

Lex Browning: Awesome. All right. This is Lonnie Harris. Just to start off, where were you born and what's your birth date?

Lonnie Harris: I was born in the Bronx, New York, 1930.

Lex Browning: When you were growing up in the Bronx, was baseball a big part of your childhood growing up? You know, were you watching the Negro Leagues in New York?

Lonnie Harris: Baseball was a part of my life from day one. I – Well, it all began with stickball. You know, in New York that's what they played. But, I fell in love with sports. And, it went to baseball, sandlot, after high school.

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I played high school baseball. For some reason, I don't know what it was, I just – it took up all my life, my younger life, dreaming one day to do what I did. But, at the time I didn't know, you know. And, I guess it was all a part of destiny that led me to Memphis. I played high school high school in the Bronx and then went to sandlot. And then, I volunteered during the Korean War and I played baseball during the Korean War.

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Rather than going to Korea, I went to Germany. *[Laughter]* Thank God. Well, a lot of my associates and friends that I knew paid the ultimate price. It made me feel rather guilty in a way because they went there and I went to entertain the troops. I guess it was all part of destiny in a way. So, I played ball in Germany and after that –

Lex Browning: Great. And so, how long did you serve in the military?

Lonnie Harris: In service? Three years.

Lex Browning: Three years. So, after you finish your time in Germany, I believe – is it true you won the batting title for the U.S. military in your time in Germany?

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Lonnie Harris: Yeah, I won – I was the leading hitter in the League and whatnot. The computer probably won't tell you that. But, on the back of the

baseball card – I can't remember all that stuff, guys. It goes – Mm-hmm.

Lex Browning: It says, "Won U.S. Army Rookie of the Year 1952."

Lonnie Harris: Okay. And, well, after that, I went back home. So, I was trying to figure out what the heck I was going to do with the rest of my life. I got an early discharge. I volunteered during the beginning of the Korean War and got out earlier than the required time.

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So what I did, I contacted the New York Giants with my baseball credentials and _____ in baseball in Germany. And, I was invited to the New York Giant **farm chain**. But, the thing that's so weird about it, guys, I was a Brooklyn Dodger fan all my young life. With my friends and associates, most of them were Giant fans and Yankee fans, and for some reason, I was a Brooklyn Dodger fan. Now, why I don't know. This was way before Jackie. I was always wanting to be different, that's why I didn't go with the other guys. Well, anyway, the thing that's so ironic about it I sent my credentials not to the Brooklyn Dodgers but to the New York Giants.

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Why did I do that, I have no idea. But, evidently, fate was working its thing because if I had sent it to the Brooklyn Dodgers, I wouldn't be sitting here now.

Lex Browning: So, you said that you contacted the Giants and then you were invited to play on their farm team.

Lonnie Harris: I was invited to Melbourne, Florida, to training camp. *[Laughter]*

Lex Browning: And so, how did you get involved with the Negro League Baseball?

Lonnie Harris: Thank you. So, I was invited to Melbourne, Florida, the training camp for the New York Giants. So, I did my thing down there, you know. But, they had so many signees and bonuses that they cut me.

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I hit three or four homeruns during that try-out things, but they had all these bonus babies. Naturally, you know, they had invested all the money in them. So, they said, "I'm sorry, Lonnie. We have to cut you." I said – There happened to be a ball player, Kelly Searcy, who was a pitcher with the Birmingham Black Barons. He saw what I did.

He said, "Hey, man, would you like to play baseball for the Birmingham Black Barons?" I said, "Who?" You know, when he said that I thought he was talking about some farm club, hey, 'cause I was born and raised in New York, I hadn't heard of Birmingham, you know. This was the boss. I said, "Hey, all I want to do is play baseball." He says, "Well, come back –" He was cut, too, Kelly Searcy. He was cut, too, so he said, "Come back to Nashville."

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At that time, Nashville was owned – The owner was in Birmingham – The owner of the Black Barons was in Nashville. So, I went back with him to Nashville. And, the manager of the Birmingham Black Barons then was a guy by the name of Willie Wells. He was inducted into the Hall of Fame, shortstop, but he was the manager at that time. Well, anyway, he took me and another dude who was an All-American at – what is this black college? Tennessee State University in Nashville? Well, anyway, there was another guy who tried – well, we both tried out.

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I think Austin or something like that. And, well, we were signed right on the spot. Austin went to the Chicago Cubs. He didn't stay there long. I played with the Birmingham Black Barons for two or three months. Well, I had an attitude. A New York attitude. Hey, because it was the first time in the South. So, I couldn't get along with the manager. So, he said something to me and I said something to him and – Well, anyway, Dr. Martin, who was the owner of the Memphis Red Sox, saw me play and he said, "Look, if you guys don't want him, I want him."

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So, Dr. Martin, who was the owner of the Memphis Red Sox, bought my contract so I came here to Memphis. And, everything else is history.

Lex Browning: So, going more into Memphis, what was kind of the feel of Memphis within the black community towards the Red Sox? You know, was there a lot of pride or – I've read several things about the pride and the attendance and how the feeling was. Did you feel that coming in, you know, in the early '50s? You know, after the integration of baseball was there still that community pride for the Red Sox?

Lonnie Harris: At that time, the Memphis Red Sox in Memphis was like the New York Yankees in New York.

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Because, you know, at that time, that's all blacks had because the blacks and whites couldn't play baseball together. So, at that time, it was the Memphis Chicks and the Memphis Red Sox. I had no idea of the gravity of the racial problem here, you know. But, hey, you know, I had – All I wanted to do, guys, was one thing: play ball. 'Cause there's only three things in sports, baseball: baseball is white, the bats are black and brown, and the rest is money, and it's green. That's the three colors, you know? Hey. And, all I wanted to do was be a part of all that.

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But, anyway, getting back to your point, which is apropos, I identified readily because all I wanted to do was play ball, which I did.

Lex Browning: So, what year exactly did you start playing for the Red Sox? Was that 1953?

Lonnie Harris: After _____? After I stopped?

Lex Browning: No, when did you start, begin playing with the Red Sox?

Lonnie Harris: I started in '53.

Lex Browning: And, that was the year you won Rookie of the Year, correct?

Lonnie Harris: I was Rookie of the Year that year. Right.

Lex Browning: So, what was it like to play for the Martin brothers? They have a long history with the Red Sox, owning them for over 20 years. They've done a lot – they did a lot for the team, for the black community, especially.

Lonnie Harris: At that time, guys, there was four doctors who owned the Memphis Red Sox.

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Four of them. And, W.S. was the head doctor, B.B. was a dentist, A.T. was a doctor like W.S., and the other guy was a pharmacist. He was run out of town because he was having an affair with a white lady, so... But, anyway, those four doctors were the owners of the team. Well, anyway, Dr. Martin was the main owner of the team. So, I played ball from '53 to the end when he passed. He passed in '61. Once he passed, the League gradually disintegrated.

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It was disintegrating anyway because most of the ball players were being bought and going up, and it was only a very few left. When we went to towns, there were no ball players to exhibit to the fans, so the fans stopped coming in the country where we played all through the South and whatnot. So, the owners, Dr. Martin, he tried to keep it together. Well, anyway, after he passed the League folded. He passed in '61, and the League ended then. And, I was devastated, guys.

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I was devastated, you know. I've always been an emotional dude. And, I was trying to figure out what the hell I'm going to do with the rest of my life. You and I know, guys, you can't play baseball, basketball, or football so long because this goes, this goes, and then what do you do for the rest of your life? I don't want to hunt, I don't want to fish, I don't want to sit around and play dominoes and checkers. So, I went back to school. What you put here will be with you always. That's what I told my students. It's cool to get sports, to play sports, but education first, sports second.

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Lonnie Harris: I wasn't told that. Well, if I did, it didn't resonate. Getting back to your point about what you asked me about baseball, how it resonated in the community. That's all the blacks had was the Memphis Red Sox because you couldn't go to McDonald's, there wasn't no McDonald's. You couldn't go to a hotel, it was black hotels, white hotels. Black hope, eating areas, white eating areas.

And, getting back to your point, how did I deal with it, **felt** about it?

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I was – in a way, it didn't really affect me, guys, because of one thing: all I wanted was baseball. And, I was going to play baseball if it was in heaven or hell, wherever it was. In Russia, China, **well**, at that time. All I wanted to do was play baseball. But, baseball at that time, was the thing in the black community because that's all we had. I think that answers your question. I hope.

Lex Browning:

So, you said, you know, you obviously said it was all the black community had. Did that give you a sense of, you know, pride just like you were providing the community this thing that brought them together, it brought them up in a time when they were being put down constantly?

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Lonnie Harris:

Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. I felt a sense of real pride that I was giving the people at that time something the grasp to, even though I didn't care that they were grasping to it or not, all I wanted to do was play baseball. Hindsight, looking back now, and your question, I can see them gravitating to that and me gravitating to them. But, at that time, I didn't look at the sociological or philosophical ramifications of what I was doing in terms of the total African American community at that time, **the point of** your question.

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Now I can see it. But, at that time, hey, all I wanted to do was play ball. I hope that answers your question.

Lex Browning:

So, did you feel like – the Red Sox, obviously, they helped the black community a lot. Would you say you feel that they caused racial problems within Memphis, between the black and white community? Or did it kind of separate both of them, you know? The black community had the Red Sox and the white community had the Chicks. Do you feel like there was any tension because of the baseball team or do you think they almost kind of helped **it**?

Lonnie Harris:

That's a great question. I think the baseball side of the identity, in terms of the community, I think it spilled over in a way, I think.

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But, the most important part of the jelling together of the community sports-wise, was Larry Finch and the Memphis State Tigers. They were the solidifying factor and we started it and became a part of it. But, the Memphis State Tigers really brought the city together sports-wise. And, I think you guys know, being students. I'm a graduate of the class of '70. I – It's just amazing, all the ramifications of what went down then and what you're asking me now. I had no idea what was going on.

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And, right now, I'm seeing you two beautiful people, asking this question and it's blowing my mind. I'm trying to keep my cool, but I'm a very emotional dude. Can't help it. But, getting back to nailing your point, you and I know sports was a solidifying factor in this community. It had a heck of a ramification of jelling the community together for whatever it is today. And, that – I don't want to go off into this educational thing where the community is divided and they're going to have schools in the county, I don't want to go **there** right now. I hope you don't ask me that.

[Laughter]

[00:21:06.19]

Lex Browning:

So, were there any white spectators that would come to Martin Stadium and watch the Red Sox play in your time? Or was it just completely the people from the black community?

Lonnie Harris:

Excuse me, I didn't understand.

Lex Browning:

Were there any white spectators that came to watch you guys play when you guys were in Memphis?

Lonnie Harris:

Oh, definitely. Definitely. We had – That was the thing **that's so** shocking, you know. I thought maybe there would just be a very few of white who would come to the games, but there was a gang of 'em, for some reason. I guess they were like I was. They were Southerners who never did and I was a Northerner who never did so we clashed on a baseball field.

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Those who never, you know – I came here and they were – I'm coming to a black community where, hey, we were isolated and

whites who – I came. So, it was a beautiful clash and all the whites who came to the games, I made it a point to wave to them. And, my buddies said, "Hey, man, don't wave to those guys." I made it a point. It wasn't a woman, it was men I was waving to, you know? *[Laughter]* But, I always wanted them to feel comfortable coming to the games. And, I'd always run out to the outfield and they'd applaud and I'd wave to them. And, the guys said, "Why the hell are you waving to them white guys? They ain't applauding you. He just come out to see this game."

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I said, "Well, hey, we're a part of the game." And, they didn't understand. And, I didn't understand what I was doing, but I was doing it because I played with whites and blacks in Europe. Heck, so it wasn't nothing new. I hope I answered your question.

Lex Browning:

So, when you were playing with the Red Sox, going from town to town playing, you know, doing the barnstorming kind of baseball, how did those places, you know, like playing in Birmingham or, you know, wherever you were, how did playing in those places compare to playing in Memphis, community-wise or how you were accepted in your time there?

Lonnie Harris:

That's a great question. Barnstorming, you play with all the Major Leaguers, ex-Major Leaguers.

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They came here because there were very few black ball players and the people in the South, particularly the blacks – Because there were very few TVs in the communities out in Mississippi, **Hushpuppy**, Alabama, Louisiana or wherever, so when we went into a certain community in the South, and everybody heard about Jackie Robinson, you know, and they wanted to see a black ball player period. They couldn't believe it was a black ball player, you know. Well, anyway, these Major Leaguers who came down here to play against us were all black, no white – Willie Mays, Hank Aaron, all the Major Leaguers who were African American.

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And so, when I played against them going through the South, I had no idea at the time the impact that it was going to have, which we left on the communities that we played in. I can now see it in retrospect because they had never seen a black ball player in these

little – there were some towns we went in, they didn't have lights. Trucks came up with spotlights. Hey, you know, farmers, you know, black and white. Spotlights.

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They took cotton bags and made bases out of them. And, the grass was so tall it was **that** high, so when a ball was hit in the outfield, they gave us a baseball in the backfield to put in our back pocket. So, if the ball – When you ran out in the outfield and you couldn't find the ball, you reached into your back pocket and throw the ball back in. But, pertaining to your question of – I had no idea the impact that we were making on the people who were coming out there – black, white, children, men, women, girls, boys.

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I only see it now, how relevant it was to them. If I put myself in their place – who never saw a black ball player. And now, I feel so proud that I was a part of that, guys. And, in terms of your question, I only hope that if I had to do it over again, I'd do it the same way. I hope that answers your question.

Lex Browning:

What was it like to play with these Hall-of-Famers, Willie Mays and Hank Aaron, and to play against pitchers like Satchel Paige? At the time, did you understand how good these guys were? Understand what you were going through, you know, stealing on Satchel Paige or whatever it was?

[00:28:12.20]

Lonnie Harris:

[*Laughter*] Oh, man, you brought me **away with that**. You know what it was, you know. I couldn't believe it really, to be on the ball field with Willie Mays, Hank Aaron, you know. And then, have Satchel Paige pitch to me, you know, scared the hell out of me. [*Laughter*] Big, tall, ugly sucker. But, hey, it was an honor. I think I gave you the picture. I'm going to autograph all of that for you.

Lex Browning:

Fantastic Yeah, there's one here with you and Satchel –

Lonnie Harris:

Yeah, that's with Satchel. Yeah, he struck me out two times that day, and I got a walk, though. I stole the base on him and then he was – he kept **saying I wasn't** going to steal the base on him.

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But, anyway, I stole the base on him and he said, "I'm going to take a picture with you." I says, "Why?" He says, "You the first son of a who stole the base on me in I don't know when." 'Cause he had a delivery that kept people from stealing. You call it a "hesitation pitcher." Have you heard about it? Hey. Well, anyway, I deemed it a special honor to be on the field with those guys. But, you know one thing, guys? *[Laughter]* I had attitude. Hey. Seriously. I could play ball with anybody and I did. I proved it.

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The only thing I regret is that I never played ball in the big show but for one reason, and I don't want to get into that now because I will share that with you – it's a – Well, anyway, the only reason I didn't go to the big show, there were offers and they wouldn't sell me. Dr. Martin wouldn't sell me. And, I'll share with you why he wouldn't sell me, but I don't want to do it now because it's a totally personal thing.

Lex Browning:

I understand. All right. Let's see. So, after Dr. Martin passed away in 1961 and the Memphis Red Sox disbanded, how did that affect the black Memphis community? With the Civil Rights Movement starting up, they lose Negro League Baseball in the community. Did that really take a hit for the Memphis black community? Or did they still have the pride that they had with the Red Sox?

[00:31:14.09]

Lonnie Harris:

Oh, we had a beautiful impact on the community. It brought them together, like I said, with Larry Finch and the Tigers. But, the blacks were proud to see some of the African Americans go up and it gave the parents of the children who were sports-minded, particularly the boys, they saw within their young men an opportunity to go up in baseball. It had a hell of an impact on the community.

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And, the thing about it, people, sports at that time was a big factor of jelling the communities together, as I already referenced, Larry Finch and basketball and us. But, here's another part of that equation. It had to do with economics. The black community had a community of itself. They had barbershops, grocery stores.

They had all a community of itself economically and the whites had their thing. But, we're in America.

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We had to bring both of those things together. Why have a black community economically and a white community economically? The country was white, red, and blue. So, your point of what it did is so beautifully asked and I hope I can eloquently jell that question in a philosophical explanation why. It all had to do with one thing, one color: green. And, money's green. [Laughter] Money brought both communities together because they knew one without the other couldn't survive.

[00:34:04.05]

Sports were part of the equation, but down deep it was green. [Laughter] Did I answer the question?

Lex Browning:

Yeah, absolutely. I just kind of want to know, you know, after the Red Sox stopped playing in Memphis, what was – did you stay in Memphis after that, after the Red Sox quit playing? You said you went to Memphis State. How did the community cover from taking such a big hit like losing their baseball team, which was such an important part of the community? How did that affect the community itself?

Lonnie Harris:

Thank you for asking that. Gee, you ask some beautiful questions.

[00:34:58.07]

I had to make a decision, guys, of what I was going to do with the rest of my life after baseball. I didn't want to go back home and so what I did – For some reason I was really philosophically depressed at that time because I didn't want to go back home, and everybody was hoping when I came, they received me on the tube one day. So, what I did, guys, for about a week I was trying to figure out what I wanted to do.

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So, one night I was overwhelmed with an epiphany. I mean, overwhelmed. And, it said, "Library." I said, "What the hell is 'library,' man? I ain't – I never would go to no daggone library." So, I said, "Hey, I'll go to the library." Next day I went to the library. At that time, it was in a different locale than where it is

now. It was right off of Poplar, I mean, right off of Union, you know, in Memphis. So, I went there and I said, "What the heck am I going to do in a library?" Me. Well, later I got a newspaper and I sat there, and I saw people coming in and out, young and old.

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Most of the people who were old were reading the newspaper or magazine, and most of the young were sitting and studying. There were no computers at that time, of course. And, I said, "Why the hell am I here?" Something told me, "Go back to school, Lonnie." Go back to school. I said, "What in the hell? I want to play ball." But, I didn't want to waste the rest of my life playing here, playing there, bush league, wasting my life, because you can only play baseball so long, guys.

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So, what did I do? I said, "What you put here will be with you forever." And, that's why I had the epiphany to go to the library because it boomed in my mind: "education." I went back to school and the rest is history, educationally-wise, why I decided and what I did with the rest of my life. I attended Memphis State at the time, graduating class of '70 and everything else. I taught school 20 years at Humes Junior High and Graceland Junior High. I didn't sit around and play checkers, hunt, and fish. I put it here. I hope that answers your question.

Lex Browning:

Yeah, absolutely. Just switching gears a little bit, so you mentioned a little bit how you and your teammates kind of had different views on race. Could you expand a little bit more on that? How they responded to your views and your opinions on being from the North and coming down to a very racially segregated area?

[00:39:21.07]

Lonnie Harris:

How they dealt with me? *[Laughter]* Oh, man, I was hoping you wouldn't ask me that. You all have heard of Charley Pride, right? Well, he played with us, too, you know? He was a pitcher and whatnot. I tried to jell because, hey, I had a clash with some of the guys because I had a hell of an attitude then and a hell of an accent then.

[00:40:12.07]

I don't know if I still have a part of it or what, because once you get it, wherever you're born, you know, every now and then you say certain words and phrases. But, anyway, they dealt with me the same way I dealt with them at that time. We all came to play baseball. *[Laughter]* There were a number of times where there were certain things said and whatnot. I didn't comment, sometimes I did comment. And, we had our little frictions on the bus and whatnot, you know.

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But, overall, we were all on the team for one thing: to play ball and to win – like any team. But, at that time – Your question is so apropos because racial tensions at that time was high in the community, and that was the time Emmett Till was killed in Mississippi and the Civil Rights struggle was going on, you know. And, the blacks felt it and the whites felt it, and the black ball players who played together felt it. So, your question, you know – I try not to reflect on that because all I wanted to do was play ball. And, how I dealt with it, I made up my mind one thing, guys, at that time.

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Because at that time I didn't have no philosophical dialogue with myself and society educationally to deal with it, but I did it the best way I could at that time, because I was an ignorant son of a beehive. All I wanted to play was baseball. So, what I did – God, I **can't** believe you asked me that question. I didn't even want to deal with it, but I hope I nail it right now. There's a cliché: "When in Rome you do as the" what? The Romans do. So, at that time I didn't know that cliché. Hey, but now I can say it, but at that time I just all I wanted was to play baseball.

[00:43:03.03]

So, what I did, I just zipped my lip. Thank God I did because I don't know what I would have done, 'cause there would have been a gang of fights on the bus. Really, man. Because I had had it and they all knew it and they were setting me up. So, I could say something and, "Hey, I guess they **jump on me with my butt**" or whatever. So, I zipped my lip.

Lex Browning:

When you look at baseball today and the strides that have been made racially and everything, with the direction it's moving in, can you ever not feel a little bit responsible for your role in that,

playing in the Negro Leagues and the early years of integration when baseball used to be so separated and now it's fully integrated? Do you ever feel like you're in some way responsible for helping that process along?

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Lonnie Harris: That's a good question. I never had it asked in that way. But, I think I did my part in it. There were a lot of things I could have done maybe a little more aggressively helping out in a way. But, I think I did my part in one way: dealing with my students.

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But, here's the thing about it, guys. When I taught school – I don't know if I'm digressing, but I'll get back to your point. The students never knew that I played baseball. I never told them that because I didn't want them to use it as an excuse. 'Cause I taught math and English. You know how students sit and, "Mr. Harris, what did you do when you hit against Satchel Paige?"

And, you know, they'll digress me off the subject of math and I knew very well what they're were doing. They were putting me on. So, I never let them know I played ball. All I told them was to get an education and play sports later. So, now when I run into them at Busch Stadium, I mean, at AutoZone and places and I tell them I played ball, they say, "Mr. Harris, you didn't play no baseball." I show them baseball cards and blow their minds.

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You know, they say, "Hey, man, you got to be kidding." Well, anyway, getting back to your question. I tried my best to do what I did when I did it. I don't know if that answers your question in terms of how I dealt with being here, unless you want me to answer a little more to it. You can ask me **more**.

Lex Browning: I just kind of wanted to see what you felt about it, what you felt when you watch – Like on Monday, this past Monday, Jackie Robinson Day. When you look at that, you know, do you somehow feel a little bit responsible that, you know, you played in the Negro Leagues, which were a cornerstone in being the integration of baseball. You're a part of baseball history that no one can ever take away. Would you ever sit down and think and say, "Wow, I did this and this happened because of me. I played

against this guy and I did this." Does that ever resonate with you and just give you a sort of pride in baseball today?

[00:47:28.03]

Lonnie Harris:

Thank you for asking me that. I've seen Jackie 42 the premiere, you know, and every time I see it tears run down my face, you know. Because I was a Brooklyn Dodger fan from day one, way before Jackie. I was a Dodger fan during the Second World War. And, why I became a Dodger fan, like I say, I don't know. But, anyway, I wanted to be different. My impact on being a part of this baseball equation that had so much to do with your question of how the ramifications of it did, in terms of me, the people I dealt with, and me period, in terms of what I did, I was proud to be a part of all of it.

[00:48:33.01]

At the time, I had no idea what I was doing. I was doing what I was doing in terms of history. I had no idea what I was doing. In answer to your beautiful question, if I had it all to do all over again, I'd do it the same way. The most important part of what I felt in what I did, the little that I did, when I was watching the movie 42 – Have you guys **put** – I was overwhelmed both times, you know. Hey, I'm an emotional dude.

[00:49:28.26]

And, I – After the movie, I went to the premiere and they asked me about it and I said, "Hey, it blew me away," you know. Trying to be a little macho here. I sat there crying just like every woman, everybody else in that movie **who were** – 'cause I was watching Jackie doing all that in Brooklyn, I was a Brooklyn Dodger fan, I saw when he came in, you know. Hey. So, seeing that in front of me all these years, I couldn't believe, here I am 83, you know, and looking at that blew me away. But, back to your question.

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I only know one thing: as long as there are people like you two associates who are doing what you do, particularly you, asking questions to people like me, I think we have hope, not only philosophically, societally, sports-wisely, but overall-ly, if there's such a word as "overall-ly." [Laughter] There will be hope for the community, communities to get together. But, right now we're having a hell of a thing. I know this has nothing to do with what

you're asking me, but the county is dividing and the city is dividing educationally.

[00:51:31.23]

So, let's not get off into that. One more point about your question. I only hope and pray that there are more people like you and your associate here to do what you do. And, I only hope and pray that there are more the people who – of me who will be around when you ask those questions 'cause we're dying like flies. We only have three people in the city now. Joe Scott just passed, I think you heard. He was the godfather, so I have taken over his spot as the oldest in Memphis. And, there's two other guys: Bill Little and Reggie Scott. Reggie Howard. Getting back to your point one more time, not to beat a dead horse, I –

[00:52:49.05]

I'm proud to know that there are people like you and your associate doing what you're doing, 'cause you have no idea what you're doing. You're bringing us closer together.

Lex Browning:

One last question. When you think about your time in the Negro Leagues, is there a favorite memory or one or two favorite things that you think back and say, "Oh, man, this was just what it was all about." Something like that, just a favorite story about your time?

Lonnie Harris:

My favorite time in the Negro League was – well, there's two. Number one was we played an All-Star game against the Major Leaguers when they came through.

[00:53:49.08]

Yeah, Willie Mays was in left field, Hank Aaron was in right field, and I think another dude was in center field, I can't remember his name. Charley Pride was pitching. They had – We were playing in Monroe, Louisiana and the Major Leaguers were kicking our butts in all the games we were playing. This was 1954-55. And, the score was 2-2, sixth inning, something like that. And, there was a guy by the name of – at the time it was a Chicago Cub pitcher, Sad Sam Jones. *[Laughter]*

[00:54:46.11]

Well, anyway, the score was 2-2. He came up, you know, **the first time** and he was a mean, **mad** dude. First pitch, strike. First pitch,

curveball. I hit it out of the park, you know, homerun. And, he was frustrated. And, I ran around him. I know he was cussing, you know. Well, anyway, there was another guy, Bob Boyd. He was the manager of our team. He was playing with Baltimore but this was his hometown, so he took over the running of our team. He hit a homerun, so we beat the Major Leaguers 4-2.

[00:55:38.22]

And, man, they had a fit. They rode on the bus with us after every game. Charley Pride would entertain them, singing and dancing. Willie Mays and Hank Aaron, you know, we would all be singing and dancing, you know, on the bus. But, that night we beat them and the whole thing was playing on the radio. [Laughter] That was number one. Second thing that I can remember was the first game I played in the Negro American League. I didn't get a hit but I got three walks and stole about eight bases at Martin Stadium in 1953 my rookie year I **broke** in. And, those are the two things –

[00:56:47.20]

Oh, one more. Yeah, I played in New York in front of my family at Yankee Stadium. That was the thing. My family. And, I stole eight – I think it tells you on the back of that card. Anyway, I stole about eight or nine bases then. Those are the three things that I can remember. Hey.

Lex Browning:

Well, I appreciate you coming and talking to us. Those are all the questions I have now. But, I really appreciate it. We've got a lot of great stuff. I was wondering if you have anyone else that you thought I should talk to about this, whether former players or just community members that you think might be helpful.

Lonnie Harris:

Pardon me?

Lex Browning:

I was wondering if you knew or if you had any suggestions of anyone else I should talk to in this regard, whether they be former players or just community members you think could help in my research?

[00:57:41.08]

Lonnie Harris:

That's a good question. On your paper? You want somebody – Yeah, I got a person who really, really – If you contact this person – He's already been interviewed by Harvard University. He's an ex-ball player. Reginald Howard. I'm going to give him your

number and you call him. And, man, he is far out. Philosophically, it's up here. He will give you all the data about all the ex ball players and stuff. Man, hey. But, anyway, Reginald Howard.

[00:58:36.18]

Other than that, everyone else is just about dead. Bill Little is – he has cancer and I would love for you to speak with him but he's too weak to really do anything educationally. I hope I have answered your questions, you know.

Lex Browning: Absolutely. **You've done** –

Lonnie Harris: Thank you.

Lex Browning: This has been fantastic. I appreciate it. Thank you very much.

Lonnie Harris: You're welcome.

[End of Audio]