



Bob Motley

Bob Motley is a rare historical figure at best. He is a living legend, the *only* living umpire from the historic Negro Baseball Leagues.

Born in Autaugaville, Alabama in 1923 Bob Motley has lived an extraordinary and colorful life. Ironically, it was while serving as a Marine during World War II where Motley found his life's passion, umpiring. From a few stints as an arbitrator for military pick-up games amongst the distressed soldiers, he would eventually find his way to the Negro American League after being honorably discharged and receiving a Purple Heart.

Starting in 1949, Bob began his journey umpiring in the Negro Leagues. He worked his way up through the ranks ultimately becoming chief umpire. Throughout his years in the Negro Leagues where he stayed until 1956, Bob umpired games with great Black players including legends Satchel Paige, Hilton Smith, Willie Mays, Goose Tatum, Ernie Banks, Buck O'Neil, Hank Aaron and the man he says was the greatest Black player at that time, newly elected Hall of Famer Willard Brown. A career highlight in the Negro Leagues was umpiring two East-West All Star games in Chicago's Comiskey Park in 1953 and 1954.



Later Bob would continue to hone his craft at the Al Summer Umpire School in Daytona Beach, Florida where he graduated top of the class two years in a row. Unfortunately with Jim Crow lurking about in the late 50's, the highest he would make it up the umpire chain would be to AAA ball in the Pacific Coast League. Not one to take no for an answer, he continually tried to break the major leagues umpire color barrier for years, writing the commissioner and his white counterparts who had graduated beneath him in umpire school and were now in the majors. Bob would never realize this dream for himself, but his campaign helped heighten the awareness of discrimination in the Majors and paved the way for younger umpires of color who followed.

In 1987 Motley retired from the General Motors Corporation after 37 years of service. In addition to umpiring in the Negro and Pacific Coast Leagues, he also umpired the College World Series and officiated semi-pro, high school and college sports including basketball and football. He lives in Kansas City, MO and currently serves on the Board of Directors for the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum and is a Royal Lancer with the Kansas City Royals baseball organization. Bob has been married for 54 years to Pearlina Hayes Motley.

Bob has written his autobiography "Ruling over Monarchs, Giants and Stars : Umpiring in the Negro Leagues and Beyond".

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