, be patient with yourself. You won't stop overnight! Reward yourself for each week or month that you stay off smokeless tobacco. Finding a support group of family and friends is also crucial. In addition, avoid those times, places, and situations that make you want to use tobacco. Finally, plan alternatives to tobacco use for coping with stress.

Larry Ward is a junior science pre-professional major originally from Johnstown, Pa. If you have any ideas for the last Medical Minute column of the year e-mail him suggestions at [Lawrence.A.Ward.25@nd.edu](mailto:Lawrence.A.Ward.25@nd.edu).