

PAPER TRAILS



LINDA S. HAYMES

Ex-pitcher tells of days in the game

The demise of Negro Leagues baseball began when Jackie Robinson, whose story has been widely told, most recently in the film *42*, broke through the major leagues' color barrier in 1947.

But baseball integration came slowly.

Four years after Robinson blazed the trail, Ollie Brantley of Lexa, then a recent Marianna High School graduate, signed with the Negro Leagues' Memphis Red Sox in 1951.

When Brantley was a boy, his sharecropper father practiced with him. Brantley used a bat cut from a branch and a ball made of a sock and cork, and practiced by throwing the ball at the barn.

"And then he had me throw it over the barn," Brantley, now 81, says. "He drew a circle on the smokehouse for me to use as a target."

Brantley shared his memories during a recording at the Starving Artist Cafe in North Little Rock of *Tales of the South*, a radio program that is broadcast internationally.

Brantley eventually played baseball in high school.

"I could throw very hard," the right-handed pitcher recalls.

While signed with the Red Sox, one of his teammates was Charley Pride, who went on to become a country music star with hits like "Kiss an Angel Good Morning."

In 1953, Brantley signed with the Chicago White Sox as the only black player within the organization. He played with the organization's minor league teams for seven years.

"When I first arrived, they had 150 kids outside the fence looking in," he recalls of his first season with the Wisconsin State League in Sheboygan. "They'd never seen a black person before. They were saying things like 'Why is he so black?'"

Like Robinson, Brantley encountered discrimination on and off the field.

"In the early 1950s, it was tough," he says. "On the road, I couldn't stay at any of the same hotels as the team. In South Carolina, when I wasn't pitching, I had to sit behind the dugout. And I couldn't ride the bus with the team; I had to ride separately in a station wagon."

"In the 1960s it got better, and I got to stay in the hotels with the team."

From 1961 until 1969, Brantley played for the Minnesota Twins' farm team. During his 18-year career, he joined the Willie Mays All-Star Team and toured with the Mickey Mantle All-Stars. The barnstorming teams were popular and earned the teams more money in two months than a typical Negro League team made in an entire season.

Retiring from baseball in 1970, he returned to Marianna, where he still resides, and became a full-time deputy in the Lee County sheriff's office, where he had worked part time in the off-season. Today, he works as a Lee County public schools probation officer and helps manage a youth baseball team.

"You don't see a lot of black kids playing baseball today," he says. "Instead, they're playing basketball and football, but you have to be tall or weigh between 200 to 275 pounds for those. With baseball, you can be 125 pounds and make it to the major leagues."

Spanning generations



Arkansas Democrat-Gazette/MELISSA SUE GERRITS

Zoe Herron, 10, waits Saturday afternoon for her father, Park Ranger Joe Herron, to apply weights to a cloth-napkin parachute during Civil War Kids Day at the Arkansas National Post Museum outside Gillett. The museum plans special activities for children each Saturday during the summer.

Handful of color



Arkansas Democrat-Gazette/RICK McFARLAND

Georgina Daniel (left) and Leslie Lankford, both of Sheridan, choose a bunch of sunflowers from the Wye Mountain Flower and Berry Farm table at the North Little Rock Farmers Market on Saturday.

With River Trail link, LR aims for safer traveling for bicyclists

CLAUDIA LAUER
ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

Bicyclists will have a little safer route along the Arkansas River Trail under a proposal to create an additional trail connector near Gill Street.

The Little Rock Board of Directors will vote Tuesday on whether to approve spending \$487,500 to build

the River Trail River Bluffs Connector Improvement Project. About \$390,000 of the project funding would come from a federal Transportation Alternatives Program grant. The city would pay the rest of the cost.

A specific source of city money was not identified in the resolution before the board. The resolution gives

City Manager Bruce Moore permission to expedite and sign agreements with Metroplan and the Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department to build the connector.

The project would involve building a loop behind the old marina building on Cantrell Road just west of

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Primate law requires registration, new fees

Future apes, baboons to be banned

HAILEY KONNATH
ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

When Barbara Doherty talks about her "babies," she's talking about her pet monkeys. But recently, Doherty has had to fight for the right to keep the animals. And a new law stands to make primate ownership a bigger commitment.

The law requires Arkansas primate owners to register their pets by Aug. 18. It also bans the future ownership, breeding or selling of apes, baboons and macaques, except by "qualified facilities."

It is a law that has garnered a number of chuckles and jokes, but its existence is the result of years of difficult compromises between opposing sides.

Susan Altrui, director of marketing and development at the Little Rock Zoo, has been pushing for a ban on primates as pets for several

years and during a couple legislative sessions.

Primates make bad pets, she said. They can be dangerous to humans, they transmit diseases and people don't usually know how to care for them properly, she said. And when people decide they don't want their pet primates anymore, they often come knocking on the zoo's door.

"People think, 'If it doesn't work out, a zoo will take my pet primate,'" Altrui said. "But that's not the case."

Zoos have a hard time introducing primates that have been socialized with humans to other primates, she said. It's a long, difficult process that requires extra space and extra time from zoo staff members.

Some primate owners in the state were furious with Altrui's proposed ban.

"Is it so wrong to care for

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Officials: Loan rates a temporary setback

TRACIE DUNGAN
ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

Officials who work with college students in Arkansas who depend on subsidized Stafford loans said they hope the doubling of the loans' interest rate last Monday is a temporary setback that Congress will remedy before it affects students who sign loan papers for the forthcoming academic year.

Otherwise, it will increase students' debt load later on and could elevate default

rates and hurt college recruitment, they said last week.

Members of Congress failed to reach an agreement before their Fourth of July holiday on extending the Stafford program's 3.4 percent rate or setting a new formula, so it automatically doubled to 6.8 percent.

Lawmakers are expected to take the matter back up on Wednesday when they return from break, said Amy Neathery, student services coordinator at Arkansas Student

Loan Authority.

"We think Congress will get this inflated rate back to something comparable to 3.4 percent," Neathery said. "Arkansas has one of the highest default rates in the nation."

The authority's director, Tony Williams, shares his colleague's optimism, saying lawmakers didn't disagree on whether to keep the rate low but on how to do it.

"We're seeing there's a general consensus in Con-

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'Likes' light up Facebook page after tornadoes

Weather hobbyist in state sees subscriptions take off

KENNETH HEARD
ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

It started as a hobby when Internet sports writer Luke Matheson, a self-proclaimed weather junkie, began loading weather information on his Facebook page — Arkansas Storm Report.

A year later, the popularity of the page has grown so much that Matheson's pastime has turned into a full-time vocation.

When an outbreak of tornadoes struck Arkansas in May after an EF5 twister ravaged Moore, Okla., Arkansas Storm Report saw an increase of 10,000 "likes" in two days. It reached nearly 35,000 "likes" by the first week of July.

Facebook users can "like" the page and subscribe to it,

receiving Matheson's weather information and the capability to comment on posts on the page.

"We take a lot of pride in it," said Matheson, a White Hall resident. "We take this very seriously."

Matheson and three other administrators — Anthony Cameron of Hot Springs, Damon Poole of Guy and Mike Smith of Texarkana — post storm warning and watch information on the page, along with photographs and video of storms, weather-related information and links to news reports.

It's a response to the change in how people get information about weather, said National Weather Service warning coordinator

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Fake storm photos keep agencies alert

KENNETH HEARD
ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

National Weather Service meteorologist John Robinson knew to question the picture he received from someone claiming he photographed Hurricane Katrina as it struck the Louisiana coast in 2005.

The picture was obviously taken in the Midwestern Plains rather than the Gulf Coast, because it showed vast fields of grain and a large super-cell thunderstorm commonly seen in the Central United States, said Robinson, the warning coordinator for the weather service in North Little Rock.

"I knew it wasn't legit," Robinson said. "I don't recall ever seeing wheat growing along the coast in Louisiana."

With the advances in technology — cellphones with video cameras, wireless Internet access and mobile access to social media — storm photographs can be presented to the public almost immediately. Within minutes of the tornado that struck Oden in Montgomery County on May 30, pictures and video of the storm appeared on Facebook pages.

But with that instant access comes the potential for

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Pink on the puppy



Arkansas Democrat-Gazette/RICK McFARLAND

Ridley, a black Labrador puppy, wears a pink bandanna at the dedication of the Pink Garden in Little Rock's Morehart Park on Saturday. The garden is to honor cancer survivors and victims.

Four file for spots on boards of schools

CYNTHIA HOWELL
ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

Newcomer Charlie "C.E." McAdoo joined three incumbents in filing as a candidate for election to either the Little Rock or North Little Rock school boards by close of business Friday.

Noon on Tuesday is the deadline to file as a candidate in the Sept. 17 school board election. Candidates file at the Pulaski County clerk's office.

McAdoo filed as a candidate for Zone 2 in the Little Rock School District, which encompasses the central part of the city.

Greg Adams, 50, filed as a candidate for a second three-year term for Little Rock School District's Zone 4.

Tommy Branch Jr., 40, filed for the Little Rock dis-

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