

Glenn's resolute love of the game

By William C. Kashatus

Stanley "Doc" Glenn was a man who spoke softly but carried a big stick — a baseball bat, to be precise.

I first met Glenn in 1997, when he was speaking to high school students about the history of Negro league baseball. Fascinated by his reminiscences, I asked if I could interview him for a book I was writing. He agreed, and over the next six years he became a personal inspiration to me.

Glenn, who died last week at the age of 84, taught me that even though life isn't always fair, you can't allow the setbacks to "take your joy away."

To be sure, Glenn had reason to be a bitter man. Until 1947, when Jackie Robinson broke baseball's color barrier, African Americans were forced to establish their own teams and leagues to play the game they loved.

Glenn was a catcher and the captain of the baseball team at John Bartram High School in Southwest Philadelphia. Known then as "Slamming Stanley," he led Bartram to two city championships and captured the attention of the New York Yankees with his offensive and defensive prowess. But when the Bronx Bombers discovered Glenn was black, their interest vanished.

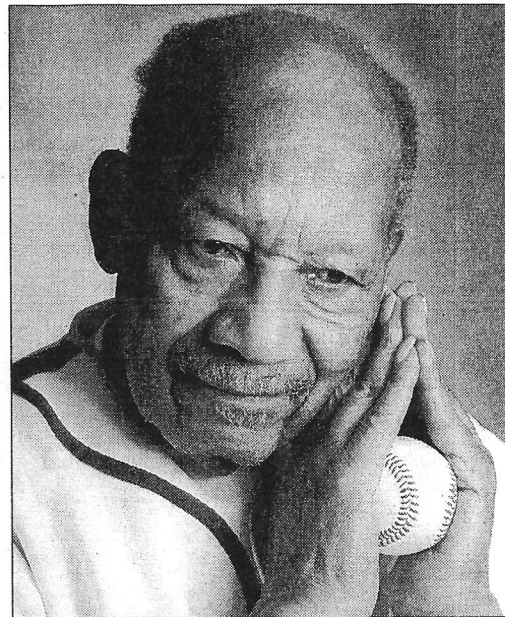
Denied a career in the major leagues, he joined the Philadelphia Stars of the Negro National League immediately after his graduation in 1944, at the age of 17. With the exception of a brief stint in the Army Medical Corps, Glenn spent the next several years in the Negro leagues.

He endured fleabag hotels, ramshackle buses, subpar fields, and segregated facilities. He and other players were routinely stopped by police for no reason and subjected to racial slurs, not only in the South, but also in the rural North. And he was paid just \$175 a month.

Remarkably, Glenn chose to dismiss the racism as "pure ignorance" and focus on the joy of playing with and against some of the greatest ballplayers in history. Nicknamed "Doc" because of his background as an Army medical tech, Glenn was "schooled" by some future Hall of Famers, including Stars manager Oscar Charleston. In one of his first starts, he recalled, Josh Gibson of the Homestead Grays purposely spiked him while sliding into home plate and then warned him to learn the sweep tag — or else "next time you'll really get hurt." Glenn said he became a smarter player for the advice.

The biggest thrill of Doc's career came in 1949, when he caught Satchel Paige, another Hall of Famer who briefly pitched for the Stars. "As hard as he threw, the ball was like a feather: It moved all over the place, so you really had to know how to catch," Glenn remembered.

The Stars' games were attended by growing numbers of white fans. On Monday nights,



CHARLES FOX/ Staff Photographer

Stanley "Doc" Glenn in 2006.

when major leaguers were traveling between cities, the Stars played at Shibe Park, where they could draw close to 30,000 spectators. Average attendance at their home field, at 44th and Parkside, was 25,000. Often, there were more whites than blacks in the stands. The Phillies, by comparison, struggled to attract 10,000 fans for a doubleheader.

"Integration," Doc was fond of saying, "was a matter of dollars and sense." Major-league owners realized that white fans would pay to see black ballplayers, and greed overcame prejudice.

After the Negro leagues folded in the 1950s, Glenn was signed by the Boston Braves. After a brief stint in the minors, he returned to Philadelphia, where he was employed in the wholesale electrical supply business.

In the 1990s, when the Negro League Baseball Players Association was established, Glenn became one of its most active members and, later, president of its board of directors. He wrote an autobiography, appropriately titled *Don't Let Anyone Take Your Joy Away*, and he shared his passion for the game with youngsters and adults, black and white. Speaking at schools, churches, and community centers throughout the Delaware Valley, he educated audiences about the history of black baseball and emphasized goodwill and mutual understanding in race relations.

Often refusing payment, Doc insisted that he spoke "for the love of the game." And he did it with great humility, integrity, and class. I will always be grateful for his example.

William Kashatus is writing a book on the integration of baseball. He can be reached at bill@historylive.net.