

"GREATNESS" IS MORE THAN SWINGING A BAT

By CHARLES J. LIVINGSTON
NEGRO PRESS INTERNATIONAL

CHICAGO - (NPI)--Ted Williams is affectionately called in baseball circles, the "Splendid Splinter," and well he might be, for the former great slugger of the Boston Red Sox has been splendid in several respects.

ONE OF THE greatest hitters ever to don a baseball uniform, Ted is the last of the .400 hitters. Some day Willie Mays of the San Francisco Giants, or Hank Aaron or Mickey Mantle of the Atlanta Braves and New York Yankees, respectively, may join the "400 Club." But they haven't yet, and so Ted eclipses them in this enviable category.

Mays, however, recently eclipsed Ted as a career homerun hitter (he had clouted 527 at this writing), and now stands third on the all-time career homer list behind the great Babe Ruth and Jimmy Foxx of past years. (Ed's note: Mays now is second on list--having eclipsed Foxx's record).

A controversial star during his playing days, Williams was nevertheless splendid on and off the field. So accurate a hitter was he that the one-time Cleveland Indians player-manager Lou Boudreau devised a defense for him called the "Ted Williams Shift." It called for the shifting of the second baseman over toward first and the shortstop toward second to plug the rightside infield against Ted, who was a lefthanded hitter. And still Ted was able to rifle his line drives through the same spot.

Afield, though, Ted got into several scrapes with the fans and American League umpires. In one episode, he was heavily fined for spitting despidngly at fans who were heckling him during a game.

But off-field, Ted did himself proud. Already a World War II veteran, he went back into uniform during the Korean conflict and served his country admirably as a Marine Corps pilot.

Perhaps Ted was never more splendid than on last July 25, when he and colorful ex-Yankees manager Casey Stengel were inducted into baseball's hallowed Hall of Fame at Cooperstown, N.Y. Mounting the rostrum to accept the honor, Ted did a proud thing. He paid a stirring tribute to two of the past greats of Negro baseball who--because of their race--did not get the opportunity to win the same immortal fame as Williams, Babe Ruth and other stars of the white race. And Ted's gesture was all the more dramatic because he utilized the rare privilege of the Hall of Fame induction.

TED CALLED for the eventual induction into the Hall of Fame of pitcher Satchel Paige and slugger Josh Gibson, ignoring the stipulation in the rules for selection that candidates must be ex-major league stars who had played for about eight to 10 years. Paige played briefly with the Cleveland Indians and Chicago White Sox of the American League during the twilight of his career.

The two--Paige and Gibson--would have made the Hall had they the same opportunity as himself, said Ted. The "Splendid Splinter" was dead right. "I hope," added Williams, "that some day there will be plaques (in the Hall) for Satchel Paige and others who have done so much for baseball."

These were brave, eloquent words, spoken by a man who was in a position to know. A les-

ser man than Williams, preoccupied with his own hour of glory, would have completely forgotten or ignored other contemporary greats, particularly those of the Negro race. Ted, however, is no small man when it comes to assessing the worth of others. Besides, he knew whereof he spoke. Williams knew the greatness of Paige and Gibson from personal experience. He played against both during barnstorming tours between major league stars and those of the then-Negro American league.

IN THOSE DAYS, organized baseball was closed to Negro players, no matter how great they were. And the only opportunity they had of competing against their white counterparts was during the barnstorm tours at season's end. However, players of the calibre of Williams, Dizzy Dean, Bob Feller and others welcomed the keen competition such provided. In fact, they benefited from it.

There were times, too, when Ted was awed by a tremendous homer slugged by the powerful Gibson, off such mound greats as Dean, or Feller. Therefore, as Ted indicated in his great Cooperstown acceptance speech, it is a shame that baseball fans in general, and today's fans, particularly, did not get a chance to see such great tan stars as Paige and Gibson at their best.

If they had, chances are the crowd of 7,000 who witnessed the induction of Williams and Stengel at Cooperstown would have been swelled by several thousands more, for it is possible that Satchel and Josh might have been installed at the same time. And but for the irony of fate, their plaques would today be gracing the Hall, along with that of Jackie Robinson of pioneering fame.

The accomplishments of Paige, and Gibson, on the baseball diamond were legion. In addition, several legends have sprung up around these two men. One centers on a stirring post-season pitching duel between Paige and Dean in Chicago's Comiskey Park. Paige, who first developed his pitching accuracy by tossing stones at bottles and cans in his native Mobile, Ala., and Dean, the fast-balling wizard, were locked in a hitless duel, despite the fact that some of the most awesome hitters in all baseball were participating.

In the fifth inning, so the story goes, Paige made the mistake of walking Dean. Another hitter got a scratch single, putting Dean on second in scoring position, with nobody out. It looked bad for the barnstorming Negro All-Stars. But Paige, supremely confident, wasn't worried. He turned around, pointed a finger at Diz' at second, and said: "Diz', there you are, and there you are gonna' stay." Then he whirled around and struck out the next three batters. Dean shook Paige's hand for the masterful pitching demonstration. The Negro stars won.

OF GIBSON, it is said that he has clouted the longest homers in baseball history. They say Josh was so powerful that he could hit a homer with one hand. I wasn't fortunate enough to see him play, but I am told he was one heck of a hitter, as great as Ruth or Mays.

Satchel Paige is an amazing man. So was Gibson. So is Ted Williams, the "Splendid Splinter."

COUNTY CLERK A POPULAR CANDIDATE

The news that County Clerk Loretta Bowman had filed to succeed herself in this important county office came as welcome news to the thousands of business men, attorneys and local home owners to whom she has given so much assistance since assuming the office on July 1 of 1965.

MISS BOWMAN is a native of Southern Nevada and a graduate of the Moapa Valley High School in Overton.

Her 19 years of experience started in November of 1947 when she became a Deputy Clerk. In February 1955, she was appointed Chief Deputy County Clerk, a position she held until last year when she was appointed to fill the unexpired term of County Clerk Helen Scott Reed.

Miss Bowman has served successfully as County Clerk and Ex-Officio Clerk of the following: Eighth Judicial District Court, Board of Clark County Commissioners, Clark County Board of Equalization, Clark County Licensing and Gaming Board, Clark County Sanitation Districts 1 & 2, General Obligation Bond Commission of Clark County, Clark County Disaster Control Board, Clark County Annexation Commission and Jury Commissioner of Clark County.

She is a member of the Women's Democratic Club of Clark County, the Las Vegas Press Club and the L.D.S. Church.

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SCIENTIFIC POW WOW

Dr. John B. Johnson, professor of medicine, Howard University, Washington, D. C., discusses with Dr. Edith Irby Jones, Houston, Texas, recently elected chairman, internal medicine section, National Medical association, plans for a scientific program to be held in St. Louis, in August, 1967. (NPI Photo)

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