

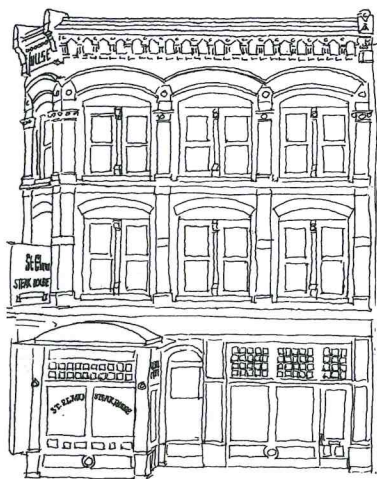
RACHEL ROBINSON INTERVIEW

Rachel Robinson, widow of baseball legend Jackie Robinson, was the guest speaker at Historic Paramount Theatre in Anderson, Indiana, on Dr. Martin Luther King Day, March 18, 1999. Robinson appeared at the request of Anderson native and former Brooklyn Dodgers pitcher Carl Erskine. Erskine was a teammate of Jackie Robinson during the historic 1947 season when Jackie Robinson became the first African-American player in major league baseball history.

Welcome to Anderson, Indiana, for the Dr. Martin Luther King Day city-wide celebration.



The Only
Real
Steak House
in Indy.



A Famous Indianapolis Tradition

127 S. Illinois
637-1811

Robinson: *I am delighted to be a part of the celebration of the life of Dr. Martin Luther King. I was and still am a great admirer of his. He gave a legacy of hope for us to work with.*

We still have a long way to go from the Jackie Robinson era. In your opinion, how far have we come and where are we now?

Robinson: *I think we are talking, now, not about civil rights, but about human rights. When we talk about human rights, the goal is very high and very important. Everything is at stake for all of us. It's not just what's happening to black people, but it's what's happening to our culture, to our society, to the world in which we are trying to raise our children, and to the world we are leaving to our children. If we think in terms of human rights, then we are not anywhere near where we should be. There are still people who are hungry. There are still people who are jobless. There are still people who are uninsured. There are still people who cannot educate their children properly. There are people without homes. None of that should be what we're living with in a world that has the wealth and intelligence and resources with which we have to work. Those resources are not available to everyone.*

Until we get the kind of equity built in so we can say that everyone is under the same circumstances, we have not reached our goal. Now that's a lofty goal, and it's idealistic, and we may never get there. I think that in order to get there, we're going to have to have greater unity between races, between social groups, and between socioeconomic groups. There are so many things we have to work on, but we get distracted. We've been on the rubber band of going forward and having to be alert - vigilant - so we don't go backwards and we don't regress into a former state. I think we have to have

more recruits; more people who think that there is a need for change. There are people who are satisfied with the status quo - people who actually benefit from the status quo. We have to be of the understanding and we have to have the passion to believe our lives are linked.

Coming in to town last night and meeting with the organizing committee, I found the diversity among the people who were organizing this very refreshing and very reassuring. I know you think about Anderson as a small town, but wherever I see a microcosm of a society, I want to see it working and I want to see it working well.

Players experience a certain excitement when they are initially called up to the majors for the first time.

When Jackie was called up, it had to be exciting for him, yet he also had to experience a completely different range of emotions, knowing he would be the first African-American player in the major leagues. Describe what he expressed to you after he found out he would play in the majors.

Robinson: *When he met with Mr. Rickey for the first time, we were not married. We were engaged. I was in California and he was in New York. He did not know what Mr. Rickey wanted to talk to him about, so it was a total surprise that he got this opportunity. First of all, he needed a job. We were getting married and he had come out of the army and he needed a job. It was important from that standpoint. He had not expected that he would get an opportunity in professional sports. There was no model for that (African-American athlete in major league baseball.). So it was risky. The uncertainty was very great. Would he get in? Would he make it? Would he get out of the minor leagues and move into the majors? However, the opportunity was quickly sensed from the way that he and Mr. Rickey were relating in that meet-*

ing. He was going to have a great supporter in Branch Rickey. I think Branch Rickey doesn't get enough credit for his role in the experiment because he has been so caricatured in the media and because he was so disliked by his peers. The forming of this bond with Rickey - entering this experiment with that kind of support - was extremely important.

As you mentioned, Branch Rickey was a great supporter of you and Jackie as he met with both of you privately throughout the season. How supportive were the other players' wives during that first season?

Robinson: That varies. When you go to work you don't necessarily make friends with the people you're working with and their families. It was a working situation, but it was also a social situation - there's no denying that. There were two or three wives who would come forward with gestures and overtures of friendship. Then there were others who would stand by and



RACHEL ROBINSON

observe what was going on. I was more on the observer side as well. I was not going toward them, not knowing what I was entering. There was a hesitation on my part as well.

Much is written today about a lack of minorities in front office positions in

professional sports, particularly in baseball. In your opinion, what types of things can be done to improve the number of minorities in baseball front office positions?

Robinson: They need to recruit. They need to have in mind that they want to recruit African-Americans in the selection. They have to think about ways to prepare them for various levels - although, there are plenty of people who are prepared who haven't gotten placement. They need to create an atmosphere where people feel they can flourish. Not many people are going to deliberately walk into a situation where they feel threatened all the time by the atmosphere and feelings toward them. I think people know what needs to be done, I don't think that the will is there to do it.

Thank you for your time. It was a pleasure to speak with you today.

Robinson: Thank you very much.

BENCH WARMERS IS YOUR TEAM HEADQUARTERS!



Throughout history, sports has played a major role in the fabric of our lives, from the first Olympics to a game of Pee Wee baseball.

Now fortunately, there's a place in town we can all cheer our favorite teams on to victory. Bench Warmers Sports Bar. At Bench Warmers, you can call the plays to your heart's content. And enjoy great food and drinks while you're at it! Next game, "ride the pine" with us at Bench Warmers Sports Bar.

Party packages and gift certificates available.



For People Who Eat, Drink and Watch Sports.

Within Easy Scoring Distance Of I-465
 Holiday Inn Select Airport • (317) 243-1017
 Holiday Inn Select North At The Pyramids • (317) 871-5655