

# Black sportswriter Sam Lacy pioneered in journalism

*Lacy credited with helping to integrate professional baseball, inspiring blacks to write about sports*

BALTIMORE (AP) - Sam Lacy, sports editor of the The (Baltimore) Afro-American weekly newspaper since 1944 and a key figure in the integration of major league baseball, is dead at age 99.

Lacy died Thursday at the Washington Hospital Center, CEO and publisher Jake Oliver said Friday.

"He was the father of modern-day African-American sportswriters," he said.

Lacy's last column, filed from the hospital, appeared in Friday's paper. He went into the hospital a week ago because he had lost his appetite, Oliver said.

"Even though he looked very thin, his spirit never stopped," he said. "I fully expected to speak with him over the weekend. This caught everyone by surprise."

Lacy, the first black reporter to become a member of the Baseball Writers' Association of America, was inducted into the writer's wing at the Hall of Fame in July 1998.

That same year he won the Red Smith Award, presented annually by Associated Press Sports Editors for extended meritorious service to sports journalism.

Months before his induction into the Hall, Lacy insisted that his effort to bring racial equality to the playing field was merely the result of incorporating his personality into his job.

"I've always felt that there was nothing special about me, that I was not the only person who could have done what I did," he said. "And I know how this may sound. ... But any person with a little vision, a little curiosity, a little nerve could have done what I did." His friends and peers knew otherwise.

"I grew up reading Sam Lacy's articles," Baltimore Mayor Kurt Schmoke said. "Sam epitomized the journalist who uses his craft to bring about change."

Even into his 90s, Lacy worked to change baseball. He advocated the elimination of the designated hitter, writing, "The only way to stop pitchers like Randy Johnson and Roger Clemens from throwing at hitters is to force them to bat."

In the early 1930s, Lacy solicited sports writers nationally to recognize the Negro League and its players. He suggested to Washington Senators owner Clark Griffith in 1936 that Negro League

players might be able to help the struggling team.

Griffith, fearing riots, said the timing wasn't right.

Soon after joining The Afro-American, Lacy was appointed to a committee to study integration. The committee never met, but another panel member, Branch Rickey of the Brooklyn Dodgers, told Lacy in a pri-

vate moment that he would handle the issue on his own.

On Oct. 23, 1945 - Lacy's 42nd birthday - Rickey signed Jackie Robinson to a contract with the Dodgers' Montreal farm club. For the next three years, Lacy chronicled Robinson's ongoing battle to gain acceptance in the majors.

He, too, suffered abuse in

the press box and on the road while he covered the story.

Lacy also covered Jesse Owens' powerful performance in Germany during the 1936 Olympics and Joe Louis in the boxing ring, often staying in the same segregated rooming houses as the athletes he wrote about.

Lacy spurned retirement and continued to write his

once-a-week column for The Afro-American. Because arthritis made it impossible for him to type, for more than two decades he wrote his copy in longhand after showing up for work at 4 a.m.

After graduating from Howard University, Lacy worked at several Washington radio stations. In 1934, he joined the Washington Tri-

bune as sports editor. Ten years later, he started working for The Afro-American.

"I have been credited with opening doors, but I have always maintained that it's no good to open a door if there's no one qualified to walk through it," he said.

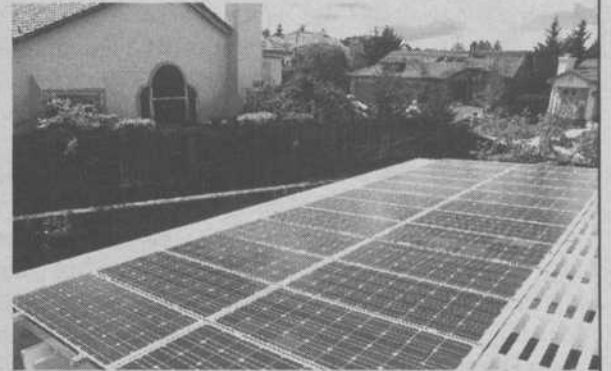
Sam Lacy never remarried after his wife, Barbara, died in 1969.



## For all the right reasons:

# 2 REASON

When it comes to beautiful and **innovative product design**, Pardee Homes consistently leads the way. Cat 5 wiring? We've got it covered. Flexible floor plans? Absolutely. Energy efficiency? Included! In fact, Pardee is the first large builder in the country to commit to build only ENERGY STAR® certified homes. And we're constantly looking ahead—for choice locations, better products and environmentally sound solutions. It's no wonder Pardee Homes has been named America's Best Builder!



Pardee builds only ENERGY STAR homes.

See firsthand why thousands of families have chosen their new home from Pardee. Visit us at [www.pardeehomes.com](http://www.pardeehomes.com).

THE WAY YOU WANT TO LIVE

PardeeHomes.COM

ENERGY STAR  
Partner of the Year  
and National  
EnergyValue Housing  
Award Winner!