

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT  
BASEBALL IN PENNSYLVANIA

1. Student's Name Catina Odom

2. Subject's Name Sam Jethroe

3. Subject's Background

a. date and place of birth October 2, 1921 Jackson,  
Mississippi

b. Present address [REDACTED]

c. Present Occupation Owner of Jethroe's Bar

4. Date of Interview November 27, 1994

5. General Comments: Before I began to actually write out different questions that I could ask Mr. Jethroe, I was pretty apprehensive on what I was going to say. Although I'm sure there were several other questions that I could have asked, I think that the ones that I came up with were pretty good.

Mr. Jethroe was very easy to talk to, and seemed to enjoy talking with me about his past baseball career. He seemed to be extremely proud of his accomplishments while playing ball and I truly enjoyed the time that I was able to spend with him.

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Catina: For the record, can you state your name and your age?

Jethroe: Sam Jethroe 71 um 73 years old

Catina: Ok, and what is your current occupation, current occupation?

Jethroe: I operate a bar, Jethroe's Bar.

Catina: And what aspect of baseball have you been affiliated with in the past? Did you play or did you umpire or what did you do?

Jethroe: When I finished playing I came back and a little with the boys around here, [ Eriel], in the semi-pros ball.

Catina: Ok, was that also called the Minor Leagues?

Jethroe: No, that was just the Glenwood League, the Glenwood League that they had around here and I played while I lived here.

Catina: Ok, and what was the name of the team that you played for?

Jethroe: I played for the Cola Beer and I played with West Springfield.

Catina: Ok, Can you briefly rell how you became interested in baseball.

Jethroe: Oh well, well I just liked to play baseball and I just came around and started to playing it. Nothing in general, nobody did nothing to get me interested in it, I just started palying it.

Catina: Ok, so would you say that you had an inspiration or somebody you liked to see playing or that...

Jethroe: I liked to see a lot of the kids play. I talk to a lot of the kids now that is playing softball, but they can't get no where playing softball. The way they're given that money out in baseball, I don't know, if they had any talent to play they should be playing baseball.

Catina: What positions did you play?

Jethroe: Centerfield.

Catina: Centerfield, ok, was that the only position or did you...

Jethroe: No, no around here that's all I played. Around, around before I went into the major leagues I played catcher and different positions, but when I went into the major league, just centerfield.

Catina: Ok, did you also play in another league before you went into the league around here, [Glenwood League].

Jethroe: Oh, where? Around here no I played in my home town.

Catina: Did you play for the Negro League too?

Jethroe: Yes, I played for the Cleveland Buckeyes in the Negro League.

Catina: And what position did you play?

Jethroe: Centerfield.

Catina: Centerfield with them too. Ok, would you say that was your favorite position or would you have rather played something else?

Jethroe: No, no as I came to the Buckeyes I came as a catcher But they saw that I ran pretty fast, so they put me in the outfield.

Catina: Alright, would you say that baseball was popular around and in the community at the time that you played?

Jethroe: Yeah, baseball has always been popular around everywhere.

Catina: Can you approximate the years that you played ball?

Jethroe: In where? I played from 1942 to 1948 with the Cleveland Buckeyes, that's in the Negro League. Then I played from forty-eight to forty-nine with the Montreal Royals, that's triple A, a Brooklyn Dodgers organization. See the Dodgers brought me from the Negro League and sent me to Montreal, then the Braves brought me from Montreal and I went up with them and I was Rookie of the year in 1950.

Catina: Ok, let's see. In your opinion why was the Negro League formed or the leagues around here.

Jethroe: Well I couldn't answer that because the Negro League went way beyond the time that I went in to play. They went way beyond that you know. How they organized, that's beyond me.

Catina: Can you tell me, like one of your most memorable experiences with the Negro League and then with the Glenwood League around here.

Jethroe: The Glenwood League, the Glenwood League, well experiences that I had with the Glenwood League, well we never had too much to be experienced about, we just played. We never won the championship in the Glenwood League. Then with the Cleveland Buckeyes, my most memorable experience, we won the championship. We beat the Homestead Grays for the world championship in the Negro League in 1945. So that made me remember that.

Catina: Ok, would you like to comment on the recent baseball strike that happened this summer?

Jethroe: Well that's an instance where both of them trying to get their point over. The owners want a salary cap, the players don't want it. To me, I think that there has to be some conclusion, ending, (what I intend to say), because salaries are escalating way up high. When I first went into the Major League, the starting salary was \$5000, which was pretty fair money back then in 1950, But now it has grown tremendously higher, so we'll see who wins out.

Catina: Do you have any favorite players that you played with around the area that you really enjoyed playing with?

Jethroe: In the Negro League, I have one player here, the rest of them died that lived here. Willie Grace. He and I played on the same team in the Negro League.

Catina: And is he from the community, Erie community?

Jethroe: He lives here. He's here now, he stays down on Front Street, and we go off to car shows every once and a while Sometimes together, sometimes different car shows.

Catina: When you stopped playing ball, did you stop because you no longer wanted to play?

Jethroe: I stopped because I got too old.

Catina: Too old.

Jethroe: Age will make you stop doing anything.

Catina: That's the truth, that is the truth. Ok, and just out of curiosity, when you were playing were you playing for fun, or were you actually, were you making your living, your living playing ball?

Jethroe: When? When I played? I made my living. That was my living, because sometimes I would play, I'd go to Cuba, Venezuela, Puerto Rico. I'd play in the Winter time you know. Stay here in the Summer and playing there in the Winter.

Catina: Wow!

Jethroe: That's where my living was made, in baseball.

Catina: Was it pretty sufficient in taking care of your family?

Jethroe: Yeah, taking care of my family and buying a house and all.

Catina: Ok, I think that's about all that I have to ask you. Would you have anything else that you would like to comment on or tell me about?

Jethroe: No, in general, I just hope that you pass the grade for doing this.

Catina: I also have a copy of your card, [baseball].

Jethroe: Oh, yes they have a number of different cards out. This is Ted Williams who puts these cards out.

Catina: I don't know, would you say that what they say about you being the fastest in the League?

Jethroe: Oh yeah. Then, well, I ran pretty fast. They considered, some considered I was the fastest man in the league. I led the league in stolen bases, I ran pretty good.

Catina: Ok, and would you say that your most prominent years was during the, while in the Negro League or when you came back here to play in the Glenwood League?

Jethroe: Well, I did it in both leagues you know. I led the league in stolen bases in the Negro League and the Major League and in the National League...

Catina: So you were pretty fast?

Jethroe: And in Cuban League.

Catina: Alright, you were just well rounded and a balance,... you were good in all of them.

Jethroe: That's what I was noted for, stealing bases.

Catina: Do you remember what your batting average was? Your best batting average during a season.

Jethroe: Well I bat, in the Major Leagues, I batted my first year, what made me rookie of the year. I batted 280, led the league in stolen bases, hit 18 home runs, and scored 100 runs.

Catina: Ok, that's all that I have to ask you for the time being. I thank you for your time.

Jethroe: Thank you, enjoyable.

Catina: Thank you.

Jethroe: Ok, alright.