

R

ed Moore believes all the fuss started around 1989, when he received a telephone call from writer/historian Jim Riley. Moore was then 73 and had already been retired eight years. He was living, as he still does, in the tidy northwest Atlanta home he bought in 1948. A longtime Sunday school teacher and deacon for Springfield Missionary Baptist Church, Moore was staying busy and minding his own business when Riley phoned and said he wanted to talk about the Negro Leagues.

Moore's first thought was, "Who is this cat?" and, second, "Why would somebody want to talk about those days after so long?" The way Moore figured, he'd packed his baseball career in mothballs years before and moved on with his life. Moore and his first wife, Mozelle—married in 1941—never had any biological children, but they had raised five in this home, adopting two of them. He worked 40 years as shipping coordinator for an East Point warehouse supplying Colonial, and later Big Star, grocery stores and became the plant's first black foreman

in 1961. Hardly anyone he knew had an inkling he'd been a ballplayer.

But Jim Riley knew. For 35 years Riley, who's white, has both researched and physically tracked down the whereabouts and fates of ex-Negro Leaguers. By his own count he's personally interviewed 175. In 1994, about five years after that first conversation with Moore, Riley published *The Biographical Encyclopedia of the Negro Baseball Leagues*, with its 4,000-some pithy biographies of men who played baseball from 1872 to 1950. Under Moore's entry he wrote: "He was expert at handling ground balls, a master at catching bad throws and making it look easy." Riley describes him as the "most perfect first baseman ever" and says "the slick fielder was quiet, unassuming, and practical."

Moore himself said recently of the encyclopedia, "I was discovered. Or rediscovered. I'm not sure which." In truth, Moore's increased visibility has sprung from more than just Riley and his epochal *Encyclopedia*. Ken Burns' 1994 film *Baseball* sparked a nationwide revival of Negro Leagues scholarship and interest. Moore's own longevity—he turned 90 in November—and relative fitness haven't hurt, either. In any case, over the past decade or so the old first baseman has received a flurry of attention, which reached its crescendo last year with his induction into the Atlanta Sports Hall of Fame, some 58 years after he laid down his glove for good.

MOOORE'S CAREER IN THE Negro Major Leagues was brief, lasting only five years, and suddenly and irrevocably dissolved with World War II. In 1936 and '37 he played for the Newark Eagles, one of black baseball's most intriguing franchises, owned by numbers banker Abe Manley and his attractive, younger (and white) wife, Effa. In 1939 and '40 he was with the Baltimore Elite (pronounced E-Light) Giants, where he roomed with a teenaged prodigy named Roy Campanella.

But his most indelible season was in 1938, when he stayed home and played for the Atlanta Black Crackers. By all rights the 1938 Black Crackers were Atlanta's first legitimate major league sports franchise, playing some 28 years before the Braves moved from Milwaukee. For most of their duration (1919–1952), the Black Crackers were members of the minor-league Negro Southern League. But in 1938, the team changed ownership, hired a number of superlative ballplayers, including Moore, and joined the Negro American League for that season only. After going through three managers in a matter of weeks, owner John Harden gave the job to his spirited, impulsive 19-year-old second baseman Gabby Kemp—"They called him that," Moore recalls, "because he done a lot of talking"—and the Black Crackers won the NAL's second-half championship.

Relatively little is known about that team—Moore is the squad's only surviving member. The Black Crackers played most home games at white-owned Ponce de Leon Park but were prohibited from using its locker facilities and showers. Practices, and perhaps even some league games, were held at Booker T. Washington High School. The team was covered regularly by Ric Roberts of *The Atlanta Daily World*, but hardly a word was written in the three white-owned newspapers of the period, and not much has been written since. It's as if that season were an underground stream flowing into, and swallowed by the more visible ebb and flow of, Atlanta's civic history.

It was around 1938 when Moore became one of the first players ever to wear a batting glove. "I wore it on my top hand—my left hand—because it stung good when I hit an inside pitch," he says. "I just wore an ordinary winter glove, and I cut the finger tips off so I could feel the bat." By season's end Moore was selected to the Southern News Service's NAL All-Star team, and fans even held a special day for him at Ponce de Leon Park, awarding the popular hometown athlete with \$350 worth of gifts and merchandise.

Moore matriculated to Baltimore for the next two seasons, playing for the

team owned by Smiling Tom Wilson, also a numbers banker. One afternoon, after his time in Baltimore had ended, Moore was working out with a city all-star squad at Booker T. Washington Field when he heard he'd been drafted into the Army. Though he didn't know it then, his days in big-time black baseball were over. It was July 1942, and Moore was only 25 years old.

SIXTY-FOUR YEARS LATER MOORE sits in a rocking chair surrounded by 18 kindergarten students who are cross-legged on the floor of their Decatur classroom. After an initial reticence, these 5-year-olds begin peppering him with questions. The effect is one of Moore, settled in the rocker, alert and isolated like a hitter in the batter's box, facing an assortment of pitches, some hesitant and nibbling, some blazing with confidence, and each full of inventive variation.

"You look old," says one student, a boy. "You still play baseball?"

Moore smiles and replies, "I was born in 1916. That means I'm 39 and holding."

A girl wipes her forehead with a precocious weariness before proclaiming, "I've been playing baseball a long, long time! I play for the Cardinals."

"When I was your age," Moore tells her, "boys and girls didn't play baseball together. Matter of fact, blacks and whites didn't play together. We were all segregated, you understand."

"How many home runs you hit?" a boy asks.

Moore gives that low laugh of his and replies, "I wasn't much of a home run hitter. I was a spray hitter, a singles hitter, what you call a hit-and-run man. But one time I hit a home run in a ballpark you might've heard of, called Yankee Stadium."

After the kindergarten talk—Moore probably makes more school appearances than most politicians do—he and I drive to the home he now shares with his second wife, Mary I. Moore. They married in 1991, four years after Mozelle

died from emphysema. Mary, who'd been friends with Red and Mozelle for years, has a wide, expressive face that often flickers between mock severity and maternal amusement. She likes to needle Red about his late-period celebrity. "Lord," she says, "I guess we'll have to get a new house, 'cause his head's gotten too big for this one."

It's a home full of religious icons and family photographs, with one living-room wall dominated by a large, brass-framed oval portrait of Red's father, James Moore II, as a young man, a formal, color-tinted photograph. There is no period baseball memorabilia—publicity photos, scrapbooks, and newspaper write-ups were lost or given away long ago. A sturdy, waist-high table in the

The Biographical Encyclopedia of the Negro Baseball Leagues describes Moore as the "most perfect first baseman ever" and says "the slick fielder was quiet, unassuming, and practical."



dining room holds both an enormous family Bible and a hardback copy of *The Biographical Encyclopedia of the Negro Baseball Leagues*.

Moore walks over to the *Encyclopedia* and pulls out a photocopy of an article from *The Amsterdam News* (New York) dated September 4, 1940. The accompanying photograph is blurry, but a caption below reads, "Red Moore, first baseman of the Baltimore Elite Giants, hits inside the park home run against the Cuban Stars"—this is the Yankee Stadium home run he'd told the kindergartners about.

Returning the clipping to its book, Moore sits down across the table from Mary. Looking at her husband, she says, "Well, he's a good man. Been a deacon a long time, and knows the Bible almost as good as the preacher. So I guess I'll let him have all this attention. I just wish sometime he'd learn how to cook or least boil an egg."

Moore pats his stomach and says, "I do love to eat."

Nevertheless, Moore's about the same size he's always been. During his physical prime, at 5 feet 10 inches and 165 pounds, he was not a large man, especially for a first baseman. He still moves with an ex-athlete's stiff, halting grace. As he walks with his slightly stooped posture, one detects remnants of elegance, of swagger, of indolent vitality—the young ballplayer glimpsed like a phantom within the old body. His hair remains dark and curly and combed straight back. By contrast his moustache is light-colored, with fine subtleties, almost like an impressionist sketch.

He also retains an extraordinary memory for facts. Moore can reach deep into the years and extract names, dates, salaries, and other distinct mileage markers from a long life. In the several interviews I conducted with him over a period of months, Moore's memory was a godsend, not only concerning black baseball but also Atlanta's pre-war black history. Still, elaboration, or extended detail—the actual fruit of those mileage markers—didn't always come so easily. Perhaps this is only natural, since I

enormous
k copy of
da of the
Encyclo-
copy of
am News
r 4, 1940.
ph is blur-
ads, "Red
Baltimore
ark home
"—this is
he'd told

its book,
able from
d, she says,
a deacon
ble almost
So I guess
attention. I
arn how to

and says,

about the
een. Dur-
5 feet 10
e was not
or a first
s with an
grace. As
stooped
nants of
ndolent
allplayer
within the
dark and
back. By
light-col-
most like

ordinary
an reach
ct names,
unct mile-
e. In the
ted with
Moore's
not only
but also
ory. Still,
tail—the
ge mark-
o easily.
l, since I

was asking about events that took place 60 and 70 years back—so long ago that the last juice and sweetness must have been squeezed from them years before. But then something like that *Amsterdam News* clipping, or like returning to a familiar place, would hit Moore a particular way, as rain striking earth, and the rich substance of detail would ripen again.

Moore was born November 18, 1916, in Oakland City, about a mile and a half from the southwest Atlanta neighborhood he calls Bush Mountain.

He was the second of four children—sister Willie was born in 1912, brother Ben in 1918, sister Ruth in 1921—to James and Sadie Moore.

"Daddy was a machinist for the Southern Railroad," Moore says. "He worked for them until he retired. Mama did day work for white families. One of those families stayed on Donnelly Avenue, and that's where we were living when I was born. We lived in the basement of their house. I'm guessing I was born in that basement, but I don't know for sure, and I couldn't tell you where the house is."

Moore was still very young when the family moved to Bush Mountain, into a single-story home at the bottom of the hill that gave the neighborhood its name. It was here Moore grew up and continued to stay, off and on, until 1948. For a while after moving away, he'd return periodically to visit relatives and friends, but gradually everyone he knew left or passed away, and in fact Moore is now the only living member of his immediate family. Sitting with Mary that afternoon at their dining room table, he confesses he hasn't seen the old place in years.

So it happened that about a month later we made the drive to Bush Mountain. On a warm morning just after breakfast, Moore, Jim Riley, Greg White, and I climb into White's van. Having Riley along is a bonus. He lives in Woodstock—he has grandchildren in the Atlanta area—but remains Director of Research for the Negro Leagues



ELITE SQUAD: Moore (front row, third from left) played alongside Roy Campanella (front, third from right) on the Baltimore Elite Giants.

Museum in Kansas City. White, an assistant director of Decatur's Recreation Department, has known Moore since 1991. A rangy, athletic-looking man with a high-beam smile, White serves as informal planner, business manager, publicist, and confidante to Moore, whom he introduces to most people as, "Mr. James 'Red' Moore of the old Negro Leagues."

It is White's idea to stop first at Booker T. Washington High School, which Moore attended from 1929 to 1934. Though we didn't call ahead, he's greeted warmly in the school's lobby, with its astonishing wall-length mural depicting "the dignity of manual labor," painted by a student in 1928. With the mural as his backdrop, Moore receives handshakes from the principal and assistant principal, and the head football coach hugs him vigorously, volunteering to show him the baseball field out back where Moore spent time in the thirties and forties. In recent years, this historic diamond has been spruced up, modernized, reconfigured, and slightly relocated, leaving it mostly unrecognizable to Moore.

A civics teacher implores Moore to speak to her ninth-grade class, and they arrange an impromptu session in a second-floor media room. He talks for about 10 minutes but without the spirited repartee of his kindergarten appearance. These students, with classic teenage cool, regard the old ballplayer as an artifact or a curious museum piece. But Moore, who'd

walked these same halls 75 years earlier, isn't fazed. Likely, it would surprise these youngsters to know this rather smallish man standing before them was once celebrated for his rhythmic flair on the ball field, that in fact he knew a thing or two about style and the upper echelons of cool. Now removing his baseball cap and smoothing back his hair, Moore looks directly at the students and says with a quiet though palpable firmness, "You need the right attitude to reach the right altitude."

We leave Washington High, drive down Beckwith Street, which borders the ball field, then turn left onto Lawton Street. "Man, I haven't been out Lawton in years," Moore says smiling, his eyes intense and watchful. "I walked all the way out Lawton from my neighborhood to get to [Washington High]," he says. "It was five miles. Every day I'd pass the white school, which was called [Joe] Brown School [named for Georgia's Civil War governor] and was only a mile from my house."

We drive down Lawton, turn onto Lee Street, then onto Oakland Drive, where he has us stop near a collapsed warehouse. This corpse-like edifice fronts an extended tract of tottering, leaning trees choked in kudzu and giant weeds. "You'd never know it now, but there used to be a big ball field here," Moore says. "This is where I

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 118]

RED MOORE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 117

first played baseball, when I was about 12 or 13. I played for a semi-pro team called the Oakland City Cubs. I was left-handed, you understand, but in those days you couldn't find a left-handed [first baseman's] glove anywhere, not in my neighborhood. So I took me a right-handed glove, turned it inside out. Made a right good glove. I never had a real left-handed glove until I went professional."

With brief exceptions—some occasional outfielding and relief pitching—Moore played first base his entire career, both amateur and professional. "From the time I was young," he recalled, "everybody came out to observe my fielding. As a little boy I wanted those big boys to throw the ball hard and in the dirt so I could dig it out. Or if we didn't have a ball I told 'em to throw me rocks. That's where I developed my one-hand style. By using just one hand to catch, I could stretch out further and shift my feet faster—for instance if I

needed to catch and then quickly turn and throw to another base."

Nowadays, with gloves nearly as large as condos, the one-handed style is de rigueur for first basemen of all skill levels. But in the 1920s and 1930s it was not only rare and difficult, it was artistically discordant—the way Charlie Parker's solos sounded to Dixieland musicians. Buck O'Neil made this clear when I called him up last summer to talk about Moore. O'Neil was himself a former great first baseman and remained, until his death in October at age 94, the indisputable laureate of the Negro Leagues.

In an interview a few months before his death, O'Neil told me that Moore and Jelly Taylor were the only one-handed first basemen he could recall from that era. He also thought that defensively they might've been the two best, which is saying something. The Negro Leagues, particularly during their heyday of the 1930s and '40s, produced a number of first basemen who blended technical virtuosity with a crisp showmanship. (Goose Tatum, probably the greatest of all Harlem Globe-

trotter basketball players, originated many of his comic routines while playing first base for the Indianapolis Clowns.) Moore and Taylor (the latter also called "Satan" because he "played like the Devil") are variously described in Riley's *Encyclopedia* as "flashy" and "fancy fielding."

Compared to contemporary first basemen, the Negro Major Leagues produced a fairly exotic specimen. Or so it seems to me. First basemen, though often premier power hitters, haven't always been the most gifted athletes. I made this point to O'Neil and immediately regretted it. When I stated that first base is often a home for "mediocre" defense, there was a long silence on the other end of the phone.

"You have to remember, sir," he said after what seemed like forever, "I saw Lou Gehrig play. Nothing mediocre about him. I remember Red Moore and Jelly Taylor, who could pick 'em one-handed. Superior athletes, both of them. I remember Goose Tatum and Buck Leonard. Uh-huh. I remember Buck O'Neil [referring to himself] who, in 1946, made one error the whole sea-



It's never too late!

Flax
DENTAL
.COM

A new smile increases confidence, boosting your chance for success in your life. Let Atlanta's best kept secret bring out the smile you have always dreamed of.

Call us at 404-255-9080 today to schedule your complimentary, individualized consultation. We're passionate about your smile. You will be, too.

"I am completely ecstatic about my smile makeover! It is exactly what I'd hoped for and more!"

MICHELLE SULLIVAN

HUGH FLAX DDS PC

Flax

Dr. Hugh Flax is Accredited by the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry and is a nationally recognized lecturer on cosmetic and laser dentistry.

Atlanta Aesthetic & Laser Dentistry

tel 404.255.9080

ed many
ing first
Moore
"Satan"
vil") are
cyclope-
g."

rst base-
roduced
seems to
premier
been the
his point
retted it.
often a
ere was a
e phone.

he said
"I saw
mediocre
Moore
pick 'em
both of
um and
member
elf] who,
nole sea-

son. Yeah. That's right!" When I later recount this conversation to Moore, I don't think he'll ever stop laughing. "That Buck, ain't he something," Moore says. "You can't slip anything past ol' Buck."

We leave behind Moore's old field and within minutes enter his boyhood neighborhood. Greg White drives slowly up a steep incline, and Moore checks out both sides of the road, called Plaza Street. His face becomes solemn, even a little anxious. "I don't recognize any of this mess," he says. "Except I know this is Bush Mountain. We going up the hill right now—this here is Bush Mountain itself. I don't recognize these houses, though, and these street names are all different."

We turn onto Bridges Avenue and his face brightens. "I know this street—it's named after some black folk named Bridges. I knew those people—they were doctors, school teachers, and big-shot preachers."

We see an older woman working in her garden, bent over, perspiring hard—it's very hot now—and White rolls down his window. "Excuse me, ma'am," he

says. "Howdy? Excuse me!" She turns and blinks but doesn't say anything. "My name is Greg White, ma'am, and I have with me here Mr. James 'Red' Moore of the old Negro Leagues."

After a moment, she says, "Why yes, we stayed next door to Moores for years." She approaches the van, looks in at Moore and says, "Ah, Mr. James. I was just a child when you left home, so you don't remember me. My name is Geraldine Hartnett. My maiden name was Armstrongs."

"Oh yes, I remember Armstrongs," Moore says. "But see here, I can't find my house. I know I'm close, but we've been driving around in circles."

"You been gone a while," she says. "I'll get in there and show you."

Mrs. Hartnett squeezes in back with Riley and me. We drive down the hill, turn left on a gravel road, go one block, turn right, and we are back on Plaza.

"Here you are," she says.

We stare at an impoverished landscape with worn-out trees and grotesque weeds that appear to sprout large cotton balls that, in fact, are wadded-up fast-

food bags. A gaping patch of ground, brimming with foliage gone amuck, is bordered by three abandoned shotgun houses that could be 100 years old, the windows broken or boarded up.

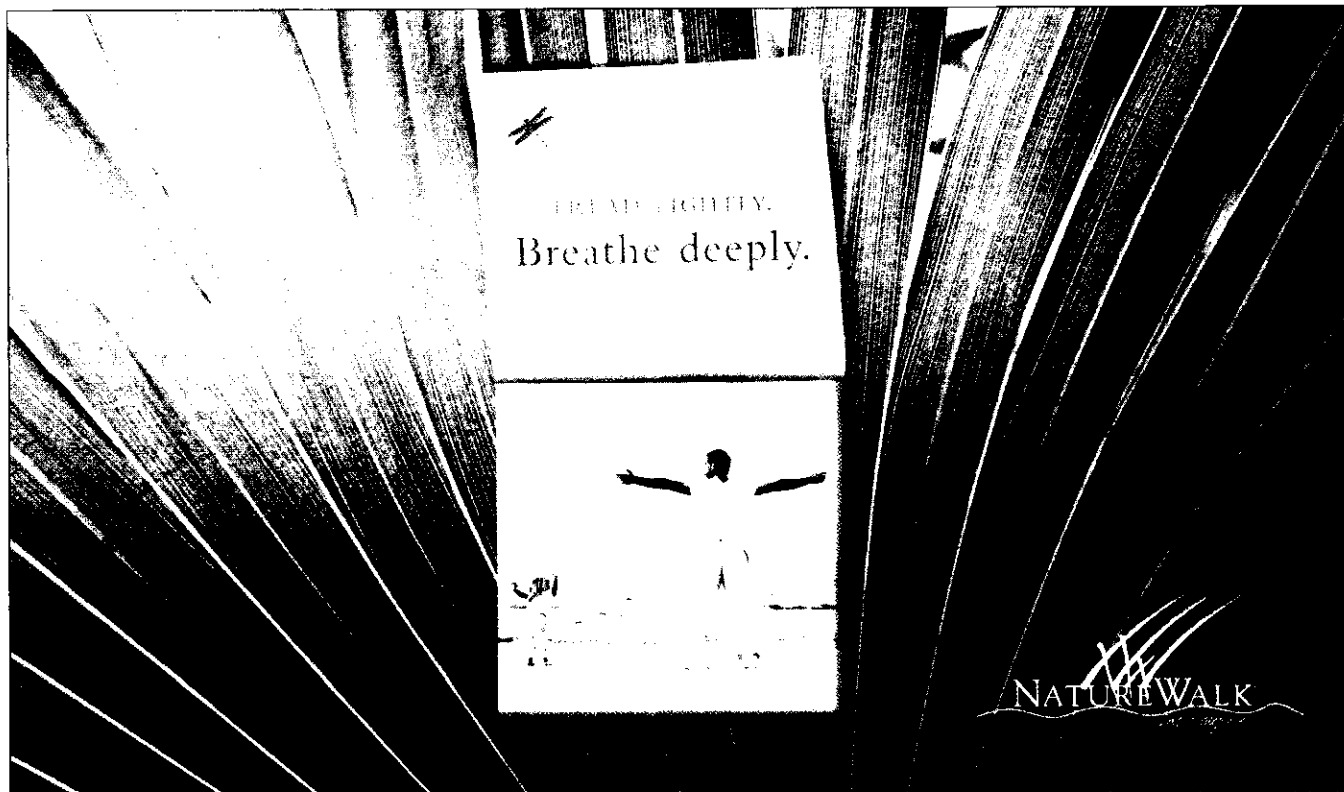
Pointing at the blank patch, Mrs. Hartnett says, "I don't know how long ago it was that your house was torn down, but it's been a long time. This here street Plaza used to be named Bush Mountain, but that was changed I don't know how long ago. Or why. This one house"—she points to a shotgun—"Your aunt used to stay there."

"That's right," says Moore, "but before that my grandmother stayed there."

"Oh Lord," she says, "these houses have been deserted for years. I'm surprised the county hasn't torn them down."

"Yes," says Moore. "Well."

We drop Mrs. Hartnett off, thank her, and she goes back to her garden as we drive away. After a short silence Moore says, "1416 Bush Mountain Avenue. That was my address—it just came back to me. It was a nice-sized house. I wasn't born there, but it's the only house I remember until I became a man."



A community embraced by nature, moments from the unspoiled beaches of Northwest Florida.
Home sites from the high \$200's. naturewalkatcavegrove.com 1.877.628.9255

atic &
lstry
5.9080

EVEN CASUAL OBSERVERS FIND pleasure in baseball's statistical abundance. Each season is an epic narrative of numbers, as individual players accumulate shading, nuance, and emotional resonance by their ever-shifting averages and percentages. Given this context, there's both an ironic and inscrutable aura to the Negro Leagues, whose entire history was plagued by shoddy record keeping. Piecing together Red Moore's statistical profile, for instance, is like searching for his ball field in Oakland City, or his house in Bush Mountain—much has vanished, and only memory remains to provide any detail or interpretation.

After years of poring over microfilm, Jim Riley can construct an approximate career line. "I can tell you," he says, "that the [*Atlanta Daily World*] published [Moore's] 1938 average as .310, second best on the team. But you can't find box scores for all the games, so you can't entirely trust that figure." Riley believes he's giving "a pretty good educated guess" in placing Moore's career batting average between .280 and .300.

Although the *World* often covered the 1938 Black Crackers, at least for home games, there remains quite a bit of mystery and confusion regarding that season, especially its conclusion. Atlanta won the American League's second-half championship, setting up a playoff series against the first-half champion, the Memphis Red Sox, whose first baseman was Moore's defensive rival, Jelly Taylor. In what was likely a best-of-seven series, Atlanta lost the first two games played in Memphis. There followed a delay of several days before the league president made the baffling decision to cancel all remaining games, and therefore no league champion was ever determined. When I ask Moore about all this, he only shakes his head and says, "I can't remember. I remember some about the two games in Memphis, but I can't recall what the controversy and conflict was about. All I know, they told us the season was over and I had to find me another place to play."

Most Negro Leaguers played year-round, joining winter-league aggregations in Florida, or California—where

Moore played—or Cuba and other parts of Latin America. Most, like Moore, didn't make enough during the regular season to take four or five months off in the off-season.

During his time in the Negro majors, Moore earned around \$200 a month, though he jumped to \$250 a month in 1940 during his last season, with the Baltimore Elite Giants. This doesn't count spring training—Negro League teams didn't pay players during the preseason. Players got paid twice a month, and Moore says that during his five years in the Negro Majors he never got stiffed on a paycheck. "I'll tell you one nice thing," he says one afternoon while sitting in his living room. "I now get \$833 every month from Major League Baseball. It's not really a pension—they call it 'compensation.' They started sending that in '97."

Moore played for the Baltimore Elite Giants in 1939 and 1940, then went to spring training with the Giants in 1941. But with war approaching, he worried about getting drafted. Many ballplayers figured that, as highly visible public performers, they were easy marks for the military.

"The whole idea was scary," recalls Moore. "I'm not talking about going to war, either. I'm talking about going into an organization run by whites, with white officers, and white people in charge. We'd heard the stories, true or not, about what white officers did to black folks." During this period he recollects "talking to some people" who advised that railroad and post office employees could get "deferred from the draft." In early June, Moore left the Elites and headed home, getting a job with the Southern Railroad through his father's help. But he hated the work, especially the night-shift hours, and quit after six weeks. Later that summer, in August, he was recruited by Rogers Grocery Stores to work in its west-end warehouse and to play for its weekend community ball club.

He got drafted anyway, getting the news in June 1942 and reporting for duty in October. Moore would stay in the Army three years, including 11 months in Europe, where he joined the 1699 Combat Engineer Battalion that supplied ammunition and food to the front lines. "It was an integrated outfit with all-

white officers," he says. "But one thing I noticed, when we got overseas and they started handing out the rifles, everybody, black and white, became right close.

"So the war ends," Moore says, "and we get on the ship and we're heading back, black and white soldiers, and we were all right, you understand, like a closed fist. We got near New York, about the time where you just make out the Statue of Liberty, and everybody started dividing up. The whites started hanging with the whites, the blacks hanging with the blacks, and I knew then we were back home."

Moore was discharged in October 1945, and that same month Jackie Robinson signed to play the 1946 season for Montreal, the Brooklyn Dodgers' top farm club. Moore was then 29 and hadn't played against top-flight competition in four years, though he fully intended to resume his baseball career.

By early 1946 Moore learned he was now property of the New York Black Yankees. He called the team and asked to get paid for spring training. He and Mozelle had been married a little over four years, and Moore explained that his wife needed compensation for the month they'd be separated during preseason. New York refused to pay anything extra, and Moore promptly returned to Rogers, effectively ending his tenure in the Negro Majors.

While Moore worked for Rogers, he did continue playing baseball for a time, primarily with the Atlanta Black Crackers, once again a minor-league outfit. He played sporadically from 1946 to 1948, mostly on weekends and vacations. Road games were often played against semipro teams in backwater hamlets, far from the big-time of Newark or Baltimore or Harlem's Woodside Hotel.

Larry Williams, who was a teenager living in LaGrange during the late 1940s, remembers seeing Moore play during this twilight phase of his career. "We had a semipro team called the LaGrange City Cats," says Williams, who now lives in Riverdale. "This was probably 1948. When the Black Crackers came to town, us kids would sneak in the park and watch Red. We called him 'Red Mo', as in, 'did you see what Red Mo' did?' Oh, he could really play the bag. He was elegant, man. He was like a Globetrotter,

Single?

We will find
The Right One
for you!



Don't find computers romantic? Concerned about your privacy? Overwhelmed by the thought of sorting through millions of on-line profiles where prospects consistently misrepresent themselves?

There is an easier way. The Right One is a modern day matchmaker. Our clients work with an accessible relationship consultant on an individual basis to help them in their search. We attract intelligent, successful professionals who want more out of their lives and relationships. The Right One's focus is providing compatible introductions. **Producing results is our top priority.**

Right ONE[®]
The Relationship Experts

678-443-9911 | WWW.THERIGHTONE.COM

Locally Owned & Operated • Confidential & Professional
Membership Guarantee • Background Checks for Your Security

BATHTUBS CERAMIC TILE

Repair • Remodel • Reglaze

Don't Let Amateurs and "Fly-By-Nights" Ruin Your Bathroom!

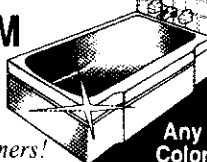
With the Nation's oldest and largest reglazing company you can be assured of the highest quality workmanship and materials.

VISIT our showroom or call for free brochure

UNIQUE REFINISHERS.COM

(770) 945-0072 1-800-332-0048

FAX: (770) 271-1514



We also specialize in pulling moldy/smelly bathtub liners!

Any Color

you know, the way he used to catch the ball behind his back."

Williams didn't personally meet Moore until 1993, during a Little League parade in southwest Atlanta, when he slapped Moore on the back and joked, "Man, I risked life and limb sneaking into the yard to see you play." Williams himself had a cup of coffee with the Kansas City Monarchs, playing center field for manager Buck O'Neil's squad in 1954 and 1955. By then the Negro American League was down to four teams—Kansas City, Memphis, Birmingham, and Detroit—and in irreversible decline.

In fact, beginning the day Jackie Robinson took his first major-league swings—April 15, 1947—the Negro Leagues went on life support. The Negro National League folded almost immediately, after the 1948 season, while the Negro American League staggered along until 1960. "In my finite mind, Jackie Robinson helped some, hurt some," Moore says. "After Jackie, our black leagues faded away. When our best players left for the white pro leagues, then most of our teams couldn't make ends meet. Sure, we had some players in the big leagues, but we didn't have any coaches or managers or front office people up there, and we haven't had many since. Black interest in the game didn't keep up, and over the years many of our people have drifted away from baseball."

SEVERAL HOURS BEFORE HIS INDUCTION into the Atlanta Sports Hall of Fame, Mary gives Red a few oratorical pointers. "Say what's important," she tells him, "and keep it at three minutes. Don't get all wound up, and for goodness sakes you don't have to give the whole history of the Negro Leagues."

That Friday night in June, standing before some 300 people at the Westin Buckhead, Moore says, "I don't think anybody could dream up what my life has been like these last few years. I never thought I'd be called a trailblazer, or a pioneer, or an ambassador for the Negro Leagues. I can't express how much this has enhanced my life, how it has probably prolonged my life, and I thank God I lived long enough to get

to catch the

meet Moore
gu parade
he slapped
d, "Man, I
into the yard
myself had a
City Mon-
or manager
and 1955.
League was
City, Mem-
it—and in

Jackie Rob-
ue swings—
agues went
o National
ately, after
egro Ameri-
until 1960.
Robinson
Moore says.
gues faded
ers left for
most of our
et. Sure, we
agues, but
or managers
re, and we
ck interest
nd over the
ave drifted

HIS INDUC-
anta Sports
y gives Red
nters. "Say
him, "and
on't get all
sakes you
e history of

e, standing
the Westin
don't think
hat my life
w years. I
trailblazer,
dor for the
press how
y life, how
my life, and
ough to get

something out of playing, because so many of us didn't live."

By Jim Riley's estimate, Moore is now one of only "a couple dozen" surviving players from the Negro Leagues' golden era of 1920 to 1948. He is therefore a certified rarity, like a 1909 Honus Wagner tobacco card, or a first edition *Moby Dick*.

But rarity or no, the afternoon following his induction is business as usual. Moore sits at a coffee table inside a Decatur bookstore signing photographs for \$10 apiece and chatting with anyone who wanders over. Children are naturally drawn to him, and when a boy asks Moore when he played, the old first baseman pats the inquisitor on his head and replies, "Young man, I played when only the ball was white."

Later, Greg White, Moore, and I drive to Hillcrest Church of Christ, where White's a longtime member. It is Homecoming Weekend, and we are treated to a lunch of barbecue chicken, baked beans, coleslaw, bread, and peach cobbler. As Moore tucks a napkin into his shirt collar, this seems a good place and time to ask him about the Bible.

"My favorite verse," he says, "is [John 1:1]. 'In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God.' Now, to my thinking that says it all. Greg, the burn on this chicken is perfect. I also like that story about the three Hebrew boys who wouldn't bow down to Nebuchadnezzar and the golden image he'd made. That's in Daniel. My goodness these beans are something.

"So many people misconstrue the Bible," he continues. "They don't realize God loves us all no matter what color we are on the outside. They want to go by the Old Testament, or they want to go by the New Testament, or by this book or that book. I've always believed, and I've always taught, the totality of the Bible. When you start separating things out, that's when you start getting these different denominations. Matter of fact, that's probably where segregation began."

He cleans his plate of everything including the cobbler and then glances at the buffet line. I offer to fetch another plate but he shakes his head. "A man my age has to watch what he eats," he says. "Anyway, I'm just a guest here. Going for seconds, that wouldn't be polite, you understand." ❖

MEZZO
LIFE. CENTERED.

due
maternity

TERRY PARKER'S
HEIRLOOM
IRON-BED COMPANY
Fine Linens

atlanta hot
Yoga

Curves

Punkin Patch

BROOKWOOD SQUARE

• 2140 PEACHTREE ROAD •

CORO
REALTY ADVISORS, LLC