

Purchase Personalities

Mayfield Messenger | Monday, Nov. 7, 1983

Mickey Stubblefield 'Little Satch'

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"If you are good, people will be good to you. If you go to church, things will be better. You get out of life what you put into it." — Mickey Stubblefield

Those are the words by which Mickey Stubblefield lives. "If you go around with a smile on your face, people will smile back. If they don't, go around the next corner, there will be someone there smiling."

Stubblefield, a 57-year-old Mayfield resident, has done a lot of living in his 57 years. Some was bad but most was good.

Wilker Harrison Thelbert Stubblefield was born in Mayfield on February 26, 1926 on East Water Street near where the Eddie Williams Park is located today.

He had four sisters and a brother. His mother died when he was six years old and his father died when he was 11. He doesn't remember much about either one.

Growing up in Mayfield, Stubblefield had a lot of homes. He was at the age where he couldn't be out on his own. "I couldn't help myself," he said.

Many people provided means of support for the young black kid, who ate many of his meals at the back door of Ernest Reynolds' café on Broadway. Reynolds, who is now deceased, would feed young Stubblefield and his friends at night after his regular customers had finished their evening meal.

There were also times, Stubblefield said he and a sister would sit at home all day without food waiting for an older sister to come home at night with leftovers from the "white family's evening meal" where she worked in the kitchen.

It was also about that time that Wilker Harrison Thelbert Stubblefield received the name of Mickey, a name which has stuck with him. Most of Stubblefield's friends don't even know Mickey has three first names. Now they do.

Stubblefield was given the name Mickey because of his shoes. They were always hand-me-downs and usually too big, Stubblefield said. It was also about that time that Mickey

Mouse came into existence. Mickey Mouse's unusually large shoes closely resembled Stubblefield's hand-me-downs — thus the name.

Continuing with comments about his name, Stubblefield jokingly says he might have been the first black President of the United States had he ever chosen to run. "The people could have voted for Wilker, Harrison, Thelbert or Stubblefield. They had a lot of choices and I would still have gotten all the votes!"

He went to Dunbar School and was later drafted into the Navy. Stubblefield didn't have to go overseas in World War II. After his basic training, the young Mayfield man spent his service-related time in Texas where he mostly played baseball on a Navy-sponsored team.

His appetite for baseball had been whetted at...

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...supposed to give the glove back to Hayes, who told him "to keep it." He did and continued to use the glove until he went into the Navy. Today, Hayes is one of his best friends.

His first baseball-related job was batboy for the Mayfield Kitty League, an all white baseball league in which he would later in life become the first black to play. The job had been landed for the 11-year-old boy by his friend, Ernest Reynolds. It was then that he learned how to throw a curve ball. "I always had a pretty good arm and the guys on the team showed me how to throw a curve. I took it from there," Stubblefield said.

The young boy also traveled with the team on occasions. One particular trip was to Hopkinsville where the team was spending the night. At that time blacks weren't permitted to stay in motels or hotels where the white people stayed and Mickey had resigned to sleep on the bust that night until one of the white players came got the 11-year-old and took him to his room. Stubblefield spent the night in the same bed as the white player.

At age 13, Stubblefield was pitching for an all-white team in Mayfield.

After the Navy, Stubblefield signed a contract to play baseball with an all black club in the Western League at Omaha, Neb.

Stubblefield remember that it was in 1947 when he signed the contract because that was the year Jackie Robinson came up to the Dodgers baseball team. Robinson was the first black in the major leagues, which had until that time been all white.

In Omaha, Stubblefield played every position. The team only had 12 players and it didn't really matter that the young man had signed onto the team to be a pitcher, "we played wherever we were needed."

Following a one year stay with the Rockets in Omaha, Stubblefield switched teams and moved to the Kansas City Monarchs. The Monarchs, says Stubblefield, were a “better class” of baseball players. They were also a member of the Negro American League or as Stubblefield says, “our (black) major league.”

Had the division between blacks and whites not been what it was then and he had been born a decade later, Stubblefield might have had a brilliant and lucrative career with some major league team. The young Mayfield resident was ahead of his time.

He received raving reports from sportswriters all across the country, especially in the 42 states which were on the Monarch’s barn storming tour.

Stubblefield remained with the Monarchs for some three years. While there he had the good fortune to play on the same field with such baseball greats as Satchel Paige and James (Cool Papa) Bell.

Stubblefield became known, while at the Monarchs, as “Little Satchel” because he had almost as many pitches and deliveries as the great pitcher. One clipping from Stubblefield scrapbook came from a Chico, Calif. Newspaper.

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...Stubblefield recounts. “Satch was just a drawing card,” the Mayfield baseball player said. “He would pitch one or two innings to please the crowd but never pitched over three inning for us.”

Paige also didn’t travel with the team. Stubblefield said he and the other team members would travel from town to town on a bus, while the great Satch was being chauffeured from the game to game in either his (Satch’s) Lincoln or Cadillac.

“Satch” was also considered an old man when he was on the Monarchs. Stubblefield said the pitcher was about 45 years old and “seemed like...”

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While on the Monarchs, Stubblefield also played against Goose Tatum and Jesse Owens. Tatum later went into basketball and was on the Harlem Globetrotters. Owens, of course, was the great Olympic runner. Tatum, says Stubblefield, was actually more highly sought after than Jackie Robinson, according to talk around the Negro American League. Tatum’s flair for being a “clown” was his only drawback to getting into the white major leagues.

In 1947, Stubblefield played shortstop in the Negro American League All-Star game with Satchel Paige on the mound. Paige went to the Cleveland Indians the next year and Stubblefield moved to McCook Neb. the year after.

