

Porter Reed

As an athlete in the Negro Leagues,
he played baseball with the greats.

Chapter 01 - 0:55

Introduction

Announcer: Muskogee, Oklahoma was a major stop on the Negro League baseball barnstorming circuit. As a child, Porter Reed saw the Kansas City Monarchs, Chicago American Giants, Memphis Red Sox and other Negro League teams play in Muskogee during the 1930s. When he became a teenager, Reed played on the local team battling the Negro Leaguers when they came to town. And when the Kansas City Monarchs came to town, he would play with the Monarchs and against them.

During his career, Porter played with the Birmingham Black Barons, the Muskogee Cardinals, the Detroit Wolves, the Houston Eagles, the Minneapolis White Elephants and the Los Angeles Stars.

And Porter played with such famous names as Jackie Robinson and batted against Satchel Paige.

Listen to Porter talk about his baseball career, including the prejudice that followed him during those days.

Porter Reed was 94, June 29, 2016, when he recorded this oral history interview for VoicesofOklahoma.com.

Chapter 02 - 3:31

Porter's Age

John Erling: My name is John Erling. Today's date is June 29, 2016.

Porter, would you state your full name, please?

Porter Reed: My name is Porter L. Reed. I was born in Texas, Windom, Texas, 1923. My family moved to Oklahoma in 1925.

JE: You born in 1923. What's your actual birth date?

PR: Well, my actual birthday was January 21, 1923, 1/21/23.

JE: How old are you today?

PR: How old am I today? (laughing) I'm ninety-three years old.

JE: I read somewhere that said you were ninety-four.

PR: Well, that goes on the record too. The reason why I said ninety-four, back in Texas then they was takin' a census every ten years. Well, my family moved from Texas in '25, we was on a sharecroppers farm, we'd try to get some birth certificates, never got around it. They checked 'em and showed that she had two boys in the '20s when they took the census. One was named Alonzo [*indiscernible*] and Porter. They had the direct dates of the birth but they didn't have the direct years.

And so my school record shows that I'm ninety-four. My army record shows that I'm ninety-three. So I go for ninety-four. I'll take ninety-four—I don't want to go back, I want to move forward.

JE: I thought you'd want to go for the younger age, ninety-three.

PR: No, no, it won't get it. The reason why I don't want to go for the younger age, we got a word on our side, "That chick's too young to fry." I've been turned down 'cause I wasn't of a right age. I'll take ninety-four, so we'll just take ninety-four.

JE: Well, it'll get you into most places, I think.

PR: Yeah, amen.

JE: We're here in Muskogee, and we're recording this in the Three Rivers Museum. We appreciate them giving us the fine facilities for this.

Joining us is a gentleman who has become a Negro League Historian. Jake, your name, please?

Jake Cornwell: Jake Cornwell.

JE: Jake, tell us a little bit about your association with the league and a little synopsis about the Negro League in Oklahoma.

JC: I've been researching this project for about four years now. And I've come to find that we have had African-American Baseball Paid to Play since 1892. So since territorial days we've had Paid to Play baseball. Through all this research I have dug through archives and made phone calls that connect one to another to another, and I end up finding people like Mr. Reed, who can fill in voids within baseball history and Oklahoma history. He played for several teams in Oklahoma, but also played across the country.

So having someone like Mr. Reed with us can paint a portrait of history that has not been archived yet.

JE: Yeah, we appreciate your interest in this and you do much of it on your own, and that's great for the world of history and preserving this story of America's Negro League.

Tell me your mother's name.

PR: Maiden name was Foster. Willie May Reed is my mother's name, Willie May Reed. She was born in 1907. At the time she married my father she was thirteen. And the time I was born, she was fifteen, right around fifteen.

Nowadays, you touch a kid at a certain age, you're boom! You're gone. They have more respect for family ties now than they did then. But as long as you was able to get up twelve, thirteen, work and take care, do this and do that, it was all right. And I was in Texas. You know, Texas is Texas, a big place. We were on a sharecroppers farm.

Chapter 03 - 3:35

Bat Boy

John Erling: Tell us what a sharecroppers farm is.

Porter Reed: You have a boss. It's just like slavery. You have a lot of property on this place and different families and they worked the big farm and everything. At the end of the year, he would give 'em all money to carry 'em over the year and that's called sharecroppin'.

JE: What kind of crop was it?

PR: Cotton and corn, that's all there was back there then, just cotton and corn.

JE: What was your father's name?

PR: John Raymond Reed.

JE: Tell us about your mother.

PR: She always had been a housemaid and everything and she didn't get no further than that. But my daddy, he went to college. My mother, that's all she was, just a housemaid. And when she passed, she was doin' the same thing.

My father went to college at Prairie View and he quit college and married her. But he ended up as a barber. He had a barbershop right here in Muskogee on 2nd Street.

JE: If she was thirteen, how old was he when he was married?

PR: He was born in 1900. He was seven years older than she was. He was around twenty.

JE: What was he like, your father?

PR: He was well educated and he knew how to treat kids and motivate 'em and everything. He was a real good motivator, of course, he was educated. Out of his family, he's the only one that went to college and everybody in the family pushed him. So it was a little distant for him when he quit college and married, but, you know, life went on.

JE: Did you have brothers and sisters?

PR: I had two brothers and one sister. My oldest brother passed and my sister, she passed, and my youngest brother, he passed. My youngest brother went to college in the KU. My sister went to college at Richmond University, and my older brother, he did work for a truckin' company. I'm only the wild sheep of the family.

So they didn't try to stop me playin' sports. My brother, he played football, but me, I stuck with it, I stuck with the sports 'cause I loved it. 'Cause where I lived, about fifty yards or else sixty, was in Brown. The Kansas City Monarchs and all the teams that come here, they would practice right in front of my house.

My third door neighbor was named New Joseph. He played third base for the Kansas City Monarchs. When they practiced there they would come across the street to my house and get water and use the bathroom and everything. It just made it handy. I was the handy boy, you know, like a bat boy? I was gettin' water and gettin' twenty-five, fifty cents, a quarter.

I wanted to be a third baseman real bad when I was a little ole boy. And I would stand behind New Joseph, which was that All-Star third baseman for the Kansas City Monarchs. He'd field 'em groundballs. A lot of 'em he'd just move out of the way and I was caught, you know, tryin' to play third base.

As it was, they had the Negro League, when they come here if they come a day ahead of time, they would end up at my house.

JE: Let me just stop you here, because you were born in Windom, Texas.

PR: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: Why did your family come to Oklahoma?

PR: My mother's family, the Foster's, they all moved to Oklahoma. They did and so we was the last one out of Texas. The Reeds was last, my daddy's family was. His mother had already moved to Oklahoma. Everybody was migratin' north. Good pickin's in Oklahoma.

JE: You were about five years old or so when you moved to Oklahoma?

PR: Yeah, um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: What was the first house you remember here in Muskogee?

PR: When we moved here we moved out to Taft [Oklahoma] out here, with my grandfather. Come from Texas, moved to his house. And we stayed there until we moved to Muskogee, right around the corner, 613 Freemont. And I went to school at Douglas School and Douglas Grade School.

JE: That was your first school, Douglas Grade School?

PR: Um-hmm (affirmative). And it was half a block for me, just across the road.

Chapter 04 - 6:27**Got a Whippin'**

John Erling: What are your first memories of baseball?

Porter Reed: Yeah, I remember in baseball when I was ten and twelve years old 'cause I told you, the Monarchs, everybody was out there in front of me. And on Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, the 19th of June at this park, everybody congregated there. I was right in the middle of the people and everything, so they played baseball, started in the mornin', and drank that good, what I call liquor, and everybody was havin' fun.

Back on those days, if you didn't play any sports you didn't have no girlfriends. That's how they did back in those days and that's sayin' about baseball, anybody wanted to be a ballplayer. And I was right out there. (laughing)

JE: I'll bet you had plenty of girlfriends.

PR: Well, I'll tell you what, it was the 19th of June, had a big picnic in front of my house. That night before—everything was free, whiskey, barbeque, home brew, just everything was free. We young guys, we played first, we played at nine o'clock. When our game was over, the men played. At that time, they was all drunk so they was short of ballplayers. They was short and so they asked me to play with the men. Out of my bunch there was just one or two of us, you know, that was good enough to play with the men.

And I said no. There wasn't about twenty-five hundred people.

JE: How old were you about?

PR: Fourteen or fifteen, somewhere along in there. They asked me to play with 'em and I said no. So they go to my father, which he wanted me to play baseball. That's what he really wanted me to do. And I told him no.

He said, "What?"

And I told him, "No."

And he started at his belt. I'd run out across the baseball diamond. He caught me right around the second base. Downed me and put his foot on my neck and gave me the whippin' of my life over about twenty-five hundred people. Girls ran and all. And the police always be down there, didn't nobody try to stop him.

Everybody wanted me to play with the men. So I got up and they put me in the centerfield. The first ball hit was hit my way. I never will forget it.

Out here at Tallahassee a guy named Ralph Gaines, weighed about 240, he lit it up. And I took it like Grant took Richmond, ease out to me, didn't make me no difference 'cause I was cryin', shamed, and everything. I made about four or five put-outs then, but guess what? We won.

And after the game, people started givin' nickels, dimes, quarters, and one or two guys that had that big money give me a dollar or somethin' like that. When I got through gettin' change and all that I guess I had about eighteen dollars worth of silver and everything.

My mama was workin' and she was makin' two dollars a week. A shave was a nickel, a haircut was a dime. That's what my dad was makin'. And I had all this money that people gave me 'cause I played ball that day.

But behind that, I got change to buy me a pair of shoes and some khaki pants. And just went on from there. And so I been playin' with the big boys ever since. I never did go back with the little boys.

JE: Did you get a hit in that game?

PR: Well, I was the one causin' winnin' the game, mostly, with my defense. Yeah, I must a got a hit 'cause I stole one or two bases. I could steal bases. I had my eyes on that pitcher, if he held his leg a long time I was gone.

Jake Cornwell: Could you elaborate some more on whenever Ralph Gaines hit that ball? Because there was quite a distance you had to cover, correct?

PR: Yeah, I had a long distance out there, but the only thin' wrong in that game—and I knew then like I know now—they didn't have no ground rules. All they had to say was over Billy Boy's own run. You know, they have ground rules, you just run a ball down. If it rolled down it rolled, you just run free if you wanted to but they didn't have ground rules. If they had ground rules it would have been about a five or six hundred feet homerun, we hit it.

JC: (laughing)

PR: When it left his bat I had an idea I could catch it. You see, that's what got me into Negro Baseball League. They go out there and take that battin' practice and everything and those old managers, they'd watch you real close. They'd know then when I first fooled around that I could play defense.

And now, at my age, if a noise make out, I'll jump like that. I did when I was in the army. At the crack of the bat if that ball went back that away I made a move that away, just automatically. If it went over in leftfield or rightfield, it's just a reflex, I just had that reflex.

And all the time I played sandlot baseball and high school and up in Canada, I probably made one or two errors, all that time, made one or two errors. But the point was I'm not sayin' that I was tops and everything but that's what got me through, I knew the game.

They had a thing on TV not too long ago, two teams playin' in the major leagues and they made a decision a team had to turn run on second base, one out. The defending team walked a man that was down second base so it was one out. And double playin' the game it'd be over. And that's what happened. They walked that man and the guy hit up and the game was over. And they asked me what would I do if I was the management?

I said, "I'd a called for a double steal."

“Why would you call for a double?”

I said, “You can’t get but one out when you get a double steal.” You got to run how the steal had a chance to win the game. You understand what I’m tryin’ to say?

JC: I understand exactly, Porter.

PR: It’s the fine points, that’s the fine points of the game. Same play happened last night, a double play, but all they got to do is call a double steal and they could throw the man out at first or they’d still had another chance, just stealing, they had another out and they did that.

And about a week or two later, after I seen ’em up at my house then and everything, I got an eleven-dollar gift certificate.

JC: (laughing)

PR: You understand what I’m tryin’ to say?

JC: Right. We’ve lost small ball. You’re saying that small ball advances the runners, whereas they just concede the two outs.

PR: No, this is what I mean: You got two men on base and one out, one on first and second, and one out.

JC: Um-hmm (affirmative).

PR: Guy hit into a double header, that’s three out. But if they call a double steal they can’t get but one out. They got to try to get the man out at third or second and you still got another out to work with. And that’s my point.

Chapter 05 - 4:30

Nickname

John Erling: You were an athlete in high school; you played football in high school.

Porter Reed: Yeah.

JE: Tell me what position you played and your memories of that. And that was here in Muskogee?

PR: Yeah, it was in ’39, ’40, and ’41. We won the state championship.

JE: What was the name of your school?

PR: Manual Training High School, Manual Training High School Bulldogs. During that time, Tulsa Washington, they mastered us in football. They either had the best team or we had the best team, in the state. But Oklahoma City and Ardmore, well, they won it in ’39, we won it in ’40 and ’41. I wasn’t a first team right halfback but I was a left halfback, but I was second team.

And the reason why I was a second team, they had a boy back in high school, he weighed about 180 or 190 pounds, they called him Truck Hose, 'cause he run like high and, you know, he was hard to tackle.

But me, I weighed about 125. When they opened up them holes in the line, that defensive man, he got to raise up to see where the ball is. He'd raise up to look for the ball, he's open for a block. But if you run low, stay low, and he raise up, you can get through that hole. And that's where I made my hittin' those holes and speed, my speed.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

PR: That's my reason there, that's what got me into high school football. And we won the state championship in '40 and '41.

JE: Were you playing Booker T. Washington?

PR: Well, yes, and we beat 'em.

JE: You beat them both years, '40 and '41?

PR: Um-hmm (affirmative), '40 and '41, uh-huh (affirmative). And I'll tell you another thing in that game in 1940, they had a guy called Dog. He could really motivate. He got this ball and took it down to the one-yard line. Our coach pulled his two main guards out there and put a boy called Fat Hair, see, he weighed about 220, another boy weighed about 240, and put 'em in at a line. It was first in goal, inches, fourth down. It was fourth in goal and they didn't move a yard, not a yard, they didn't move.

The other guys laying there at home block and that whole end. Then they get us the ball and we kicked out on the first down. And that same guy brought that ball right back down there. He did the same thing.

I was on the sideline and as the guy named Ben Phillips, a bootlegger, and he bet five hundred dollars—this is true—he bet five hundred that they don't score. And you'd thought it was a race riot. The reason why everybody from Tulsa tryin' to get some of that bet. The first time he did a five again and it didn't score again.

JE: Hmm (thoughtful sound).

PR: And you know what we did? We got in the same formation and for our fullback, a guy threw a pass to him, he caught it on the fifty-yard line. The next play, the same damn thing about Dumas, Harry Dumas.

Jake Cornwell: Um-hmm (affirmative).

PR: He switched and got on the end because he was a fast, big guy. And the other guy threw this fifty-yard to him and now we beat 'em in only two plays.

JC: Speaking of football, that's how you got your baseball nickname.

PR: Yeah, for Gut.

JC: Gut.

JE: What was the nickname?

JC: Gut.

PR: See, when I'd go through that line I didn't tell nobody but the coach. Like I told you, those guys got to raise up to see where the ball was, them defensive guys. And when they raise up them guys really could block 'em. But I stayed low and scooted right by him.

In 1941, we used to go to on Tulsa, the first two plays. We beat 'em fourteen to thirteen, and this same guy, Dumas, a guy caught a pass but he's out of bounds. Dumas wouldn't tackle if he was out of bounds. He come back in and run a touchdown. Of course, the referee didn't catch it or nothin' like that.

And this guy, Hicks, for Tulsa, run the extra point to tie the game. I was the first one back there and he's just zigzaggin' and he ain't got by me. And when he went to step across and Dumas hit him.

JC: What was Dumas's first name?

PR: Lafayette.

JC: Lafayette Dumas.

PR: Lafayette, Socrates, the Hammerhead. We used to call Lafayette, Socrates the Hammerhead. But I'll tell you what, he really didn't have no reason playin' football. At that age, see, back then they didn't have no age limit.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

PR: And he was old and real experienced and everything. They just called it mature then. But anyway, Dumas hit him, he went straight up and he come straight down. Now he threw the bottleblock on him. Dumas got hurt in that game and as he didn't have no doctor he died from that injury.

JE: Umm (sound of regret).

PR: And just like I told you, he's just like Satchel, he just throw hard at Satchel, maybe hard at—

JC: Satchel Paige.

PR: ...he went with the Memphis Red Sox, that's where he played for the Memphis Red Sox.

Chapter 06 - 5:35

Bat Against Satchel Paige

John Erling: Let me bring you back to baseball at that age, because isn't it true that you hooked up with a baseball team that made a trip to New Orleans?

Porter Reed: Yeah.

JE: And the coach used you as a pinch hitter.

PR: Against Satchel.

JE: Tell us that story.

PR: Now we was in New Orleans and there was a beauty contest. You know, they had a beauty contest, all them girls, you know how they promote 'em. I guess there was about ten or twelve thousand, maybe be more than that at the game. I wasn't even playing. Satchel was. Well, you had to see Satchel's pitch to enjoy him 'cause he was the clown. And he could back it up.

JE: Yeah. We're talking about Satchel Paige now.

PR: He was struck out about seventeen at that game, now 'cause it was a big crowd. And he pitched good in front of big crowds now, he didn't play around.

I was walking through those girls, you know, flirting and goin' on. Reuben Jones our manager, he's the manager of the New Eagles, Reuben Jones.

Jake Cornwell: Uh-huh (affirmative).

PR: He touched me on my shoulder and said, "Get a bat. Just get a bat. I want you to pinch hit." And listen, them teardrops gone in my eye 'cause I knew Satchel. So I got the bat and everything. He said, "Listen, I'm not 'spectin' you to hit him, but what I want you to do is take your cuts." The other guy was lookin' out takin', you know, and Satchel's just blowing that tease to Negros, "You can't mess with these," throwin' that tease to need, I mean, he was gettin' it on up there, he was hummin' it up there again. 'Cause he was the show's show, and everybody was hollerin' for, "Satch! Satch! Satch!"

And so I got a bat up in his name. "I'm not 'spectin' you to hit it now. But I want you to just take your cuts." That's what he told me. And I got started and he stopped me again. Well, this is makin' Satchel mad, 'cause we're holdin' up the game. And he said, stopped me again, "What did I tell you? I told you to take your cuts." That was it.

So I went on and even before I got to bat he stopped me again. And that boy, Satchel, he just hard as mad and he calls and said, "Man, don't take my show away from me." He said, "You just get up there and didn't give this strength to a black kid, it wasn't what it looked like," he told me. "It ain't like he can get it." We called him Slop 'cause he dig in and just like he did and he hit for just doing it."

And so I got up there and, sure enough, I did what he did, and the crowd just, you know, 'cause they loyal to Satchel and everything. Just sure is away from Satchel and then with Reuben Jones, he had on suspenders and house shoes, our manager, that's what he had on.

And I got up there and, sure enough, first one they throw you in the Negro League, the first ball, I mean, guys like me like that, you know where that first one's goin' be, don't ya?

JE: At your head.

PR: Yeah, that's right. Yeah, that's where that first one's goin' be. And you know what the catcher said, don't ya? "Look out!" And all that noise and if you weak you be—but see, I

know about all this stuff. So I got up there and, sure enough, he whipped one through there and I took my cut. And the crowd went wild. Didn't, what no worryin' me, I was goin' hit it. But I was doing what Reuben told me to do.

He stopped the game, said, "Now listen." He called me Muskogee, he said, "Listen, Muskogee, I'm goin' tell you one damn thing. What you do, you can dig in," and he just talked to me like I was a dog, "but it's goin' be a P at the knee." And he hollered, "P at the knee!" And the crowd, "P at the knee!" And that's where he'd throw the bullet.

But I took my cut and I fell down. And I swung so hard and the crowd just went wild. But old Satchel, I didn't hit him. After then, I got him about eight, ten, twenty times, I never did hit him.

JE: You never did hit him?

PR: Um-um (negative). Didn't even foul the ball. He didn't lighten up on me. He remembered that incident down there and he didn't lighten up. The guys hit him but I didn't.

JE: What was his pitch, the fast ball?

PR: Yeah, see, Satchel, you couldn't teach him nothin', he didn't have no pitching coach come out there and want to talk to him. But his location, see, Satchel was real smart. He'd pitch where you'd swung at it but then he had a fast ball and a good curve ball but he knew how to mix 'em up. He knew how to mix pitches up.

JE: So he had a curve ball and other pitches besides a fast ball?

PR: Oh, yes, he had 'em all. The man was he was a natural. You had to see him pitch to enjoy, and when he warmed up he'd get a little old penny match on the floor. He didn't have to have no plate to home, he'd just throw a cap down there, he would warm up. And it didn't take him long to get ready either.

JC: That was the Muskogee team in New Orleans?

PR: No, no, that's what New Orleans Kings was in.

JC: Oh, okay.

PR: Which is, Reuben Jones, they got him from Texas Blacks Riders to managing the New Orleans Kings.

JC: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: Satchel Paige went on and played in the majors, is that right?

PR: Played with Cleveland and [*indiscernible*]

JC: Yeah, he had a long tenure in the Negro Major Leagues. And then also was one of the first to integrate into major league baseball in the American League with Cleveland.

PR: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JC: Another caveat to that is that he was a baseball ambassador for the Tulsa Oilers in the 1970s as a kind of pitching coach and a draw to the ballpark.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

PR: I'm telling you, he knew how to make money. I got with him in Omaha, the Omaha Rockets, he had an All-Star team. They did have a team in Muskogee, he come in and stayed about three days and made money, you know, fishing, you know. He had a guy, Jack Matchen from Kansas City Monarchs, and had another guy from Kansas City Monarchs and we played a number against him and outfielder had to go home and he took me with him, Satchel did, he took me with him. That's how I got to play with the Sats Free] All-Stars.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

PR: I just filled in with the Sats Free All—I wasn't on his team, I just filled in. Just like when the Kansas City Monarchs come to Muskogee, they would let me play. Why? Because they'd come to my beer joint and they was just good to me, you know.

Chapter 07 - 2:26

Bootlegger

John Erling: You just said beer joint?

Porter Reed: Oh, yeah.

JE: What was that about?

PR: That's where all the money was made in the beer joint. You could buy a gallon of whiskey for six dollars and sell it for sixteen.

JE: Did you do that?

PR: I did it for about thirty years. I did it about thirty years. When the state went wet the fellows started cracking down on the bootleggers. Rather than goin' to penitentiary I just quit, and I didn't even start playing baseball, I just quit period.

JE: So were you a bootlegger?

PR: Yeah, I was a bootlegger. Shoot yeah, I was a bootlegger. I could make forty and fifty dollars a day. See, back there then, like this guy Ralph Gaines I was hollering about, he could play with anybody but instead the man making about a hundred gallon of whiskey a week and he sell it for six dollars a gallon. That's six hundred dollars.

Now why he want to go and play baseball and may not get nothin', huh? There's a lot of good guys stayed at home, had good teams like the Tulsa Clowns, Tallahassee, Fort Gibson, they'd beat you. You could play with the Monarchs, they'd play four or five good innings with the Monarchs. I mean, a lot of guys wouldn't quit their jobs and leave.

JE: Why did you continue to play baseball when you could have sold liquor and made more money?

PR: Well, see, I didn't want to go to penitentiary. And I wasn't crazy. I had a lot of sense about it and I joined church.

JE: What church did you join?

PR: I was going to Rayfield all the time but I just got on with Ward Chapel. I was goin' to church as a little bitty boy. Dad was a deacon and Mom was goin' to church. Church wasn't a block from me. Man, you want to elevate yourself and move a little higher, you know, you think about different things like that.

This reason why I quit bootleg, I was marrying, had kids.

JE: You got married?

PR: Oh, yeah, I got married in '43 before I went to the army. Look here, understand this, you married, got kids, and goin' to church and everything and so I quit. I just quit on my own, didn't anybody make me.

JE: Yeah.

PR: I just quit on my own.

JE: How many children did you have?

PR: Nine.

JE: Nine children?

PR: Um-hmm (affirmative). Three dead and then six living. I got six living children.

JE: Did any of them play baseball?

PR: No, I had one boy who was a way yonder better baseball player than I was at my age, but he went to basketball. The reason why he went to basketball, the coach had a son and he was a good buddy and he started staying with the coach. You know, staying over there and they didn't want you to play two sports then. He was a catcher, he's a way yonder better baseball player than I was.

Chapter 08 - 4:33

Satchel the Clown

John Erling: Muskogee was a really hotbed for baseball players.

Porter Reed: About eighteen of 'em went into the Negro League.

JE: Can you name some of them?

PR: I can name all of 'em.

JE: Okay. When you say their name, tell us the position, what was special about them.

PR: Newt Joseph played third base and he played with the Kansas City Monarchs. He come out of World War I. Lloyd Bruce, he was the pitcher. Dan Thomas, the same Dan Thomas, he's all-around ballplayer, first base catcher and outfielder. Trav Taylor, the catcher and third baseman. And then there's Ladd White, he was a pitcher. Dumas was a pitcher.

Jake Cornwell: Lafayette Dumas.

PR: Yeah, Lafayette Dumas was a pitcher. And Leo Sanders, he was a pitcher and outfielder. He played with [*indiscernible*] Birmingham. Virgil Gibbons, he played with the Kansas City Monarchs. He was a shortstop.

JC: Virgil Givens?

PR: Gibbons, he was an infielder and he played with the Kansas City Monarchs. And he finally had to go to the army and everything. And I—how many is that?

JC: Eight.

PR: And myself, Porter Reed. I played with the Houston Eagles. I ended up with the Houston New Eagles, that's who I ended up with.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative). But as a child, baseball teams that you would see, you'd see the Kansas City Monarchs, is that true?

PR: I'd see 'em all come, they all played here in Muskogee. Birmingham Black Barons, the Kansas City Monarchs and Memphis Red Sox, Indianapolis Clowns, and Muskogee was a hotbed, a good place, and they turn out real good. The ballpark right in the middle of town and these guys from Muskogee, Lloyd Bruce and Newt Joseph and Eddie Joseph, you know, they all from Muskogee and everything. And Henry Williams was one of the best—he was next to George Gibson in catching, Henry Williams was.

JC: Henry Flick Williams.

PR: Yeah, Henry Flick Williams. The onlyest thing that George Gibson had on him was hittin'. Now he couldn't hit with George, but I would of said he was a better receiver than George.

JE: Hmm (thoughtful sound).

PR: I would say. Then we had the Gideon brothers, the Big Sox and Little Sox. Luther Gideon, he went to Chicago American Giants and he and his brother.

JC: Claude.

PR: Um-hmm (affirmative). He was a shortstop and then [*indiscernible*]. Then out in fielding first base, just fielding now, you know, fielding, defending, to my idea, and I know baseball real good, back out then, back outfielding, not on first base, not out infielding, I mean, the man was super.

That's the same way about George Gibson, Cool Papa Bell, Satchel Paige, all them guys was natural, you just had to see 'em to enjoy 'em. Just talkin' to 'em ain't goin' do no good.

Now I'll tell you what happened, back in 1946, somewhere along in there, Kansas City Monarchs was playin' the Homestead Grays. George Gibson buckled down there and Dick See. Satchel was pitchin' for the Kansas City, he had one run. And he had Satchel in there. If Satchel could get Dick See out and Buck Leonard out, the game was over with. And the third batter was George Gibson.

Now I told you Satchel was a clown. I mean, a clown, but he could back it up. He walked Buck Leonard and Dick See to get to George Gibson. Buck O'Neil had a fit and Satchel said, "Sit down, B."

And the crowd just, well, I mean, you just thought the world was falling in. He held up his hand—

JE: George—

PR: ..."P at the knee, three." That's what he threwed George and George didn't get his bat off his shoulders.

I seen him bear down one or twice. In Omaha, a guy hit a ball on Satchel and hit the top of the fence and it didn't go over. It hit the top of the fence and the guy didn't even run to first base.

JE: (laughs)

PR: He was so glad he hit Satchel and just, "Oh," well, this guy clowned and turned, he just held up the game. And people hollered.

And Satchel mad and he said to Strow, these are the very words that he cussed and said, "We need to come to the bat." And he'd been fooling around there. He walked everybody, just walked, just walked. And got to him again. Got to him again, and I don't know what Satchel said to him but he walked down to home plate and said something to him. But that's when I seen him at his best.

JC: That was in Omaha?

PR: Yeah, it was in Omaha. And brother, he whupped some, I mean, they talkin' about the ninety-five, but I know, it had to be way up yonder 'cause—but he could back it up. Oh, he backed up all his stuff.

Chapter 09 - 3:40

Had to Be Natural

John Erling: Talking about the Kansas City Monarchs, they were the longest running franchise in the history of baseball's Negro Leagues. J. L. Wilkinson was the first Caucasian owner at the time of the establishment of the team.

Porter Reed: Yeah, real good, man, yeah.

JE: In 1930, the Monarchs became the first professional baseball team to use a portable lighting system.

PR: That's right, carried it around with 'em.

JE: Which was transported from game to game to play games at night, five years before any major league teams did.

PR: Yeah, that's right.

JE: The Monarchs won ten League championships before integration and triumphed in the first Negro League World Series in 1924. They had only one season in which they did not have a winning season. After sending more players to the major leagues than any other Negro league franchise the team was finally disbanded in 1965.

PR: Yeah, that's right.

JE: So they were the greatest in the nation.

PR: Yeah, they was the greatest of the greatest. But the point is, you got to know baseball to enjoy it. I mean, batting practice, infield workout, you see those guys take that infield workout? And that's just as good as the game. See, if I'm not playin' and watchin' baseball I'll be gettin' the fine points, you know. The small things just really won a game for you and stuff like that.

And see, they, they had a guy named Willard Brown, you ever heard of him?

Jake Cornwell: Willard Brown? Um-hmm (affirmative).

PR: Willard Brown? Until that man hit a man far as George Gibson and all of 'em guys. Like this guy I told you in Muskogee, Dough Belly?

JC: Um-hmm (affirmative).

PR: Them guys can hit balls five and six hundred yards.

JE: Did you feel, all your players, that you were as good as the white major league ballplayers?

PR: This is what I thought about the white League baseball players, see, we didn't play unless we was natural, 'cause we didn't have no Minor Leagues. If I'm a white boy and I got the potential, they send me to triple A or double A and develop you. See, if you didn't have it you couldn't play with the colored League.

JE: If you weren't natural, is what you said, right?

PR: Yeah.

JE: If you weren't natural, you didn't play.

PR: You didn't play. You'd play at home in sandlots and stuff like that.

JE: Right.

PR: And now, right now, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rican, Cuban are slippin' in and takin' over baseball. People are not watchin' that real close. But they got camps down in Puerto Rico and them places for those baseball players, and the major leagues is supporting 'em. They good baseball players. I'm not saying they not good baseball players. But now, I'll tell you what the white man is doing, he's getting' down to business and he's playin' the hell out of it too. Don't think he's not. He's getting' down to business 'cause it's a business thing and it's a lot of money in it.

JC: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: What white ballplayers were big at the time that you were playing?

PR: All the—

JE: Joe DiMaggio?

JC: Um-hmm (affirmative).

PR: All the good guys was real good then, they was real good then, but they didn't play it like they should have, you know, like they do now.

JE: Yeah, but the black ballplayers, you felt you were as good as—

PR: They was—now I'll tell you this, in 1930, after World War I, in the '20s and the '30s, Negroes, they was the best baseball players. They was the best! There's no doubt about it. Just like Bob Fella.

JC: Um-hmm (affirmative).

PR: See, he pop up there and he fit right in with them guys, like I'm trying to tell you right now, them guys stayed at home, they didn't go nowhere. They played to show their stuff.

Now you take Bob Fella, he's seventeen, he come out of there and he's hummin' that ball. What else those old Rottam guys at home can do the same thing.

And we had a guy right here named Adam Wright. You heard of Adam Wright?

JC: Huh-uh (negative).

PR: He played with Chicago White Sox, a white guy, real tall, six-six, something like that. He can play with 'em and the way he hit that ball and the way he played, he knew the game and everythin'. The point is, baseball nowadays is up here.

JE: In the head.

Chapter 10 - 9:25

Jackie Robinson

John Erling: According to the records, the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, Kansas City Monarch's Hall of Famers, were Ernie Banks—

Porter Reed: Yeah.

JE: Willard Brown.

PR: Yeah.

JE: You have—

PR: Homerun Brown.

JE: Andy Cooper.

PR: Yeah, that's a big pitcher, big left-hand pitcher, old man. He come out of World War I.

JE: Of course, you've talked about Satchel Paige.

PR: Yeah.

JE: Bullet Rogan.

PR: Yeah, out of Oklahoma City. He threw hard as Satchel and he threw out his shoulder, man, and everything, out of Oklahoma City. Just as good as Satchel.

JE: Hilton Smith.

PR: Yeah, Hilton Smith out of Louisiana. He's a guy had his arm crooked he throw so many curve balls. Hilton Smith, yeah, out of Monroe, Louisiana.

JE: J. L. Wilkinson.

PR: Yeah, J. L. Wilkinson.

JE: And Jackie Robinson.

PR: Jackie Robinson. The one mistake that the Kansas City Monarchs made on Jackie Robinson, one, you know what that was? He didn't have the arm for shortstop. That's why they put him on second base.

JE: He didn't have the arm for shortstop.

PR: Yeah. And the reason why he did so go in shortstop with the Kansas City Monarchs, he had Buck O'Neil at first base. He scooped him and saved him. Those good first basemen, they can save an infielder. But Jackie Robinson is like Satchel, he had it all down pat.

JE: Did you see him in person?

PR: They eat in my house and ate at my table and used my bathroom.

JE: Jackie Robinson?

PR: Yeah.

JE: What was he like to be around? Was he fun guy or—

PR: No, he didn't like prejudices, he was well educated and knowin' he wasn't bein' treated right. But that man talked to him and showed him where he—he could listen. Now you could say, "Now if you do this tomorrow..." let him know he wasn't goin' to stay in the same rut, he would understand. There's a place up there for him. Jackie, he was like Satchel, he was just a natural, he was just a good, natural baseball player.

JE: Was he a standout? Everybody knew that he was really good?

PR: Oh, yeah. You know what he did in football, didn't you?

JE: He played—

PR: With UCLA.

JE: Right.

PR: Now the reason why Branch Ricky got him in 1946, maybe '45, the American and National Leagues had All-Star game. They played in St. Louis and had 34,000 people at the All-Star game. Negroes played in Chicago, their All-Star game, the East and the West, 56,000.

Now right here in Muskogee, they had the Reds, Cincinnati owned the Reds and they was playing C ball. They had a ball game right over here at this civic center. Be three and four hundred, maybe five hundred people. They had six hundred people they had a sellout.

Kansas City Monarchs come here and the game's at night and we had three and four thousand.

JE: So Jackie Robinson then was playing with the Monarchs?

PR: Yeah, he was playin' with the Monarchs. But the point I'm tryin' to show you that the Negroes, see, they stopped pepper ballin', say we hotdoggin' and all that stuff. You know, the Negro put on a show like Indianapolis clown. They wouldn't dare have that in baseball now, Indianapolis clown, they wouldn't allow them in the park.

JE: Do you think you drew more people for some of your games than the white—

PR: Back at then before they took Jackie Robinson we did, I know we did. I'm tryin' to tell you we'd have three thousand. When the Monarchs come in they wouldn't have but seven or eight hundred.

Jake Cornwell: How did the Muskogee Hustlers and Cardinals draw?

PR: The Hustlers drew real good. All them black teams played in Muskogee drew good. Tallahassee come up here and played Muskogee they had a good crowd.

JC: Did they play exclusively at Douglas or did they play in Athletic Park too?

PR: They played in Athletic Park.

JC: Okay.

PR: They just practiced down at Douglas. The 19th of June or something like that or—

JC: Nineteenth of June, you mean Juneteenth, correct.

PR: Juneteenth, yeah, game like that, Fourth of July, like this park was occupied by Muskogee, they played down on Douglas school grounds and stuff like that. And people didn't want to come see it free down there, see the same thing free. Everythin' was free. Hotdogs, free hamburgers, free liquor, free homebrew. They just havin' a good time. You're not goin' to top baseball, I don't care how good a football team, you're not goin' to top it. This is number one sport, that's where all the money is, all the money is.

JE: You mentioned Jackie Robinson and prejudice. Did you feel prejudice here in Muskogee?

PR: There's still prejudice in Muskogee.

JE: But did you feel it then in the—

PR: Yeah, you could feel it. I remember a time in Muskogee, blacks couldn't go across Main Street to the east side unless they worked over there. And when a policeman arrest you in Muskogee you didn't give no sass, you'd get your whupped. I mean, get it whupped.

I'll tell you this now, you just listen then, Tulsa is prejudiced. They open with theirs, Muskogee is sneaky, I mean, it's sneaky. They's things goes on here you wouldn't believe, right here in Muskogee after eleven o'clock at night, 'cause our downtown has moved out.

The mall moved out downtown. After eleven o'clock, the policeman see me riding in a car, he's goin' to stop me. If I don't have no excuse, I'm goin' to jail. You think, after eleven o'clock there's nowhere to go, where you goin'? Huh?

You listen to this now, you're not goin' change things. As long as there is a world there's goin' to be prejudice. You read the paper and everythin', you know what they done over there in Syria? They couldn't beat his head off 'em, shoot 'em and kill 'em. That's all over the world. You overlook stuff like that, that's the reason why you go to church and listen to preachers, just read the Bible and everything. They've been killing ever since there's been a world. Don't worry about a little thing like that.

You try to live your life, try to get along with your fellow man, try to raise your family, you try to do right. You see, I ain't been around here a long time for nothin'.

JC: Right.

PR: I know when to hold 'em and know when to fold 'em.

JE: Did many whites come to the black baseball games?

PR: They took a poll. You had to—if you didn't go down there and get in your seat, they took off all the footballs games and all. They had the grandstand first. In 1946, and Tulsa Washington had a super team, Muskogee had a double super team. We had about sixteen thousand people at the ballgame. They had a big shootin' there. All the Negroes on the sideline walkin' around sayin', "The white folks sittin' up in the grandstands." They had the seats. Didn't nobody care, they didn't want to be up there with 'em no way.

JC: You told me an interesting story one time about whenever the Negro League team would be playing at Athletic Park that segregation was interesting for athletes because as long as the white person got the seat then a black athlete could sit next to a white person. Correct?

PR: Oh, yeah. It's always been like that. If you get a seat out there they didn't do it but they got in the seats ahead of preferred seats, nobody asked you to get up and sit down, nothin' like that then. It was on the city bus you had to go to the back, until they stopped it.

But at the ballgames, they didn't pay it no mind. At all the ballgames, they didn't pay it no mind. They had the preference of a seat and most of all of 'em, they wanted to get down, walk around the sideline and show they clothes and drink they whiskey. It's just different strokes for different folks.

JC: Right. You said at the ballpark that the race thing was out. You had told me that previously, correct? That as long as the white person got their seat the race thing was out because you guys could sit—

PR: Oh, yeah, that was over with and everythin', if you got a seat that was over with. At them ballgames, all them things, football and baseball, it was over with.

JE: Do you think you got respect from the whites because you were a good athlete, you were a good ballplayer?

PR: Well, I was recognized by certain people. The only way I get recognized in Muskogee now and then is the people that knew the game.

JE: By the way, what positions did you play?

PR: I didn't play no nothin' but centerfield, that's all.

JE: Centerfield?

PR: Um-hmm (affirmative). That's all. Now when I was with the New York Eagles I had to play rightfield because they had a guy named Wilkes that went with the Dodgers and Johnny Digs, all them guys, I was just a substitute when I was at Houston Eagles.

Big Harvey wasn't no way anyone was goin' touch him, he weighed 280 and he'd run about 400.

JE: Tell me about Newt Joseph, a great third baseman.

PR: Super, he was built for a baseball player 'cause when he put on the uniform his legs are bowed. Newt Joseph, he was just built for first base.

JC: He was kind of stocky.

PR: He real stocky and he can get them low balls.

JE: He had a lifetime average of 335?

PR: It may have been a little better than that. They wasn't keepin' records that good. They just guessing at a lot of records.

JE: And you saw him play?

PR: Oh, yeah, I [*indiscernible*] for him.

JE: William Redus.

JC: Frog.

PR: Yeah, Frog, yeah. He managed Chicago American change. He took a lot of guys from Muskogee up there.

JE: He was an All-Star in '36 and '37.

PR: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: Three hundred hitter.

PR: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: How excited were you when Jackie Robinson in '47 broke the color barrier in the major leagues? Was that pretty exciting for you players?

PR: No, it wasn't, it wasn't exciting to the Negroes. Whoever hurt us, our crowds, people stopped and they wasn't watching the [*indiscernible*], that's when you realized what was goin' on. The first two years it didn't make us no difference.

JC: Oh—

JE: But weren't you excited that blacks were going to begin—

PR: No, no, no, no.

JE: Why?

PR: 'Cause all this shit already been there.

JE: Yeah.

PR: 'Cause all this shit already been there. To the ballplayer, it wasn't excitin', but if you wanted to be a ballplayer and wanted to get there, then it was excitin'. 'Cause you could look at a guy and tell, "Shoot, I could do that, I could beat that—"

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

PR: "...and do this and do that and everything."

Chapter 11 - 5:00

The Word Prejudice

John Erling: December 7, 1941, Pearl Harbor, you were nineteen years old. Do you remember that day? Remember hearing about it?

Porter Reed: Yeah, there was talk everywhere about it. See, we just got through beatin' Tulsa Washington and we played St. Louis Exhibition game at Saturday before then.

JE: This was Sunday.

PR: And we played the football game that Saturday, right after Thanksgiving. We beat Tulsa Washington on the 27th of November. Then that next week we played that team out of St. Louis. St. Louis had an All-Star team and they came down here and played us 'cause we had a guy that stayed about three or four doors named Buddy Brown. He was teaching school up there and he negotiated a game. We had a good team and they had a good team. They beat us nine to seven.

JE: What do you remember? Did you hear it on the radio? How did you—

PR: Yeah, yeah, well, see, here then, we used to have a newspaper called *Extra! Extra!* You know, they'd print a newspaper right then and everybody would run all over town tryin' to find out what the news was. It was big news down here, it was real big news.

JE: Did any of your family join the army then in '41?

PR: No, no, no, I went in the army in '42 and my two brothers went to the army. My youngest brother and my oldest brother and myself, we all went to service.

JE: In '42? Where did you serve when you were in the army?

PR: When I went to the army I served at Jefferson Barrack in St. Louis and I served down in Florida and I served in Virginia. And I went overseas, Hawaii, and then I went to Balasio Island, the Saipan, and Okinawa.

JE: Did you have any prejudice in the army?

PR: That's all that it was, it was prejudice. Look here, you just forget about that word

“prejudice.” ’Cause you ain’t goin’ make nobody like you and that’s the way it was and that’s the way it was brought up like that. They come here as a slave, this is hard to change. It still goes on but in a different kind of way.

Look at the thing with the police that shoot guys in the back and kill ’em for nothin’. People killin’ people and for nothin’. You ain’t goin’ stop nothin’. And me, I, I don’t use that word “prejudice” no more, ’cause like I say, I know when the old one—I know how far to go with a man. I know when it’s gettin’ out of line when I run a joint. See, I run a joint for about thirty or forty years. And people’d get drunk in some other place and come to my place.

JE: What was the name of your joint?

PR: Just Reed’s, just Reed’s Tavern. It wasn’t nothin’ but a tavern. Mostly it was gamblin’ and sold homebrew and whiskey.

JE: Did you make a lot of money in that beer joint?

PR: That’s where all the money was.

JE: Yeah.

Jake Cornwell: What kind of gambling went on?

PR: Dice and cards. It good money. There’s still good money out in the world. What do you think people fool with this dope for and all that stuff? It’s still good money there. But I wouldn’t fool with it.

JE: Did you play baseball in the army?

PR: Oh, my best baseball playin’ was in the army, on Saipan. I was All-Star centerfield on Saipan. Yeah, that’s where my best baseball playin’ was in the army.

JE: So from ’42 to ’46 you were in the army.

PR: Um-hmm, um-hmm (affirmatives).

JE: When you came home, you told me not to use the word “prejudice” I guess.

PR: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: Racism, did you feel racism when you came home from the military?

PR: Oh, yeah, it was here then. It’s not goin’ to go away, so you might as well forget about that, that’s not goin’ to go away.

JE: Yeah.

PR: That word is there to stay here. The reason why I said that, they not choosing people, that’s happenin’ everywhere. There’s things that happen in New York and St. Louis, it’s a lot of blacks don’t like blacks. Can’t stand ’em, and kill ’em quicker than white men’d kill ’em. You got to know how to deal around those, you know.

JC: Porter, can you tell him about when you played in Arkansas? Tell him about just some of the experiences that you had in Arkansas?

PR: Oh, I had some bad experiences in Arkansas. See, Fort Smith had a real good colored baseball team. We could beat Fort Smith. Fort Smith had some good baseball players

down there, that's where the Gideons come from. Luther Gideon and his brother come from Fort Smith.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

PR: Well, anyway, I remember one time in Green Forest, Arkansas, the scores was eight to nothin', favor of Green Forest. It was in the ninth inning, and we was battin', and I went to the dressin' room and changed my clothes, and they say, "Hey, hey, Porter, it's your bat!"

I said, "It's my bat?" I said, [*indiscernible*] and I went out there with my own pants, dressin' to get my pants on to go out there and my shirt, and that's I put on, and my shoes.

They had a guy, he really had a real good curve ball. I think I struck out two or three times. And this same guy was out there. The guy threw me a ball and I hit it and the reason why it didn't go to the fence, it just hit the top of the fence, and, well, anyway, we beat 'em.

JE: Hmm (thoughtful sound).

JC: This was a black or a white team?

PR: White team, we beat 'em in it. And I, I was coming around third base, and he said, "I told you that nigger's goin' get that ball!" And then two guys fight (laughing), they're winnin' and everything. But there was some good teams in Arkansas. I played one or two exhibition games against Dizzy Dean down there.

See, if you could play at home you could make a little money, but goin' away, you didn't make too much money.

JE: You said Dizzy Dean played?

PR: Yeah, you know, they had the All-Star team, Dizzy was in that.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

PR: Anyhow, the season was over.

JE: Yeah.

PR: Yeah.

Chapter 12 - 7:59

'Round the Clock

John Erling: You joined a barnstorming Negro League, didn't you, out of the army? The summer-long league started in Houston and on to Chicago and to New York?

Porter Reed: What we called "'round the clock."

JE: Around the clock?

PR: Yeah.

JE: Tell us about that.

PR: Well, see, we'd leave Houston and go to Beaumont, [*indiscernible*], come on up to Dallas. Leave Dallas and come to Oklahoma City, leave Oklahoma City and go to Wichita, and [*indiscernible*] and go on into Chicago. Leave Chicago, go to Terre Haute, Indiana, and go on down to Philadelphia and Pittsburgh and New York. Come on down to Washington, DC, on down till we get to Atlanta. And come on to Atlanta, come on across back in Birmingham, on back to Houston. Because it took thirty days to do that we called it "round the clock." They made that 'round the clock.

JE: Did you play many games in one day?

PR: Oh, we played so much as three games in one day. That's how Reuben Jones, my manager, got fired. (laughing) That was what we'd do, start at twelve o'clock and play a doubleheader, then we'd play a twilight game at night, not that same town, but thirty or forty miles away. Wouldn't be tired or nothin' like that. If you're in condition it's a lot of fun. *If you wanted to play baseball.*

JE: Did you get paid?

PR: Oh, yeah. The Negro League paid pretty good, the Negro League did.

Jake Cornwell: Tell him about how Reuben got fired though, because of this tripleheader.

PR: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: And tell us who Reuben was again.

JC: Reuben Jones was a manager.

PR: Manager of New York Eagles. He was the manager at famous Dixie Black.

JC: Out of Minneola, Texas.

PR: Yeah, uh-huh (affirmative). Yeah, he played baseball, then he went to Newark Eagles. We played a doubleheader in New York and come on down to somewhere in Delaware and played that night. Well, they didn't turn the taxes in for at night game. They'd been keepin' that money and they put that big bill on Miss Effa Manley there, that big bill on her, you know, where it showed back taxes? And talking about doing something to the club and she found out they was keepin' that money.

JC: Effa Manley, the wife of Abe Manley who owned the club.

PR: Uh-huh, uh-huh (affirmatives). Yeah. And he found out he's keepin' that money. There was a lot of crooked stuff goin' on. 'Course, I got a crooked deal in.

JC: So Reuben essentially just took all the money from the third game.

PR: The third game wasn't never played in Newark, as far as they concerned.

JE: Hmm (thoughtful sound).

PR: They took it all, him and Mitchell [*indiscernible*], the secretary took it all.

JE: And this 'round the clock, you probably slept in the bus?

PR: You slept in the bus wasn't no 'round the clock league. (laughs) If you had to ride, you had to ride a pretty good ways. You slept on it. They gave you seven dollars a day eatin' money.

- JE:** But you slept on the bus, hardly ever stayed in a hotel.
- PR:** Hardly ever, see, you got seven dollars a day—two dollars for sleeping money, and the rest five dollars eatin' money. They gave you that.
- JE:** Speaking about eating, weren't you refused service in many restaurants?
- PR:** Oh, yeah, a whole lot of 'em. A lot of people, they just didn't want to fool with you.
- JE:** Where did you buy your food if they didn't want to fool with you?
- PR:** You can bought it at grocery stores and you go to the back door, said to eat in the kitchen, they let you eat in the kitchen and stuff like that. They sell you sandwiches. They'd sell it to you but they didn't want you eatin' in the front, they didn't want that.
- JC:** Didn't you guys have a network where you knew someone else in another city that could help you get through to the next city?
- PR:** [*indiscernible*], that bookin' agents down in McKenna, Texas, he had it down pat. Clingon.
- JC:** Mansell Russell? He was a booking agent for the Muskogee Cardinals?
- PR:** Yeah, but they all had to come through Clingon.
- JC:** Okay.
- PR:** He booked it all for the Kansas City Monarchs and everybody. He had it sewed up. And, see, a lot of guys didn't give those booking agents that money.
- JE:** Um-hmm (affirmative).
- PR:** You know, he got part of it but he didn't get it all. Then he'd catch up with you and get you to get his back money. It was really tough back out then. That money, it changes a whole lot of things.
- JE:** One time the team called ahead to pick up food from a diner?
- PR:** We called ahead and we in Iowa somewhere, I think it's Des Moines. We played a game about thirty miles away, and we called and ordered dinner for fifteen or twenty. The guy had the table set in the front of the café, this long table for the ballplayers.
- We got there, till he found out we was black. "No, ain't no nigger comin' my joint." And got his shotgun. And took that same food that he had up there and threwed it out in the front and turned and brought three dogs loose on it.
- JE:** Oh my.
- PR:** And so another man across the street had a grocery store, he said, "Sure enough, I seen it, nothin' we can do about it." And we bought all his baloney and crackers and things right then.
- JE:** How did that make you feel?
- PR:** It didn't bother me.
- JC:** You were used to that kind of treatment.
- PR:** Yeah, and it didn't bother me. See, I got it when I was in the army and got here.
- JC:** Yeah.
- JE:** But you were heroes to your race, you were treated as celebrities among blacks.

PR: Yeah, you know, if you liked football and baseball and things they treat you real nice. Like right now.

JC: Well, and you ran with other celebrities too, like jazz musicians, Jay McShann and—

PR: Yeah, Jay McShann, he's right here. He was born out there on 19th Street. Jay McShann, all them guys, all them guys knew me because mostly here after the game we had a dance. The game's over about ten o'clock and they have a dance ten to two. We knew each other and sometimes we traveled on the buses together. You know, you rent a bus—now you go to Fort Smith, we wasn't only a baseball team 'cause we was renting a bus and the band and the baseball team go together. We'd rent a forty-passenger bus and go down there together.

JE: Did you know Marques Haynes?

PR: Did I know! I got a picture of Marques. He drove to Sand Springs and his brother-in-law was my school teacher. He could dribble.

JE: Yeah.

PR: Yeah, I knew Marques Haynes real well. I think he died down in Ardmore or somewhere down in there.

JE: Yeah.

PR: He's from Ardmore but he over in Sand Springs.

JE: He grew up there, right?

PR: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: We have interviewed him elsewhere on this website, so you can listen to Marques Haynes. Did you ever come across Jesse Owens?

PR: Yes, I come across Jesse Owens once or twice. I'll tell you why they puttin' on them shows and pulled a game he had with a little track and meet and everything. I used to try and get in those track and meets but they were too swift for me. I slowly walked away.

JE: How about Joe Louis? Did you ever meet him?

PR: Yeah, I was in army with Joe Louis.

JE: In the army with Joe Louis?

PR: Yeah.

JE: Tell us about that.

PR: Well, Joe Louis, he wasn't an educated man. It was pitiful the way he come up. Well, he was a robot. Tell him everything and he knew how to follow instructions, but he's one of them natural.

JE: Did you meet him in the military?

PR: Yes, see, he married a girl from Boley, Oklahoma, over here. One of them Trotter girls in Chicago, that's who he was married to, a woman from Boley. And I knew Joe Louis. I used to write his letters for him, you know, when he was in the service.

JE: Did you like him? Was he a nice guy?

PR: Yeah, a real nice guy, he didn't bother nobody. But they shouldn't of sent him to the army. I mean, it's pitiful the way Joe Louis got treated, it's pitiful. They hollered about Mohammad Ali and everything, but to my idea, he couldn't touch Joe Louis. Couldn't touch him.

I got a chance to see him fight one time. The guy was named Tamokle Morelli, I think that's what his name was. This guy hit Joe Louis and knocked him clean across the ring. I mean, hit him, and went over there to finish him up, but Joe Louis had a guy in Blackburn, he's the manager, he tell Joe Louis to knock him out. He tell Joe Louis this, Joe Louis could do.

And this guy run over there and Joe Louis just wandering, he's out, I mean, he could do things like that but he's really good. Joe Louis is real good. Just like I'm telling you about sports and that, what I'm telling you some things you'll write and scratch out, but you got to know sports. Any sports writer should know what a person's talking about and then able to write.

I shouldn't be able to surprise you with nothin' in sports. You just want to know the facts and that's all. You understand what I'm trying to say?

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

PR: Now Muskogee had a real good sports guy here, could really write it up, but he died. But he was a good guy. He'd follow you around and bring the facts to you.

Chapter 13 - 3:36

Major League Tryouts

John Erling: You and other black players, you got tryouts with the major league clubs?

Porter Reed: Oh, yeah. I had tryouts with Atlanta Braves. Went down and played at Leavenworth for about two or three days up there at Leavenworth. I've had a whole lot of tryouts but to see the point that people didn't know, my age caught up with me.

JE: So you would have been how old when you got your tryouts?

PR: Oh, I was in my late twenties, early thirties. They had trials here in Muskogee and I would come. Cincinnati Red ahead of me all the time 'cause he had a manager here all the time. And he had already recommended me. It didn't do too much good 'cause them boys was seventeen and eighteen and I'd been playing baseball ten years.

And out in California, I went out there to a funeral and it's a guy from here that was managing a team out there. I used to talk to him a long time. He said, "Do you think you

could still play baseball?" He said, "Yeah, I'm goin' to slip you into one of these games, let's see what you can do. I've been talkin' about you in Muskogee and braggin' on you how I'm goin' to see you."

And I was almost seventy-two years old.

JE: Oh.

PR: But team he had out there, see them guys in Class C and Class D and A? They don't want 'em to throw curve balls. They don't want 'em to hurt your arm before you get up. Guys throwing fast balls.

JE: Yeah.

PR: All they do is step in and hit it 'cause, you see, baseball's always been easy for me, now I'll say that.

JE: You played for the Birmingham Black Barons?

PR: They was in the same league that I was in.

JE: Did you play for the Muskogee Cardinals?

PR: Yeah, I played for Muskogee Cardinals and Muskogee Hustlers.

JE: Detroit Wolves?

PR: Yeah, I played Detroit Wolves.

JE: The Houston Eagles?

PR: Yes, last team I was with, the Houston Eagles. That's Newark Eagles and they moved to Houston.

JE: Yep.

PR: You understand?

JE: That was in '49 and '50.

PR: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: So when you were playing for the Houston Eagles you were twenty-seven and twenty-eight years old.

PR: Um-hmm (affirmative).

JE: You had a good team then?

PR: They had a good team. (laughs) The Newark Eagles, they done won the championship once. That's where Larry Doby, Monte Irvin, and Campanella, and Don Newcombe come from.

JE: Tell us about those people. Roy Campanella, were you around him?

PR: I just around him, uh-huh (affirmative). He was a real good pitcher but he got killed, you know.

JE: Yeah.

PR: He had a wreck. He was real good. When Campanella was playing with the Dodgers, see, they get ready to pull the pitcher, if he didn't get orders in, pull him. People didn't know that. He'd go to that dugout and warm somebody up, that's what he would do.

Jake Cornwell: But he wasn't playing with the Eagles at that time—

PR: No, he was with Baltimore Elite.

JC: ...he had already gone on to play.

PR: Campanella wasn't done. Newcombe went to the Eagles.

JC: Ah.

PR: And Larry Doby and Monte Irvin.

JC: But they had already gone on to the major leagues—

PR: Yeah, yeah.

JC: ...whenever you played with the Eagles.

PR: Yeah, they was leavin', that's how I got a chance to play with the Eagles, 'cause Doby, Monte Irvin, and all them guys was goin' to the big league and they had plenty of openin's, that's how I got to go. It wasn't that I was that good, I was good enough to play with them, you know, to fill in. You know, they got rid of Doby and Monte Irvin and that knocked the plug out of 'em. And Johnny Davis and Rufus Lewis and Max Manning, that's one of the best pitchers in baseball. Well, they got rid of about seven guys at one time.

JE: You played for the Minneapolis White Elephants?

PR: Oh, I didn't play long. That was with Sad Sam Jones—you heard of Sad Sam Jones? Sad Sam Jones?

JE: Sad Sam Jones? Yes.

PR: He flew through the corners and he—

JE: Tell us about Sad Sam—

PR: ...I say that's who owned that. I just stopped through there and played a few games with 'em.

JE: Los—

PR: I was headed back to Muskogee.

JE: Los Angeles Stars?

PR: No, they had me mixed up with the Los Angeles Stars but I don't know why.

JE: Okay. And you played in Canada, didn't you?

PR: Oh, yeah, I played in Canada. I went up there with the Houston—that's when I went up with the League and All-Star. That's where I got my League and All-Star there.

Chapter 14 - 4:13

\$187 a Man

John Erling: One time you were playing a tournament, they announced the winner would get \$187 a man.

Porter Reed: I'll tell you what, that was in Arkansas. The winner would get \$187 a man and the

loser would get less. We was in the head, we had them beaten. And they had a guy named Jake, he was a very big guy and he could hit that but he was deaf and dumb.

Jake Cornwell: He was deaf and dumb?

PR: Yeah. He was kind of like a mummy kind of like guy but he could hit that ball. (laugh) Sure enough, they got down to him and what they did, they got some men on base, which would have been the winnin' run, and they put Jake up to bat. And according to the score card it wasn't his bat. He'd already batted. But they argued around there and finally said, "Well, we just have to call this game off and try to settle it tomorrow."

And we had a guy, Dan, he's raised all—

JC: Dan Thomas?

PR: Yeah, he raised all kind of hell. And Dan kept scores real—Dan was a good baseball man. That holding that \$187 up and he decided to let Jake go ahead and bat.

Jake got up there to bat and, I mean, they was woo, that crowd went wild. They let Jake bat and the crowd didn't know what was going on.

Sure enough, and I told that guy, I went up there and told him, this is Ladd White, I told you, a guy playing for Red Rock, I said, "Ladd, don't throw Jake nothin' low," 'cause he was an upper cut hitter and he was sixty. I said, "You pitch high to Jake, pitch high to Dinger, don't throw him nothin' low."

And I told that catcher, 'cause me and Trav, we all three from Muskogee, we all went to that event. And Trav say, "I told him don't throw nothin' low."

And sure enough, he got up there, and the first ball Jake hit was a foul ball and it went fifteen miles, I guess. He could hit, now.

So Ladd got him on up there and Jake lit it up. He hit it but it was high. And it started up, I knew I could catch it. The crowd went wild. And I stopped running, like I told you, I didn't have no ground rules. If you had ground rules that had been it. And I run and I stopped and it got real quiet.

At first when he hit it, they was hollering. Got real quiet. And I caught that ball. Boy. But the point was, if it had ground rules we'd a got pushed out of there.

JE: When you were running for that ball you were thinking of \$187, weren't you?

PR: No, I thought about that when he left to bat.

JE: (laughing)

PR: Look here, I started not to move, but what made me move was the ground rules. See, back out then, I told you my mama wasn't makin' but \$2 a week. My daddy's haircuts are nickels and dimes and pennies. And that's a lot of money. (laughs)

But anyway, when I stopped, the crowd got quiet. 'Cause I made many, many good plays down that town for them not to know me.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

PR: They know that's the reason that—lots of old, real old, real old white man he say, "Hey, boy." And I stopped. And some old white people say, "What you got to say to that nigger?" He said, "I told him if he hit it," he called me Muskogee, "hit it, Muskogee, well, the game was over with."

And I told him in front. See, they had a baseball field, a football field, and the fairgrounds. You know, this all come—

JC: This was in Green Forest, correct?

PR: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

JC: Okay.

PR: All they had to do was have ground rules and the game would of been over with.

JC: Can you tell us about the time when you were playing in Arkansas where you had to stay in a tin shed?

PR: Oh, yeah. Them old boys would rock the shed and their old ladies sittin' on the porch, you know, and callin' me names. I stayed on that porch the whole night.

JC: They would rock the shed but they would also throw rocks at the shed, right?

PR: Yeah, that's what they did. They really didn't want me there, the people didn't, they really didn't.

JC: But you had to stay with the dogs, correct?

PR: Yeah, they had dogs in there, yeah. But the guy paid good, he give good money and everything but you just can't make people like you, you just can't do it.

JC: And you went to Arkansas on an exhibition. You didn't go with the team, you just went there—

PR: No, no, I didn't go but Sunday. I'd go every weekend. I played Saturday and Sunday with 'em.

JC: Do you know what town that was in Arkansas that that happened?

PR: Naaah (negative). I ain't goin' to tell you about [*indiscernible*] 'cause I told somethin' and they come back and—

JC: Okay.

Chapter 15 - 3:03

Fundamentals of the Game

John Erling: The Negro American League lasted from 1937 to 1962. Many believed the league was major league quality. And you'd agree with that?

Porter Reed: Eighty percent of Negroes playing in the American Negro League and the National Negro League was bona fide to play in the big league. But the point was, it was a whole lot of ignorant ballplayers. Just like you had the steroid, they would get drunk and do different things.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

PR: It was kind a bad. You know what the thing is about a Negro ballplayer now? If he's not super, the only's way he can get in the big league is through college. If he's not a super, and that's all said through the scout, and if a scout recommend him he'll go, but otherwise—

JE: That's the same for whites too. They generally go through college now.

PR: Yeah, well, that's what they should do.

JE: Yeah.

PR: Make good ballplayers too. You don't want no fool out there, you want an educated man out there.

JE: Right.

PR: You don't want the man throwing to the wrong base and this and this. Them little things will beat you.

JE: Yeah.

Jake Cornwell: The fundamentals of baseball.

PR: Yeah, yeah, that's the main thing.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

PR: You tell Jackie Robinson, he made a play, he on second base, tieing run is on third. The guy was on second, the ball was hit to him. This guy around third, he come around third, 'cause he knowed that Jackie wasn't goin' throw to third. And Jackie threw it behind him and got him out. He didn't throw to first. He threw behind this guy and got him out.

Little things like that, little things that'll beat you.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

PR: Little things like that.

JE: I used to think that was natural, they weren't taught that, they just naturally thought that.

PR: Yeah, oh, that's what I'm callin' a natural ballplayer.

JE: Right.

JC: You had told me in the past that that is what led to such a long career for you.

PR: Yeah, that's right.

JC: That you weren't a large ballplayer but you knew the fundamentals of the game.

PR: That's what a guy named Jim Taylor, old Negro League manager, I mean, he's, he could of went up in the big league, he was too old. He and I used to sit down at his hotel, I mean, a ballplayer then, you had to be in bed by eleven o'clock or twelve. Me and him talked to two, three o'clock in the morning.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

PR: You know, we'd talk baseball, two or three o'clock in the morning. We were talkin' baseball to Jim Taylor.

But the point is, see, now, the only reason I'm not in Birmingham and not somewhere in Georgia, maybe, maybe I would have a job. There's a guy named Frank Evans, he's older than I was, but he kept my job, you know, gettin' ballplayers and scoutin' and that old boy was scoutin' and everything. I would have a job 'cause he would call me at night, "Put on So and So and So," I mean, from Birmingham he'd call me. "So-and-so, I got So, what do I do now?"

I said, "The So-and-so?"

He said, "Yeah."

And I said, "Is it [indiscernible]?" I said, "Play him on third base."

"Why third base?"

I says, "He can stand in front of the ball and knock it down, you know, and he got that good arm and everything."

JE: Hmm (thoughtful sound).

PR: "You use that old boy put on third base like that and he's the best player in the game now," everybody say he like it.

But a lot of guys can't go to the rail, can't go to the right. And they get over there and they stumble and fall and not in a position to throw, you know. Sit there and wouldn't throw.

Chapter 16 - 2:40

Muskogee

John Erling: Here we are in Muskogee. This was considered in the nation, probably, one of the hotbeds.

Porter Reed: *The hottest bed.*

JE: Hottest bed.

PR: [indiscernible] guy, Chicago, Philadelphia, he may get one or two players out of it. A lot of guys, like I said, would leave home, it may have been [indiscernible], but like Muskogee, shoot, they gone, you know.

JE: Why Muskogee? Why was it such a hotbed?

PR: Well, see, all we had off in Muskogee was football, basketball, and baseball. Kids didn't have cars, didn't have nothin' to do. See, when I lived there, baseball right in front of my house there, you didn't get a chance to play 'cause everybody was out there playin' baseball, football.

But you catch a guy and he can get him a car and get him some of that dope and say to him, "What do you think about baseball or football?" And if he ain't one of the players he ain't goin' just go out there and try.

But back out then, you didn't play baseball, you didn't have no girlfriend, or football, or basketball.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

PR: Somethin' like that.

Jake Cornwell: With Muskogee having a sizeable black population what do you think differentiated it from, say, Tulsa? Or Oklahoma City?

PR: Well, see, and this is what you don't know about Tulsa, Tulsa was considered a little Kansas City. All kind of people goin' there. Do you think right now in Tulsa that all this killin' and goin' on is them local Tulsa boys? Them outside and movin' in to Tulsa. Now you just check their background, there's somewhere new. You don't get that stuff in Muskogee. That dope, they fool around with that dope and stuff like that but you take Tulsa and Oklahoma City, it's rough, I mean, it's rough over there. One body robbin' somebody durin' the daytime, you never heard of nothin' like that. They kick your door in durin' the daytime, they don't care. If they know you got it.

JC: Right, but I'm talking from ballplayers, like, with it being the hotbed of Muskogee, what do you think made it such a hotbed for athletes versus other towns that had sizeable black populations? Why the difference?

PR: It just happened to be like that. See, you take like the Gideon brothers. They really was from Fort Smith. Dan was from Little Rock.

JC: Dan Thomas?

PR: Yeah, he's from Little Rock. Them guys, they from different places. They come here and move to Muskogee. That's when [*indiscernible*] and migrate to they stayed here and they played baseball. They [*indiscernible*] right now.

Tulsa Clowns had a good baseball team.

JC: The Tulsa T-Town Clowns.

PR: Yeah, yeah, but the point is, a lot of guys are not goin' leave home to go play baseball. Now if I got a job, say, I got a wife and three kids, love my family, why I want to quit my job and go off and play baseball, since wintertime coming? Go off and play baseball and don't make no money. You know, don't make no lot of money. A lot of guys love that money, and if they don't have that good job and income they goin' stay home and get the same thing.

Chapter 17 - 3:45

Today's Ballplayers

John Erling: What do you think of today's ballplayers compared to your era? Are they different?

Porter Reed: Yeah, they a whole lot different, they way above us. I don't think that I could be in a major league.

JE: Why don't you think you could?

PR: Well, first is size. I'm an outfielder so first is the size. And the second is, well, you can't tell about that reflex and everything, what would happen. But I would play with 'em now. See, that's my biggest trouble, I didn't back off. I kept a baseball glove and a pair of shoes with me all the time. Kept it with me, I wanted to play. That's the main thing—

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

PR: ...if you want to play, you goin' to play.

JE: What was your batting average, approximately?

PR: They got me battin' about 3 something or about 310 or 309, like that. I said I could of been a lot better. When you run against some guy like Satchel and Hilton Smith—

Jake Cornwell: That affects your batting average pretty quickly.

PR: Yeah, uh-huh (affirmative).

JE: Yeah, but the batting average is 310, that's pretty good. Any ballplayer today who is batting 300 is considered really strong.

PR: You know, you ain't goin' find any ballplayer battin' 300 nowadays. You goin' stay in that 200 bracket. Look at the Cecil Fielder.

JC: Um-hmm (affirmative).

PR: He's not quite 200 but last night he struck out three times. But tell you what, they know if he connect it's going to be something, you know, with Cecil Fielder.

JE: Yep.

PR: They overlook a lot of that.

JE: You know, we've got pitchers today that are pitching 96, 97, even touching 100 miles per hour. Do you think your pitchers were pitching that fast?

PR: Satchel was throwin' better than 100 miles. But it rolled and doin' stuff, they throwin' better than 100. They was doin' better than 100.

JE: How did you know that?

PR: I can tell the way they doin' it now.

JE: (laughs)

PR: 'Cause I know good and well, them balls Satchel throwed, them three bullets he went by me I know I [*indiscernible*] about eighteen times after then. You catch that ball up there, way up there, when that pitcher got it. When he turn it loose up there, that's when you should of had, well, when he switches over. Ain't no whiskey, steroid, or nothing goin' to make you hit no ball.

JE: Yeah.

PR: If you don't have that eye on that ball you're not goin' to hit it, I'm telling you now.

JE: Yeah.

PR: And I didn't drink for so—nothin' like that. We had a guy named Dough Belly.

JC: Dough Belly.

PR: Dough Belly, he looked like a dough belly, all growed over and everything. You could shoot it up in the air and he'd hit it. He was drunk and he could hit it up there and Ralph Gaines, and, you know, them guys like that. Then the other guy he get up, he look bad striking out, you know, instead of the guy gettin' the ball by him, but I know good and well, it's a prison. I wouldn't want to go there spring trainin' and all that kind of stuff. That's just learnin' all over again everything, but you don't have the eye, you're not goin' to—if it's not in you then it's not goin' come out then at bat.

JE: Yeah. It sounds like you didn't drink any or some at all?

PR: I sold whiskey, I sold it and I didn't drink, I didn't smoke. I tried it and it didn't, I didn't drink nor smoke.

JE: What kind of advice do you give to young ballplayers today? What should they do?

PR: Well, first, you sharpen your mind and stay in condition. *Stay in condition*. That's the same way about football, them guys in good condition, they don't get hurt. You're loafing when you get hurt, you get out there loafing and you're not doing your job. And you're sittin' on that bench and that guy pitchin' that ball, if his curve ball is working you lay off of it.

JE: Right.

PR: He goin' to finally throw you a fast ball or your pitch. You don't get your pitch and everythin', that's the way scouts look at it. He expect you to hit your pitch. They really expect you to do that, they really expect you to hit your pitch and do your job.

I know I could be a double A or triple A ballplayer up in them majors. But, see, guys got size and they got a guy for the St. Louis Cardinals, Holliday.

JE: Um-hmm (affirmative).

PR: That man's a big man.

JE: Yeah. How tall were you?

PR: Five eleven and always been five eleven, I always have.

Chapter 18 - 4:55

Askin' for Twenty

John Erling: Is there any one game that stands out in your mind as being special?

Porter Reed: Well, there was two games when I was in the army. We played the 7th Air Force for the championship of the Saipan. We had them one run. They had two men on bases,

one on second, and one on third. The tying run and the winning run. And they was their own team, they had the tying run on third and the winning run on second, and a guy named Goat that played for the Indianapolis Clowns before he went to service, he hit a ball to the right-fielder.

I was playing centerfield. I went to back him up and before I got there a boy named Jeff Beef from Cairo, Illinois, he got down on his knees to stop the ball. I picked up speed and cut in front of him and caught it right on my shoe top. It wasn't my ball whatsoever. That won the Island championship.

JE: Hmm (thoughtful sound).

PR: And my name [*indiscernible*] was in the *Stars and Stripes*, pitchin' everything. I had them pitchin', I lost some of them, the *Stars and Stripes*. That was in 1945.

Jake Cornwell: It was published in the *Stars and Stripes*?

PR: Yeah, uh-huh (affirmative). I was in Hawaii. Ted Wheatley didn't find out who I was, he said, "I read about you in the *Stars and Stripes*."

I would talk to a lot of 'em, the guys that was in the service then and heard about that. But that's my biggest thrill and my biggest thrill in baseball.

JE: That's great. How would you like to be remembered?

PR: You mean as a baseball player? Or as just a favorite?

JE: When people think about you, how would you like to be remembered?

PR: Well, to be remembered, I like publicity and I like for people to like me and I like the truth and everything and I'm just an ordinary guy. But my puzzle's fillin'. They had the right thing for a puzzle.

JE: Yeah.

PR: I think the right thing you looking for that piece for that puzzle and you me so we got it, the right piece for a puzzle. That's the only thing I could be.

JE: Well, you're ninety-four years old and you've taken care of yourself. You're sitting here and you've got a memory like I don't have. How you can remember all that is beyond me. You've had a good life, haven't you?

PR: Yes I've had a good life. Well, I'm not goin' to say I'm ready, I'd like to stick around a little while longer and everything. I don't know if you know too much about the Bible but in the Bible is a man named Hezekiah.

JE: Yeah.

PR: He was the king. And God told a prophet to go tell Hezekiah that he's goin' to die tonight and to get his house in order. He was sick to the point of death, and he was dyin' as he walked in and told Hezekiah what God said.

Hezekiah knowed good and well he had lived a good life and he did everything God told him to do. So he run all the people out of the room and turned his back and told God

this and this and this and this and that, what all he did and how [*indiscernible*] did all that.

But as the prophet was goin' out the gate he stopped and God said, "Go back and tell Hezekiah that I gave him fifteen more years to live." He went back and told him.

And if Hezekiah got fifteen, I'm askin' for twenty. If he got fifteen more to live, I want twenty. So I ain't got but about seventeen to go, ain't I?

JC: (laughing)

PR: So that's, that's the way it is. You want to live as long as you possibly can. See, it's hard for me to get up after I sit down. I can't do the things I used to do but I realize that I'm ninety-four and things ain't what they used to be. So I'm just hangin' in there. I got a couple little grandkids that worries the hell out of me. I won't say nothin', their mama get mad 'cause I won't do this and do that.

I remember when I was a child, I was just bad, you know. Now take my bullish brother, he was the best man, he's so good I envy him. My youngest brother, he went to KU and he never finished and got the chance to be in the medicine field. My sister was a genius in school, he went to Richmond University. I didn't go to college. I was a wild horse of the old sage, loose mule, that's what I was.

My parents didn't criticize me too much. I used to hobo and catch the freight and go anywhere. But I've always wanted to be somebody.

JE: And you were somebody.

PR: Well, like I said, Hezekiah got fifteen, I'm askin' for twenty, so I figure I can cut loose in twenty and all.

JE: Yeah, yeah.

PR: But I know at twenty, ain't too much I can do at ninety-four, now what could I do with twenty? (laughs)

JE: (laughs) Well, it'll probably happen. I want to thank you for sharing your story with us for VoicesofOklahoma. You are truly a remarkable man. And now you'll be remembered and heard for many, many years to come. Thank you.

JC: Thank you.

PR: Yes.

JC: That was good, that was good. (clapping)

JE: All right.

PR: You're not pullin' my leg, are you?

JE: About what?

PR: Being good.

JE: No. Well, I can only see the man sitting in front of me.

PR: Yeah, okay.

JE: And you've been good for the last couple of hours.

PR: Amen.

Chapter 19 - 0:33**Conclusion**

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