

# Robinson's mother reason for bountiful legacy

*Special to Sentinel-Voice*

The moment I met Jackie Robinson, baseball Hall of Famer and American icon, remains etched in my memory, as if it occurred yesterday, not way back in the early 1950s.

I don't need to look at the black-and-white picture I have of an awestruck nine-year-old beside whom the Brooklyn Dodger star stands with an arm around his shoulders and a smile for the camera. Nonetheless, that picture continues to occupy a place of honor in my home.

It does so because Jackie Robinson was not just a wondrous athlete. He was a wondrous individual. He's not some star we should put away on a pedestal as the 50 year anniversary of his breaking baseball's color barrier draws to a close. He is a man whom we should rightly think of as standing next to us, with an arm about our shoulders, offering us encouragement.

That's part of the message I've gotten from Arnold Rampersad's masterful book, *Jackie Robinson: A Biography*.

Published last fall, this book, together with those published in 1996 by Robinson's wife, Rachel Robinson, (*Jackie Robinson: An Intimate Portrait*), and his daughter, Sharon Robinson, (*Stealing Home: An Intimate Family Portrait by the daughter of Jackie Robinson*), shows that there was far more to Jackie Robinson than just the physical ability teammates, opponents and fans marveled at.

They tell us why it is that Jackie Robinson's name resounds in 20th-century American history:

He took after his mama.

By that I mean that beyond the baseball feats, Jackie Robinson's character is really the reason he is so celebrated today.

It was his character — bolstered by the decency, and desire to win games, of Branch Rickey, the Dodgers' general manager who signed him, and some of his teammates — which enabled him to endure the vicious taunts and threats of opposing players and fans and press on.

That fortitude came from his mother, Mallie McGriff Robinson. She made it possible for Jackie Robinson to have a future in which achievement could be a possibility.

Mallie Robinson, who lived from 1892 to 1968, was an

## To Be Equal

By Hugh B. Price  
President  
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African-American Everywoman. Born near Cairo, Ga., her formal education stopped at the sixth grade. She married for love, but it turned out to be a bad match. Her husband, an illiterate sharecropper — the kind of farming which, as Rampersad pungently observes, "smelled like slavery." — was bent so low by the burden of oppression that after 10 years of marriage and five children with Mallie, he snapped. He deserted his family. They never saw him again.

Mallie, taking the advice of a half-brother who had moved to Pasadena, Calif., some years before, left Georgia in the spring of 1920 with her children — Edgar, Mack, Frank, Willa Mae, and Jack, then, little more than a year old — for that Los Angeles suburb.

Pasadena was not the Promised Land; racism was intensifying there, too. But there was more opportunity; and that degree of difference between California and southern Georgia was all Mallie Robinson needed to buy, on a domestic's salary, a spacious home and fashion a decent life for herself and her children.

"Jack's mother was an extraordinary woman, spiritually deep, resourceful, and indomitable," writes Rachel Robinson, who knew her well. "The way Mallie assessed things was simply 'Is this the environment I want for my kids and myself? Can we flourish here?'"

Rampersad writes that, though he always loved his mother,

the youthful Jackie Robinson "felt guilty that she worked so hard and in such menial jobs to support him and so many others ... [and] found some of her ways hard to accept: her almost compulsive generosity to relatives, friends, and even strangers; her incessant talking about God; and perhaps other things."

After her death, however, "looking back with a lifetime of experience and open eyes," Robinson would say, "Many times I felt that my mother was being foolish, letting people take advantage of her. I was wrong. She did kindness[es] for people ... because she wanted to help them. It was her way of thinking, her way of life ... she had not been a tool for others. She had given with her eyes as open as her heart. In death she was still teaching me how to live."

This was the character of the woman whose son devoted his life after baseball to the political and economic advancement of African-Americans; a man of whom Rampersad writes, "Despite his quick temper in the face of injustice, especially racial discrimination, he lived on the whole a life of discipline, restraint, and self-denial; he thought of himself and his future in terms of moral and social obligations rather than privilege and entitlement."

It was Mallie Robinson's strength of character, decency, compassion, determination to try to do well, and bravery Jackie Robinson inherited and displayed to such wondrous effect throughout his adult life. That was her gift to him and her other children, and through the example of Jackie Robinson, it was her gift to all of us.

It is a bountiful legacy.

## Sports Quiz

By Larry Duncan  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

1. How many seams are there on a football?
2. What bullfighter earned more than \$3 million a year at the height of his career?
3. How many seconds does an NBA team have to shoot after getting the ball?
4. How many bowling balls does it take to make a spare?
5. What is the nickname of the University of Tennessee's football team?
6. What do you call a young female racehorse?
7. What six-time Olympic champion was known as "The Flying Finn"?
8. How many numbered colored balls are there in pocket billiards?

### SPORTS QUIZ ANSWERS

1. Four; 2. Manuel Benitez Perez (El Cordobes); 3. 24; 4. Two; 5. The Volunteers; 6. A Filly; 7. Paavo Nurmi; 8. 15

## Targeting

(Continued from Page 8) discrimination, statistics show they are making significant progress.

They revere family. Movies like "Soul Food", centered on a female-dominated family, showcased the best aspects of African-American women in both personal and professional roles.

They like quality items. African-American women, marketing studies say, tend to

be more brand-conscious and spend a disproportionate amount for branded items.

They are good money managers. Forced by necessity to hone their budgeting skills, they know how to get the most quality for their dollar.

They like products that reflect their heritage. Black women purchase products incorporating Afrocentric values and traditions. As a result, major department stores

like Sears and JC Penney's have created Afrocentric departments built on Kwanzaa and other Afrocentric holidays.

Start now to tailor your business promotional activities to reach this important market. By recognizing the power and influence of this important

market segment, you can boost your firm's revenues and establish it as a preferred one among African-American women.

*Pierre A. Clark is a nationally known self-employment expert and entrepreneurship columnist.*

## Money

(Continued from Page 8) can be distributed around the country.

A conference for educators called "African-Americans in the Digital Age: Learning and Earning on the Internet" will feature the top African-American developers of these new technologies including Ty Ahmad-Taylor, art director of @Home and a former new media reporter for the New York Times; John "JT" Thompson, principal engineer for Macromind Director, the leading video and multimedia software program and Dean Marsh, program director of IBM Digital Library, which puts libraries online.

Assistance will be given to prepare technology plans, anticipating the most effective technologies for particular markets.

Books'n'Bytes, the conference sponsor, will assign

technology professionals to work with schools over the next year to create and implement their technology plans. The timely conference is Saturday, Jan. 10, 1998 at the Center for African and African-American Art and Culture in San Francisco from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. For conference information, call 800-321-1900.

John William Templeton is executive editor of "Griot," the African-American, African and Caribbean business daily. For more information on the African-Americans in the Digital Age conference, call 800-321-1990.

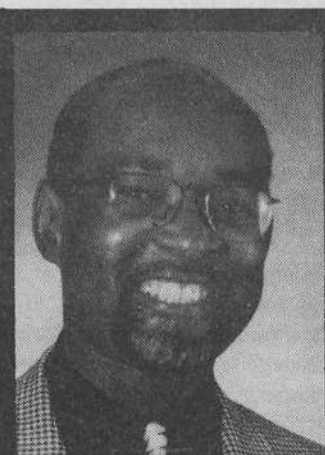
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