



SOFTBALL PLAYER PROFILE: JESSE WASHINGTON
-by Larry Wolfe

Jackie Robinson....Frank Robinson....Vada Pinson....Curt Flood.... The first two are baseball Hall-of-Famers and heroes of Jesse Washington....the last two were peers who made it to the big leagues. If the times were a little different, Jesse might have been on that list, too. He was an exceptional all-league player in high school at Oakland Technical High, an all-star American Legion player and then he went on to star at Humboldt State College and Oakland Junior College. Jesse then played in the minor league systems of the Cincinnati Reds and Baltimore Orioles. But injuries, unwritten racial quotas in the 1950s and 1960s and low salaries pushed Jesse back to college where he graduated from San Francisco State with a degree in Parks and Recreation Administration.

Like his hero, Jackie Robinson, Jesse was a trailblazer for racial equality and opportunity. During his playing days and his career in parks and recreation management, he was the only African-American to play baseball at Humboldt State, the first to be named a department head in Orange County, and the first to be elected President of the California Parks and Recreation Society. Being “the first or the only one” is never easy, but the lessons of life and religious and moral foundations taught to him by his great-uncle and aunt, who raised him, allowed him to overcome those hurdles and to succeed and prosper.

After over forty years in parks and recreation management in several California cities, Jesse and his wife, Delores, relocated to Sun Lakes in 2005. They were drawn to Arizona by friends and the housing values as compared to California and soon fell in love with the area.

After playing semi-pro baseball, then regular and senior softball for many years, Jesse joined the Sun Lakes league. He currently serves on the Association's Board of Directors and is also a member of the 70+ tournament travel team.

Besides softball, Jesse enjoys traveling with Delores, who is an active travel agent. They're both looking forward to a 21-day 10th anniversary celebration tour of Europe in November. They also enjoy their six children and six grandchildren.

Jesse has two other passions: one is, of course, his beautiful bride, Delores, whom he says "is the best thing that ever happened to him," and the second is singing. He even sang for two years with the San Francisco Opera, where he was on stage with the legendary Leontyne Price and Pavarotti, whom at the time Jesse thought "was really good and might make it!" Today, Jesse is the Director of the Male Chorus at the Gospel "4" Life Church in Chandler.

Jackie Robinson once said, "I'm not concerned with being liked or disliked—all I ask is that you respect me as a human being." Like Jackie, Jesse overcame a lot of obstacles in life and has also earned that respect for his many accomplishments.