

Father Tells Son's Story Of Love, Rebellion and Drugs

by BOB JOHNSON
Associated Press Sports Editor

Stamford, Conn. (AP) - Jack thought life was a bad deal. He dropped out. He turned on. He became a drug addict.

But finally, as the kids say, he got his head together.

He was like a lot of boys—except his father was Jackie Robinson, college football star first black player in the major league baseball, successful business executive.

Like a lot of fathers, Jackie Robinson found his success was useless in dealing with his son. It even hurt.

"You know, you just don't lose a boy after finding him, lose him again and not really feel it," Robinson says.

There are reflections of Jack Robinson Jr. that hurt less:

The letter from the 40-year-old addict who wrote that Jack Jr. helped him find a new perspective of life;

The visit from the 33-year-old addict who said that, in

trying to help him, Jack Jr. often seemed to be 33 and he, only 24.

"You know," Robinson said, "it kind of took some of the pain away to see the contributions he had made."

Young Jack died on June 17 when his car hit a parkway railing. He was working with the drug organization that had saved him. He counselled addicts and his current project was organizing a benefit jazz concert at his parent's home.

The Robinsons thought it over and going ahead with the concert seemed to be the right thing to do.

On a sunny summer afternoon, just five days after the funeral, the lawns of the Robinson home were filling with people.

Jackie looked out beyond the crowd and recalled from the beginning how he lost a son, found him and lost him again.

"I think it started a long, long time ago," Robinson said, "when he resented people talking to him about his father. He was very young, you know, and it built up something in him, I think, and all of a sudden he rebelled against it, and it came about after he developed some potential as a Little Leaguer."

Branch Rickey, boss of the old Brooklyn Dodgers, had hand-picked Jackie to integrate baseball, and Jackie used to tell his son "that I thought he had the kind of ability that Mr. Rickey talked about."

But the kids on the ball teams razed him, and the adults kept comparing him to his dad.

"There was always that comparison," Jackie said, "and even though at the time there was a great deal of warmth and a great deal of love between us, the pressure started to get real hard on him and all of a sudden, he, you know, just kind of started to pull away."

"He decided, as he told us, that he was going to be the best something . . . and he took up pool because he knew I wasn't a good pool shooter and he was going to have something so he could really trounce me. — and he really was pretty good at it."

But beating his dad at pool wasn't enough. By now Jack Jr. was a teenager and rebelling more openly.

"He was always out, not happy at home, very sullen very quiet. And the next thing you know he wanted to go into the service."

One day he came home from New York and boasted he and a friend had smoked marijuana.

"We questioned him about it and like many young kids today he kept saying: 'I don't care what you say, I like the taste of it, I know it's not going to affect me, I'm strong, I'm not going to go on heroin'."

Jackie dropped out of high school at 17, enlisted in the army and was wounded in Vietnam.

Jack Jr. smoked pot in Vietnam and was still on it when he came home at 19. And he still was obsessed by the desire to excel.

This time he chose crime. With a gang of Stamford lads he tried everything from stealing hub caps to burglary.

The Robinsons knew things weren't right with Jack, but they didn't know what was wrong.

Among the things Jack did not tell his parents was that he had started using heroin.

His father thinks it happened when pot lost its kick for him.

Jack ran away to Colorado where he had been stationed for a while in the Army. He worked the dice table in a gambling joint. The Robinsons found him and made several trips to talk to him. He began to drift back and forth between Stamford and Colorado.

At last he was arrested and charged with possession of narcotics and a pistol. The judge ordered him to undergo treatment for drug addiction.

He went to a rehabilitation centre at Seymour, Conn., headed by a reformed addict, Kenneth Williams. His assistants are other addicts who have kicked the habit.

Williams warned the Robinsons that Jack might try to leave in two or three weeks and that they would have to "tell him if he comes home your going to revoke his parole and put him in jail and this time he's going to stay there."

That scared Jack because his father was then a member of the state parole board and was known to the guys on the street as its toughest member.

Six months later he was arrested in a Stamford hotel room and charged with using a female for immoral purposes. This time the court sentenced him to two to four yrs. in prison—but suspended the sentence and ordered him to the centre again.

"It was always our contention that Jackie wanted to

be arrested," Robinson said, "or why else would he keep going back to the same place where he was broken the first time . . . the same hotel, the same thing, where the police knew him, and everybody else."

Jack made it through the drug program and Williams became a second father to him. Jack became assistant regional director and his goal was to establish his own centre in Stamford.

"From 21 or so until 24 he began to find himself, and we had him back for just a year where, you know, we were a family," his father said.

And that's the way it was at 2:20 a.m. on June 17 when Jack's car hit a guard rail at a speed that threw the engine 200 feet from the frame.

"I have to think that he went to sleep," his father said, "because he had been putting so many long hours into the jazz program."

"And you talk to Kenny—in fact, I asked him about it, and Kenny says you could rest assured he was not on dope."

At Jack's funeral, one of the eulogies referred to him as a "beautiful black brave warrior."

Pepsi-Cola Wins Award

Victor A. Bonomo, President and Chief Executive Officer of Pepsi-Cola Company accepted the Frederick Douglass Award on behalf of Pepsi-Cola Company at the New York urban league annual dinner held in the Americana Hotel in New York City.

The Frederick Douglass award is presented to New Yorkers who have made a distinct contribution towards advancing the cause of equal opportunity. Mrs. Ennis Francis, Co-ordinator of the United Federation of Black Community Organizations, and Mr. Fredeick O'Neil, President of Actors Equity, also were recipients of the award.

Pepsi-Cola Company was cited for having vigorously pursued a policy of equal opportunity on every management level of Pepsi's operation. In 1962, Pepsi named the first Black Vice-President of a major American company doing international business, and now has three Black Vice-Presidents. A Black attorney is also Assistant Secretary & Corporate Counsel for Pepsi-Co, Inc., of which Pepsi-Cola is a division.

The major soft drink firm was also praised for purchasing from minority firms. Advertising campaigns have been conducted on behalf of minority-owned business, minority banks and distribution routes have been utilized.

DIGNITY and REVERENCE
FOR EVERY FUNERAL



Needham
FUNERAL SERVICE

"The Memorial
Chapel"

520 Dundas Street
434-9141



CAMPBELLS

RESTAURANT and TAVERN

433-5188

100 Dundas Street



Dignity, Reverence,
Whatever Funeral Service
you choose, rest
assured deep understanding
for the bereaved is
inherent in every
member of our staff.

EVANS FUNERAL SERVICE

A. F. Atkinson

648 Hamilton Road

J. Lorne Crinklaw

605 Richmond St.

Phone 451-9350 or 432-7802

DICTIONARIES WEBSTER

Library size 1970 edition, brand new, still in box.

Cost new \$45.00

(WILL SELL FOR \$15)

Deduct 10% on orders of 6 or more.

MAIL TO

NORTH AMERICAN LIQUIDATORS

58 - 158 2nd Ave. N. Dept. 0-313

Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

C.O.D. orders enclose \$1.00 per volume good with deposit. Pay balance plus C.O.D. shipping on delivery. Be satisfied on inspection or return within 10 days for full refund. No dealers, each volume specifically stamped not for resale.