

**ORAL HISTORY T-0015**  
**INTERVIEW WITH JAMES (COOL PAPA) BELL**  
**INTERVIEWED BY DR. ARTHUR SHAFFER AND DR. CHARLES**  
**KORR**  
**BLACK COMMUNITY LEADERS PROJECT**  
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Today is September 8, and this is a tape-recording in the Oral History Series of the Archives of the University of Missouri. The recording today is being made with Mr. James Bell, a former baseball player in the Negro Leagues in the United States, Caribbean and Mexico with Dr.'s Arthur Shaffer and Charles Korr.

SHAFFER: Today is September 8, and, why don't we each identify ourselves. I'm Arthur Shaffer.

BELL: "Cool Papa" Bell

KORR: Charles Korr.

SHAFFER: And we're discussing Mr. Bell's career in the Negro Leagues and his long association with them. You might start by telling us something about your background, Mr. Bell.

BELL? You wanted to know how I started in?

SHAFFER: How you started in baseball, and where you're from, and...

BELL: Well, I was born in Starkville, Mississippi in 1903 and I came to St. Louis in 1920 and I started playing sandlot ball on Compton Hill.

SHAFFER: Had you ever played ball anywhere in Mississippi?

BELL; Yeah, we played it in Mississippi. It wasn't a league, we just had a little team, playing around, different neighborhoods. In 1922 I started playing professional ball with the St. Louis Stars. It was the old St. Louis Giants and they sold the franchise in 1922 to Richard Kent and they was looking for a pitcher so they found me.

SHAFFER: What teams did the League consist of?

BELL: In 1922 they had the St. Louis Stars, the Detroit Stars, the Chicago American Giants, the Kansas City Monarchs. I can't think of all the teams. The league changed so: There were eight teams and some of the teams folded around in 1924 and they organized it again, in Birmingham and Memphis. But all together they had four different leagues, they had a Texas

league, they had a Southern league and a Western league, we was in the Western League, and they had the Eastern league.

SHAFFER: How were there leagues connected, I mean, did you have playoffs?

BELL: Yea, we would play off the Eastern League... the Western League would play the Eastern League in the playoffs and the Southern league and the Texas League, they would have their playoff.

SHAFFER; What kind of salary did they pay you?

BELL: Well, they wasn't payin' very much when we first started, but they were payin', some of the Southern teams back there, they was just payin' by the week, but they was payin' us by the month... when I started I was only getting ninety dollars a month for playing. And some of them was getting a hundred, a hundred twenty five, two hundred dollars or something like that. But I played here for ten years and my salary went up to two hundred twenty dollars and when I went out East, they was paying more out East because they was playing more, they played every day.

SHAFFER: How often did you play here?

BELL: We all, we played five games a week.

SHAFFER: So you couldn't hold down another job then while you were playing.

BELL: No, we had contracts, we played full time baseball. But you know, only five months, like they do in the Major Leagues you only played five months and that was your salary for five months. A lot of people think you get paid the whole year around.

SHAFFER: Two hundred and twenty dollars a month about 1932(sic) wasn't a bad salary.

BELL: No, in 1922, see that money there was just money, not like today, You know it wasn't.. a dollar is not a dollar anymore.

SHAFFER: Where did the team play in St. Louis?

BELL: We played at Compton and Market, there where the old Vashon High School, it's Harris Teachers College now.

SHAFFER: Oh, Harris Teachers College.

BELL: It's kind of centered there, that was where the park was situated. They cut off twenty feet and they made the park smaller. That was in 1931. So the league broke up then, in '31. The Southern league had gone white before that. The Texas league was folded. And they had the league that had started to playing out East and most of the ball players went out East and it really wasn't half a league at that time and then they formed the league again out West, and they called this western league, the American league. And out East they called it the National League.

SHAFFER: So it's sort of parallel to the Major Leagues. What about the ownership?

BELL: Most owners, they lived well, they had doctors, sometimes it would be two or three of them.

SHAFFER: It was entirely Black? Was the management Black as well?

BELL: When I first started, all then were Black but one, the Kansas". City Monarchs, that was a white man, and then 1932, the Monarchs, they didn't have a team, they did have a team in Chicago and he was a white man, but the rest of them was all colored. And when they started this league over again, Kansas City come back and they still had a white man, the same man.

SHAFFER: Is that when Satchel Paige played for..?

BELL: Oh, Satchel Paige played for the Monarchs, "38 through "47.

SHAFFER; I guess that's when he went to Cleveland?

BELL: He went to Cleveland in 1947... Mr. Wilkerson, he had a son, and it was Wilkerson whose eyes went bad and he sold his franchise to his co-owner, Tom Burd, and he give his team to his son, that was Wilkerson Jr., and that was a farm of the team. They was training ball pitchers developing them to sell to the Major Leagues who were taking them. So I managed the team, the farm team, and Satchel Paige was with me and he stayed with me a month and nine days and then he went to Cleveland. But the league team got credit for him, see, they was a league team. See, the public didn't know that. We would play in the territory with this farm team, in the territory of the Monarchs we was the Kansas City Stars, with Satchel Paige, and then we'd play out of the territory, we^ say Kansas City Monarchs with Satchel Paige. And a lot of scouts, was scouting my team thought that was the league team and we sold about thirty- eight ball players and twenty of the ball players that I had scouted started, and developed was sold to the major leagues. All of them didn't make the Majors then but they were in the farm system, at that they weren't taking them too fast. Some of 'em got too old to be in.

SHAFFER: Were there any familiar names besides Satchel Paige?

BELL: Well, Satchel was with me when they signed him.

SHAFFER: Those who made it in the major leagues.

BELL: Frank Bonds made it, he played here with the Cardinals for awhile, he was a pitcher... and Satchel, Bonds, I had another... Banks, Elston Howard.

SHAFFER: Oh! Ernie Banks, you mean'? I didn't know he played.. Of course, Elston Howard is...

BELL: Yea, Banks, Howard, I found those. I think those were the only ones that played in it, in the majors. That I can remember now. But we had. A lot of 'em was good enough to play but at that time they didn't have too many Blacks on each team and, they wasn't bringing 'em

up. They had some great ball players that didn't come up.

SHAFFER: You think that there was a kind of quota system?

BELL: Yea, they had to be that way.. see, the public the one that had to accept them and naturally that you couldn't put too many, you know. Blacks on. It was the same when we went to Mexico, I used to play in Mexico, when we developed. a league down in Mexico and we had about thirty five players out of our league went down. One of our teams had fourteen blacks on there and only had one Mexican playing, but the public said no, we want to see our players. And so it's that way. It's natural with anyone.

SHAFFER: When do you think that changed, when teams began just taking players on the basis of ability rather than worrying about race?

BELL: Well, I couldn't say that because it will take a long time yet.

SHAFFER: There's still a kind of.

BELL: Yes, the generation will have to run down. The young people will have to do this. You have to know one another. That's the only thing. See, you've been so far a part, you have to be reared up with each other. You have to go to school and know, you know, that a human being is just a human being, but if you are deprived or something and don't get to the opportunity to do things naturally you gonna be lagging behind.

SHAFFER: Do you think there's still, in Major League baseball, a tendency to limit the number of Black players?

BELL: I feel, myself, you can't use too many out there because they won't even let you have a black team together in the Major Leagues.

SHAFFER: Were you surprised a couple of days ago when the Pirates had a Black team, except for the pitcher they had eight blacks.

KQRR: Oh, I think they started nine blacks, with a black pitcher. It's apparently the first time in Major League history.

BELL: Yes, that's a thing of now, that they have more blacks, I think, than any other team, I think. At one time San Francisco had 'em but you change around , they coming up so fast, that how I have to make this other two teams in the Major Leagues, there's ten, now there twelve. And because there so many blacks coming up and you just can't send them down. You have to make room some place.

KORR: A lot of people have claimed that blacks are allowed to play only if they are very good, you don't see many black bench warmers. Second string players. Do you think that is still true?

BELL: It's not like it used to be when they first started. I don't think, from my ideas, after they picked Jackie Robinson and Doby, Campanella. Some of the teams was a long time, you know, and they wasn't getting our best ball players, they was getting a guy that they could sit

down but the public, if you hadn't wanted them to play, so they had to get the best ones. So that's not the way it is now that if you are on a team, they would rather see you. Play to the public. They would rather see you play but sometimes you get too many on a tea^ than you'd they talking about another league now because they coming up so fast. And a lot of them up from Cuba and Mexico, not Mexico, Puerto Rico and Dominican Republic. See, they can play the whole year around and they develop faster.

SHAFFER: Someone told me today that only two of the black players on the Cardinals are from the United States, just Gibson and Brock and the rest are Latins. Did you have any Latins in the Negro Leagues?

BELL: Oh yea, they had a whole team in our league, a whole team in the Western League and a the in the Eastern League. Cepeda, Orlando Cepeda's daddy played

BELL: played out in the Eastern League and we had them on our team. Different teams had them. So there, you know, the light ones, we had light ones too on our team but they don't make and difference now, you just play down there. We had some that passed for here but, see, ninety percent of the people in Cuba is Black people. I mean not only the face is black but their ancestors are black. So it's a little different down there than it is here.

SHAFFER: But they did come up here as early as the 1920's?

BELL: Oh, yea Way before that time. They had some great ball players from down there. When I come up some of them had been up so long, I didn't even know them. I started playing in 1922. And they had some great ball players before my time. The only thing now is just a few names who stay alive, like Satchel Paige, me. Cool Papa Bell, Josh Gibson, Joe Williams, John Henry Lloyd. Now you may hear those names, Oscar - Charleston, those names, but people thought that we had just a few ball-players. At one time they thought we only had just Satchel Paige; was the only pitcher we had. We had great pitchers way before his time, before you was born and pitching along with him.

SHAFFER: But Paige was the one who won the reputation?

BELL: Yea, you see his name stayed alive more often than someone else. And he was a great pitcher, we had other great pitchers too. He was faster than anyone I've ever seen. So we had other' pitchers •AO could win, too, and they were fast. A lot of them were fast, some of them wasn't so fast but they pitched a good game.

SHAFFER: Were you surprised when they brought Paige up?

BELL: Yea, I didn't think he would accept it. I know that, see he was about forty two years old when they brought him up. I didn't think he was gonna accept, he had played twenty some years in the Negro Leagues. But I said to myself that it's a kind of different system that you play, and we had a lot of pitchers that was good and our umpiring was bad. That I know Satchel Paige,(difficult to understand)..out of all the pitchers I know at the time,

BELL: you see, at the time they were putting them in the Major Leagues we didn't have any to put in there. Most of our ball players were too old. We didn't have many youngsters coming up. And, I said, Paige is the only one can go in there now, of our pitchers and throw

strikes. But most of our other pitchers, they didn't know the strike zone, not that they couldn't throw, but they was trained in different leagues. We had umpires, like here playing in St. Louis, they would have St. Louis umpires. We'd go to Memphis and they play with Memphis umpires. You'd get two strikes on you, and you could throw the ball over your shoulder and they would call you out. And so that makes the difference.

SHAFFER: What kind of crowds did you have?

BELL: Well, we had pretty good crowds. In later years we drew twenty thousand people, fifteen. It wasn't like when I first started, we'd draw three thousand, five thousand, six thousand on Sundays or Holidays. Sometimes we would, I remember the largest crowd we had here in St. Louis, it was fourteen thousand.

But we had All-Star games we'd play every year, we had as high as fifty thousand. Played at Comiskey Park in Chicago.

SHAFFER: You were probably drawing more people than the Browns.

BELL: Well, we were here at one time -when we had lights. See, we had lights before any of the Major Leagues had lights. We had lights in 1929. And they didn't get them in the Major Leagues until 193<sup>^</sup>. That was in Cincinnati. In 1927 we played under portable lights. We had lights, naturally they weren't as good as the lights that we have at the stadium here but we had them the same way.

SHAFFER: Well, they weren't too good. in the Major Leagues at first, either.

BELL: No, they had nothing approved.

SHAFFER: I'm just curious, as to what are your feelings about the fact that so few people know these kinds of things about the Negro Leagues, for instance, that there were more than just three or four great ball players, that there were, you were playing under lights before Cincinnati was. Does it bother you?

BELL: No, it don't bother me. A lot of the young people don't know, a lot of the older people know some of the things, some of them won't tell it. And some of 'em is dead. And they kept the black hidden, not only in baseball, in any form of life that we had outstanding black people. But they just didn't keep the records. Just like our baseball, they just said it was sandlot baseball.

SHAFFER; Then it was referred to as that?

BELL: Yea, we was organizing in our league just like they were in a way but there wasn't much money because the people didn't have jobs, you know, some people couldn't get jobs, that was qualified for the jobs. So now it's changing now, it's going to take time to change these things and it have to take different generations, like I say, to die out. Because as long as we have black or white, you know, people might say that their brains are twisted, so it's hard to untwist them. And education have to bring that out. Understanding, knowing one another.

SHAFFER: Do you think it might have helped during the 1920's and '30's if more people had

known about things like the Negro Leagues?

BELL: oh, yea! It would have helped.

SHAFFER: The audience, the crowds, were they always all black or were there whites?

BELL: Oh, they had white, the/had lid-life and black, that's when I said they knew about it.

SHAFFER: Did the local newspapers cover the games?

BELL: No, not, much. Only the black papers. And, you see, a lot of the people don't read the black papers. And they don't know about em.

SHAFFER: So the Post Dispatch would never cover...

BELL: Well, they would carry some things, not, not too much. When we'd go to these different places down South, that they would have a white side for the white and one for the black. Why, we'd have just as many whites as we

BELL,- do blacks. But back then it was different.

SHAFFER: Did they do that in St. Louis? Were the stands segregated in St. Louis?

BELL: No, it wasn't segregated, the big league was segregated. We could. only sit in the pavilion the bleachers. We couldn't sit in the stands.

SHAFFER: Until when, about how late?

BELL it: I can't remember hew late was it, I -Sink it was sometime in the "30's. See, that's why they say now the young people don't know these things, and, they didn't write about them. You see how they could, have kept history of us if they had of wanted to. So that's what they are trying to do now, teach in these schools, and the people don't understand it. About, you go to school and you see outstanding pictures in the books, you know, they mix 'em in these schools (next part unclear; I know some black person did a whole lot from his picture, I want to know about what happened, what did he do? They want to know now, that they brought black people over here in 1619 and. up until now, what did they do for this country? Like my father, or something, or my grandfather, or great-grandfather, what did he do? Well, he picked cotton, he plowed, you know, something like that. They didn't do nothing outstanding, maybe mine didn't. But someone did. So those the things that your own people don't know. They never got any credit for it.

SHAFFER: Do you sort of get tired of seeing George Washington Carver as the only black?

BELL: See, you know about a few of 'em. They come along a little late, you know. George Washington Carver, Booker T. Washington, but we had greater men than them. But if you don't write about 'em, then you won't know anything about them.

SHAFFER: Do you think the fact that baseball did finally integrate, that that has made a lot of difference? Do you think that helped?

BELL: yea, that made a lot of difference. When they integrated baseball, and, they put the right man in. there at that time, Jackie Robinson, a lot of people now don't like him now, but he made it better for jobs for people. Because when he went in there, he took a lot of abuse. That's one of the reasons they picked him, because he had went to white schools, and played football, basketball, and baseball.

SHFFER: He went to the same school we did UCLA?

BELL: Yea, that's what I'm talking about. That's the thing about it, you see, he had mixed, he had, he had some part had mixed. And we had a lot of ball players who didn't make it because they couldn't take the abuse. Now it's just a...

SHAFFER: Now, you say abuse. Were they abused by their team-mates or by the fans?

BELL: By the public, you know, they'd holler from the stands. Well, some of the team-mates were, or so I've heard about, now I don't know this for true. That, you know, they sort of snubbed them, you know, didn't want to play them and, but they didn't know any better. See, that's the only thing, until we all are equal to a certain extant, it's the way you were brought up, it's the way you're taught, you know, like that.

SHAFFER: Was there a lot of resentment among those playing in the Negro Leagues against the Major Leagues because they wouldn't take blacks in?

BELL: No, a lot of people didn't like it, in a way, but since they broke up the Negro League. See, see after the Negroes, after the best players were going into the Majors, they didn't have nothing to go and look at, so they said, we have this boy, we know that he can play, give him a chance. But they don't mind, they glad that he going in there, they was like me, I was glad, I was glad to see this, that's one of the best things was that the public, black and white, they know that we have ballplayers, that it's not your color, it's the same qualities you have to be born with. I don't care whose son, how much more, you got, or how long you get out there and train, if he's not born with this natural ability, he ain't gonna be no ball.., he not gonna go better than the farm. From 17 years to 25 years, old, if you can't throw, or run, you'll never do it. And by then you can see, course your weight might get a little higher, but in that age you can know if that fellow gonna be a little stocky or not.

SHAFFER: Were you in St. Louis, living in St. Louis, when Robinson broke into the Majors?

BELL: Mmhhmm.

SHAFFER: There were a lot of stories in the Eastern press, in particular, that the Cardinals were the team that gave Robinson the roughest time, that they threatened to go on strike, and they wouldn't play against him.

BELL: Well, all I read about those things, that I would know, about those things, I only read, it, like you read it. I was playing then myself, and I wasn't going to ballgames too much then, cause I was playing at that time.

SHAFFER: Were you playing in the Mexican League at that time, you mentioned. ?

BELL: In '47 uh, no I was playing, I think, in '45, when they signed me after the season in '46, in '46 he went to Montreal and I was out East, and I come back in '47 we was going to have a team in Detroit, but something happened, and they wouldn't give us the car, so we played as Associated member, in the Negro League. Then in '48, that's when I started to manage the farm team of the Monarchs, and I managed 'em for three years.

SHAFFER: Now, you -were talking about the Kansas City Monarchs?

BELL: No, we were associated with the Eastern League, out there.

SHAFFER: About how long did the Negro Leagues last, when did, they break up".

BELL: I don't know, exactly, -what year they broke up, it had to be, it was in sometime in 50's.

SHAFFER: Mr. Bell was just mentioning that he used to play winter ball in Los Angeles, in the 1920's.

BELL: In 1923, was the first year I played out there. I played 1923, and I didn't go back out there until 1933. '33,'34, and '35 I played out there.

SHAFFER: Now was this an organized league, as well?

BELL: No, it was just a winter league. They had there three white teams, and one colored team. Just four teams would play.

SHAFFER: I was going to ask you about that, if during those years you ever played against white teams.

BELL: Oh, yeah. We played, I played against a lot of the Major League teams too. We played the Detroit Tigers here, in 1922, all except Ty Cobb and Harry Heilmann. They wouldn't play.

SHAFFER: Cobb was from Georgia.

BELL; Well, yeah, they had played down in Cuba and they said they wouldn't play against black ball players anymore. But we played 'em at Compton and Market over there, beat 'em two out of three.

SHAFFER: Did this happen frequently, I mean, playing against Major League teams, or was this the only time?

BELL: Oh, that's about the only time that I knew, that I heard that they said they didn't want to play . In Cuba, we had some guys from Carolina out there, a guy used to pitch for the Yankees. I thought of his name, now. But they went down there, and they didn't know about Cuba, they played winter baseball down there and, they all, the Cubans speak Spanish, well, they had light ones and everything, but a lot of them don't know so much about the dark people down there, which I didn't know until I went down there. I didn't know, I thought all

the Cubans, in a way, was white.

SHAFFER: You thought they were Spanish?

BELL; Yeah, Spanish, but they used to play here, I thought there was just a few of them, played ball, but when I went down there, naturally, I couldn't speak Spanish. We had loads of mail, and we'd go out there, and we didn't know a mailbox from nothing else, you know. And we were looking at one we thought was an American, a Negro, dark, and we'd say something to him, and he'd start speaking Spanish, and so, we'd just have to go back to the hotel, we had some boys had played down there, they helped us out.

SHAFFER: What kind of salaries did they pay you?

BELL; Down there? Oh, they was just paying down there \$175 a month, and all the expenses of transportation.

SHAFFER: So it was better than you were making..?

BELL: Better than some of 'em was making. I went down there too, I didn't want to go, they'd been trying to get me down there for a long time and I didn't go. And, I got married, decided to spend my honeymoon down there, and played ball down there. They gave me \$200 and my expense.

CORTINOVIS: You went as an individual, not the whole team?

BELL: No, they got a All Star team. They wouldn't get a whole team, get they'd some of the players on each team, some from the West, some from the East. And they'd go there and play. They had only four teams down there during the winter, and they was all mixed.

CORTINOVIS: Did you play just in Havana?

BELL: No, they had two teams in Havana, and they had one in and the other one in. Those were smaller towns.

CORTINOVIS: About the only towns on the island, really.

BELL; Yeah. Well, they had another in Santiago, but they didn't play there.

SHAFFER: Did the white and the black players from the United States mix there?

BELL: They mixed... when they first went there, some of them didn't like to play, but, they got used to it.

CORTINOVIS: In your article you mention about playing, after playing with the white Major Leaguers, after the close of the regular season.

BELL: Of the regular season, yes. We played 'em, an All-Star team. See, when we played the Detroit Tigers here, and beat 'em two out of three, well. Judge Landis wouldn't let 'em play our whole team intact, because they was keeping their blacks out of the Major Leagues, and

if we could beat 'em, why not let 'em play? So, and, so they would let 'em play an Ail-Star team, and if we beat 'em, we hadn't beat no big league team. So that's the way...

SHAFFER: So it was deliberately done to keep you... Was there any publicity about those games. Did the local press carry those?

BELL: Yeah, we had, the black papers I think, had.

SHAFFER: But the larger papers..?

BELL: Well, I didn't get any clippings from them. I wasn't keeping a scrapbook or nothing at that time.

SHAFFER: What I was wondering about was if there was an effort to keep it quiet.

BELL: Well, I don't know if there was an effort to keep it the public quiet or not, but knew that they played 'em in the off season. And a lot of the people, black and white, say, well, "They're not in their league, they're not trying to play". Only they did.

CORTINOVIS: But, when you played these games, where were the games?

BELL: We played out there, at Compton and Market, here in St. Louis.

CORTINOVIS: Yeah, where they used to have the circus. The big field.

BELL: Now, there was a-team before I started, in 1921, played the Sportsmans Park. See, now our league, the whole wasn't as strong as the Major Leagues because a lot of the ball players wouldn't play because they wasn't making enough money, a lot of them had jobs. But, you pick an Ail-Star team, and you could play, and have the same chance at beating any Major League team, and in our league, in later years, you could pick three teams out of each league, and put 'em in the Major Leagues, and they would hold their own there, if they had enough men. But you see, we didn't carry but about fourteen to eighteen men. In the Major League they carry, you see, about twenty-five. Now, in a short series, we could beat 'em. You play from three to five games, we could beat 'em. But you play more than that, our pitchers, you know, wouldn't have enough rest. So we didn't have, we kept about five pitchers, sometimes we have three outstanding pitchers. And, it's not that we couldn't get the pitchers if they was making enough money, but so many good ballplayers wouldn't play ball 'cause they wasn't making it, it wasn't paying anything. When I started, I didn't start playing ball just for money. My brother wanted me to play, if I could play professional ball. I was working at a packing house, and I was making more money at the packing house and playing on the lot. Now the team wanted me to play on Sunday, I pitched and played outfield, I was a pitcher when I played then, I pitched two years professional ball, and I was making something from, around thirty dollars a week working at the packing house. Our guarantee was twenty one, twenty cents, but we were working overtime. And he said I could play ball for him on Sunday, gave me twenty dollars a game on Sunday, then I would make my salary workin'

CORTINOVIS: That sounds pretty good, huh.

BELL: Yea, an, but, now they wanted me to play professional ball. And, I played for ninety

dollars a month. But, if I hadn't went I would have been making more money workin' than playing, you know, on Sunday, And my brother, because he could get along fine, and he said, "Well, just go ahead and play professional ball, professional ball." When I started and got in there I stayed in there for twenty nine years.

CORTINOVIS: But, when you, you used to have all-of your expenses paid, didn't you, when you, that is your room...?

BELL; On the road.

CORTINOVIS: ... on the road, un huh.

BELL; I played twenty one winter seasons. So, I, we had a lot of fun playing with, we didn't know any better We just played at it seemed we played the time, we played just for the fun, and not baseball like it's for money.

SHAFFER; Now it's become a big business.

BELL: Yea, and I never hit under .300. We lose some. The lowest I ever hit in baseball was three eight. And, I hit as much as four thirty seven.

CORTINOVIS: In the whole season. That's fabulous.

BELL: I have a batting record in Mexico, down there. And, I was the first ballplayer to ever hit three homers at one ballgame, in Cuba

SHAFFER: How good were the Cuban ballplayers then?

BELL: Good.

SHAFFER: They were very, they were as good then as they are now?

BELL: Yea. They had some, then I don't think these could compare with them.

BELL: In a way. We had some great ones. You should have seen some of the players we had, gone by. Now, I don't know, I see these ballplayers they have in the Majors now, they good, but they make it look like they making now, and with this live a ball, and good treatment and things, I don't know what some of the boys \_\_\_\_\_. Like, Campanula played out there, \_\_\_\_\_, he went in, he was a great ballplayer. But you won't ever know who the best ballplayer is. When they went in, he wasn't, now our best ballplayers never even went in. He might have developed, and got better. Jackie wasn't our greatest ball player;

SHAFFER: Did Jackie Robinson play..? I didn't know he played in the Negro Leagues.

BELL: Oh, yea.

SHAFFER: Oh, he did! I thought he had just come right out of college to...

BELL: No, he played one year, he played in 1945.

SHAFFER: Oh, I see.

BELL: He was a good ballplayer.

SHAFFER: Of course, he was a great football player, too.

BELL: Yea, he was.

SHAFFER: He went to UCLA. That was a great team, when they had, Kenny Washington,

BELL: He died here, about a couple of weeks ago.

SHAFFER: I remember Kenny Washington playing in the old Pacific Coast League, right in the 1950's.

CORTINOVIS: Which was a baseball league?

SHAFFER: Yea, he played third base for, then, the Los Angeles Angels.

BELL: Yea, Angels.

SHAFFER: It was an AAA team.

BELL: He tried out with us out there, when we played winter ball. But he couldn't make it. See, Jackie, was about the only one -who was playing, but he couldn't play on a team, he was young. But the team we'd take out, they were playing winter ball, at that time "Jackie couldn't play on that team, there wasn't nobody he could, beat, playing. And not only Jackie, there's a lot of boys, like Kenny Washington a lot of those boys around there, we had some of our best ballplayers when we'd go and play some of these Ail-Star teams down there.

CORTINOVIS: When you'd play these games, like you said, you played at Compton and Market, and you took off for a \_\_\_\_\_ who came to see you?

BELL; Black and white. We -was in Los Angeles, and we were beating those, it was during wartime, we was beating those Major Leaguers, they let 'em go....they wouldn't play but about a month after we beat the Detroit Tigers'. They wouldn't M, 'em play the -whole season, they used to play the whole season. They stopped that, and let 'em only play a month, after the World Series was over. But we was beating 'em so, out there, that word got back, here, to Atlanta, that's when the door was opened. They'd say, "these boys are beating these Major Leaguers out here". Now, they didn't have a full team, they had four or five Major Leaguers, and they had Minor Leaguers, you know, playing. Some of them had some ex-Major Leaguers. And said that, why can't you let these black ballplayers play. And Judge Landis went out there, to see about it. So, he stopped them from playing, but some of them still played, under assumed names. That's the way they did it out there. So^ they only let 'em play about a month after the World Series was over.

SHAFFER: The thing is, whether Judge Landis objected to the Dodgers, Signing Jackie

Robinson, but perhaps he was already dead.

BELL: Judge Landis?

SHAFFER: Was he still commissioner?

BELL: No.

SHAFFER: When you heard that Jackie Robinson had been signed, did 'you think that would be the beginning? Did you feel confident that...?

BELL: Oh, I knew someone would follow. They was talking about it all the time, I didn't think it would happen that soon. In 1945 we played the Kansas City Monarchs, in Wilmington, Delaware, and the secretary of the team, he come to me, and he said that, "I want you to do a little favor. Well, I said, "Yea, what is it?" He said, "Well, I'm telling you, that after the season's over, ' maybe before the season's over, Jackie Robinson's gonna be signed into organized baseball... He said," He want to play shortstop, except for we don't want him to play shortstop." the said Boston had. turned him down, twelve players went to Boston, and, the Boston Braves, and they turned him down. They said he couldn't play. And, Jackie Robinson was one of them. And, so, since Boston took this step, Rickey made his step. And so, they told us, Jackie Robinson is a Major League ballplayer, but his best position is second base. So, either first base, third base, or outfield, he and a little flaw in going to his right in deep short, and they had told Jackie. We'll try and give him another chance, and let him play second base, but he won't play. And, so he told me, he said," Now, I want you to hit the ball to Jackie's right." And, I'm the type of hitter nine out of ten I could hit the ball to any field. I want. Not that I would. get a hit but I could hit it down the right. And, so he was trying the to confuse him of that position. And, the first time up I hit the ball so he could had catch it, but he couldn't get in front of the ball. You're not supposed to backhand it. He was chasin' and made a couple of steps before he could pivot and throw it back. And, I beat the ball out. And, the first two times up I did that, and beat the ball out. And, I stole second base and trick slide. We had trick slide, puts his foot up touch that we just pushed other foot back like you see them running up and down slide by the base of a loose bag He got that from us and I got it from old ballplayer. And, the next two times I walked and I stole two of my four bases. Never did get me out. And, but still when he was in the Major league that he wanted to play shortstop. Well, that wasn't really his best position, but after that last ricket he looked at it, and he kept it. And, when he found the chance he put him on second base.

SHAFFER: Montreal?

BELL: Yea, he went down in, uh, he put him on second base when he brought him up, you see. He played, first base, Stanky was playing second base and finally, then Rodriguez said, "The best second baseman in the baseball was playing first base." He was talking about Jackie Robinson, but few people would believe it, because Stanky was a good second baseman. And, so he found a player he could put in there and he put him there. And he stayed there until he, until ten years, when he slowed up some. And, he feel they was going to trade him so, he just, you know, retired, I was glad that

KORR: Perhaps, even if Rickey hadn't it, it was coming. was coming. It was going to

happen....

BELL: Oh, yea it was going to happen some time soon. But, after he found out that he, made this first step, that's what he wanted. The thing is that there's a lot of those owners wanted black. But, they didn't want to be the first one. Just like my old manger, he said, a black manager, he said, "Who want to make that first step?" That's the thing then. We had guys qualified for it and, but it just never happened. You don't know how the public is gonna react on this. And, you don't know how the ball players gonna react. See, most our black ball players, when they get through playing ball they have nothing to do, but baseball. Here lately they give 'em something to do. But you gotta star out there. Then when you come out, you're not qualified to coach, you're not qualified to scout, even if you made a big name as a ball player and he knows the game and everything, an outstanding ball player, and here he don't have no qualifications.

SHAFFER: He had a big fight with Bob Feller.

BELL: Oh, yea. Bob Feller, well, I don't know. Some people have their own ways. I don't think that he ever said that Jackie couldn't make it. Now, I was mis-quoted in there, where I said that I didn't think that Jackie could make it. But the thing was, just like I was telling you, that he wanted to play short-shop when he was a major leaguer, but we figured that he wouldn't make it as a short-shop. Because they had turned him down in Boston as a short-shop and so we wanted to put him in a position that he'd know.

SHAFFER: Was there ever any talk about keeping the Negro Leagues alive by having major league baseball support them, like a farm club?

BELL: Well, they wanted that at one time. They wanted to get a United States League and they was going to have a farm team to bring em up from. But they wanted the older ball players to teach the younger ball players but they didn't want to pay them anything. At this time some of the ball players were getting sixty, seventy, hundred dollars a month.

SHAFFER: At what time was this?

BELL: Must have been around '46, because I was out there then. They had a meeting. I didn't go to the meeting because they wanted to pay them a hundred and twenty five dollars a month. But they couldn't live on that. And you couldn't hardly get jobs after the baseball season was over-it was only for five months. Well, they said, we want to hire some experienced older ball players to train these younger fellows and call it the black farm. But for developing ball players and a salary of only a hundred and twenty-five dollars a month—that's why I didn't go to the meeting myself. Cause I was living off the salary that I was making. I wouldn't mind sacrificing for the future of blacks in baseball, but how was I gonna live?

SHAFFER: So it never worked out then? And the league sort of died out?

BELL: Well, the league didn't die out then, but after the big leagues began to pull these boys, then they wanted to organize the colored leagues into the major leagues, but they didn't organize. Then they began to take the best Negro ball players. After they began to take the players, then they began to pay' em for the players. I don't think that they got anything for

Jackie Robinson. They may have given them something later.

CORTINOVIS: You mean they began to pay the owners?

SHAFFER: They just bought their contracts?

BELL: Yea, when they get a ball player from the Negro league, then they paid the owners something. Just because it would keep it quiet. That really broke up our league. They tried to survive for a while, but just couldn't do it.

SHAFFER: How long were you playing, you said playing twenty nine years? Would that be from 1924?

BELL; It was 1922 through 1950. See you count it as a season. You don't count it like you count a year. 1922-23 is just a year, but in baseball, its two years.

CORTINOVIS: A season then.

BELL: I was managing a farm team. The Monarchs went out to California during the winter in 48. Cleveland won the pennant. Satchel Paige was with Cleveland at the time and they was playing some of our boys, but we didn't have nobody much to play cause all of our best players was gone to the majors and to the farms of the other majors. So we had to play what was left and we didn't have too many experienced ball players. Satchel Paige asked me if I wanted to come and play with them. But I said no, because I wasn't in condition to play. And we had another experienced pitcher. But sometime he needed a little relief. But these younger black ball players had the idea that the major leagues was so much better. But the old players knew. because we had been playing against them—some of the major leaguers. So when I went out there, I had been developing ball players, and I wasn't in good condition to play. I was kind of a player-manager of the farm team. I couldn't stay in condition like as if I was a young ball player. But if we played a tough team, I'd get in there, after I let them star. But Satchel said, I want you to hit while I pitch, see. He'd pitch from three to five innings. Then the last game we played in 1950, we played in Garcia's home, he was with Cleveland too. Mike Garcia, that was. And he pitched three innings. It was kind of raining, and they wanted to see Bob Lemmon pitch too. He pitched two innings and we had to call the game cause it was raining too hard and we won 1-0. I got a run off Lemmon. But then I didn't play any more.

SHAFFER: Larry Doby. Did he play in the Negro Leagues too?

BELL: mmm-mmm.

SHAFFER: He did play there then/

BELL: He played on the same team that Monte Irwin played. The Eagles. And Newcombe. We played against those guys.

SHAFFER: So the early players all came from the Negro Leagues?

BELL: Yea, they come from the Negro Leagues. But some of the other guys. Now, Aaron he

was playing with the Jacksonville Redcaps. He just come on up, from when he was playing D.

SHAFFER: And Willie Mays? Did he ever play in the Negro Leagues.

BELL: Willie Mays played in Birmingham. You see, when they first came up, when they was young, most of them was on the bench and the older ones wanted to know why these guys got into the major leagues, but the majors wanted the younger players. There was a man on my team, but they wouldn't take him. I was looking to play myself. I stayed 13 years longer than I intended to play. But I was looking for a job, but I couldn't find one, a regular job that is. We had a boy down in Birmingham and our I owner was told that there was a great ball player down there, he couldn't hit the ball, but he could run and throw, but he swings level. All you would have to do was just bring him up. He was supposed to be understudy for me (Bell) because I was going to quit as soon as I got a job. I had the intention of playing with a factory team in Pittsburgh, and working in the factory too, you know. We had a couple of boys already on the team. But they (the owners) wouldn't take the chance on Willie Mays, but look what a ball player he made.

CORTINOVIS: They kind of guessed wrong on him, didn't they? When you were talking earlier, did you talk much about all the different towns that you played? Not just the teams that you played for, but also the many places you played.

BELL: Well, no, we didn't much. But we played in most all the large towns here in the United States. We played in about every state in the New England states up there, big towns, small towns, especially out east. When I played in the West, we would travel a whole lot. Then when I had this farm team from '48 through '50, we played from Los Angeles back up to Canada, we were up in Edmonton, Canada.

CORTINOVIS: Now were these dates arranged singly, or were they pre-arranged like the baseball leagues?

BELL: Yea, they were prearranged. Before we would start, they would make these schedules up and we would follow those. Some times they would get rained out and you would have an open date or something.

CORTINOVIS: But before the season it was all set up like it is now?

SHAFFER: It was a regular league.

CORTINOVIS: What was the name of that league?

BELL: We had three different leagues, four different leagues at one time. We had the Texas League, the Southern League, the Western League, that was in this area and then they had the Eastern League, back out there.

CORTINOVIS: Between all those leagues, did you have a World Series title?

BELL: Yes, we had a World Series. Now in this book. Only the Ball was White, I see in this book, they had the St. Louis Stars when they had reorganized again. That was the New St.

Louis Stars. The old St. Louis Stars finished here in 1931. Almost all of the major league teams that came through here we beat all of them. The Warner brothers and Bill Terry and Heine Meine and Bill Walker, all those guys...we played them all down at Compton and Market

SHAFFER: And you got big crowds for those games?

BELL: Yea, we got big crowds. On off season time, we drew pretty big crowds and we made pretty big money then.

SHAFFER: What was the charge of admission to the game?

BELL: I'm trying to think. Fifty-cent, seventy-five cents, maybe a dollar for some seats, or a dollar and a quarter.

SHAFFER; How did that compare to what the Cardinals were charging.

BELL: WELL, I think at least that, or maybe they were charging a little bit more. The bleachers would be fifty cents, and the pavilion was seventy-five cents. I don't know much about it now, but I mean back in that time.

CORTINOVIS: Did you play much in the South?

BELL: Oh, yes, I played in the South, because we had teams in the South- in Memphis, Birmingham, and then we would play Montgomery and different towns around there. See our league was right here, but we would go down and play those people down there. And then when that was the farm team for the minors, then we played down there a whole lot. We played all around.

CORTINOVIS: But you didn't have any mixed audiences there, did you?

BELL: Oh, yes. Of course, it was white on the one side and black on the other.

SHAFFER: There was no major league baseball in the South.

BELL: No. There was no major league ball. And we played in the same parks that whites played in. Course they would have a rope to put across the stands, whites sit here and colored sit there.

CORTINOVIS: That rope made them feel good though.

SHAFFER: Mr. Bell pointed out earlier that the Cardinal games were segregated until around 1938 or so.

BELL: Until about 1938 or so you couldn't sit in the stands, just in the bleachers.

CORTINOVIS: I used to go to the girls' Knothole Gang and I don't remember any of that. You mean in Sportsman's Park, on Grand Avenue, don't you?

BELL: Yes. It was 1938 until they changed.

CORTINOVIS: Well, I was just a kid, I probably didn't even notice.

BELL: When we was playing here, they would come to all our ball games. We didn't charge them nothing either. But when we'd go there, sometime they's let you in, but sometimes they'd say, "the president's not here," or something. Or, "how many out there" and if there was about ten.....

SHAFFER: You mean that whites could get in free?

BELL: Some of the ballplayers. Like I say though, I don't like to bring up those things to the public. Just like we're taping this. I don't want to be the one to say all that. But most other players or ball clubs would let us in.

CORTINOVIS: Except in St. Louis you mean?

SHAFFER: If you went to Cincinnati, let's say, you could then?

BELL: Yeah. But I guess it got different a little later on. But I didn't go to baseball games too much here, because I wasn't playing here. I was playing away after 1931.

SHAFFER: What teams were you with?

BELL: Pittsburg Crawfords, Homestead Grays, out East. One year, in 1937 I played in Santo Domingo. We played about two months down there. That's Julian Javier's home. Now its called Ciudad Trujillo. They changed it about six years ago to the name of the president down there. We went down there to play, but we didn't know that it was a political affair, but Trujillo wanted to get back into office and the people liked baseball down there. The people wanted a championship team to put him back into office. So they sent for a few of us, got people from all around. United States, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Panama. Orlando Cepeda's daddy was on the same team that I was on. He was a good ball player. We won the championship and they got back into office.

CORTINOVIS: Trujillo, you mean?

SHAFFER: You mean the election depended on who wins the championship? You were recruited for his team in other words?

BELL: Yeah. Satchel Paige was down there first. And he said that he needed some help. We have about five or six American boys on that team. Some Cubans and some from Santo Domingo. It was kind of tough down there.

Then when we come back, we toured the United States under the name of the Trujillo All-Stars. They gave me a whole set of uniforms, so I formed a team, although I didn't know nothing about managing, so we made another guy on the team manager and it seems like that satisfied them. Most people are kind of jealous, you know.

CORTINOVIS: It was all kind of casual though, huh,?

SHAFFER: Of course baseball is enormously popular in the Caribbean. I guess that you drew big crowds, didn't you.

BELL: Oh yeah. We drew big crowds.

SHAFFER: Did you enjoy it down there?

BELL: Yeah, but it gets awful hot down there.

CORTINOVIS: Always a nice breeze though.

BELL: In the evening about four o'clock maybe.

SHAFFER: Did you play day games?

BELL: Yeah, day games. We'd go out about ten o'clock in the morning, You'd have to grease your face to keep from getting blistered.

CORTINOVIS: So you played all over the United States, Canada, Mexico, Cuba and the Dominican Republic.

BELL: And some of the ballplayers went to the Philippine Islands, but I never did go.

SHAFFER: When was that?

BELL: That was back in the twenties.

CORTINOVIS: In The twenties:

SHAFFER: Oh, yes, baseball was very popular there. In Japan too

. CORTINOVIS: But I didn't know that early.

SHAFFER: There was a great tour of Japan that the Yankees made in the 1920s. With Babe Ruth.

BELL: Babe Ruth went over there in 1931. He was out in California then. We had two colored teams out there then and we was supposed to play them. We played them, but Babe Ruth wasn't with the team, he was late and met them over there. They did play one team in California and they was supposed to play the other one on the way back from Japan, but they didn't.

CORTINOVIS: Who do you think were the greatest ballplayers you ever saw? I mean, ever played against.

BELL: I played against so many good ballplayers, that you cannot tell who was the best ballplayers. But they are in certain categories. You have number 1, number two and number three. And then you have superstars. The number 1 ballplayers are just above the number two and so on, and then the super ballplayer he is above the number 1. So you have good

ballplayers, stars and superstars. Just like picking these guys for the Hall of Fame. Some of them can do a little more than the others, but they are all super-stars. There's not that much difference. One can do two things, one can do three things, one can do all of them. So that's the way baseball will go. You have to have a combination. You have to do two things well. You have to throw and hit. Or if you are a catcher, receive well. If you are an outfielder, you have to be able to hit and run. See, some people can do everything. Field, steal bases, hit home runs. You have guys now hit thirty-five runs. But in the old days, you didn't have too many guys hit a lot of home runs. Fifteen or twenty was a lot of home runs.

SHAFFER: The ball was dead really.

BELL: Yeah, the ball was a little deader than the ball is today. Some of those balls we played with back in that time, if we were playing today with the different ball, there might be a lot more home runs. We had this boy. Josh Gibson playing catch he was the most powerful hitter I've seen, out of all the hitters I've seen—Babe Ruth and all of them. He hit the ball a distance ball, but cut just right. Not that a lot of guys don't hit the ball as far as he did, but he hit 72 home runs.

SHAFFER: How many games was that?

BELL: We would play around 180 or 200 ball games. But now, some parks we use to play in wasn't fenced in. And if it was fenced in, couldn't tell how many home runs he would have hit, cause he hit the ball so far that the outfielders would stand 400 feet or more to catch the ball. We would play mostly two games every day at that time.

CORTINOVIS: Two games a day?

BELL: Sometimes three, some teams even played four. I played three games many a day. It was just my luck that the times we had four games scheduled, the other teams didn't show up.

SHAFFER: Did you charge separate admissions for each game? How did you do it?

BELL: Well, here's what we would do. For the three games, we would play a double-header and then a night game. But most times we would play a ten o'clock game, and then just sleep in the bus. We'd get up in the morning and put on our uniforms at eight o'clock and then just go and get something

BELL: to eat, go to the ball park.....

CORTINOVIS: Then peel it off at midnight, huh?

BELL: Sometime when we would get back home, it would be three, four o'clock the next morning.

SHAFFER: Did you travel mainly by bus?

BELL: Sometimes, by train, but they wasn't fast enough because they didn't make these small towns. So every team carried by their own bus. According to the times, they was doing all right, but it was just hard. You couldn't make enough money during the baseball season to

hardly live out the winter, so you would have to find a job somewhere. That's why a lot of us played winter ball.

SHAFFER: You were mentioning the great players. I assume you would put Josh Gibson as one of the greatest. Were there others?

BELL: Of course, the fellas in the Hall of Fame. Course we only have three in there, but those fellas were superstars. Of course we have a lot of superstars playing today. You have to be out of baseball five years to be elected. You have a lot of white ballplayers, old ballplayers should be in the Hall of Fame, but they go by the voting you know.

CORTINOVIS: Who are the black ball players in the Hall of Fame now? Jackie Robinson?

BELL: Yeah, Jackie Robinson and Roy Campanella and Satchel Paige.

SHAFFER: But there will be many more.

BELL: Yeah, there will be many more. I'm one of them picked to vote on. They picked eight, one a year to go in, but they might pick more.

SHAFFER: You mean that special category?

BELL: No, they dropped that. But that was just a token, that special Category. The Hall of Fame now, is just one Hall of Fame—you either in there or not. But the only thing is, they didn't keep records on black ballplayers. We didn't keep all the records, cause we didn't have any money to carry any writers around with us like that. So we didn't keep all true records like they did or like they do now.

CORTINOVIS: Sure, if a guy sneezes now they write it down.

SHAFFER: They keep records on everything now. The old joke goes. "so-and-so led the team in stolen towels".

BELL: Yeah, it's just a shame that the public doesn't know about these black ballplayers and, you know, it's just a shame.

CORTINOVIS: Who are some of these black ballplayers that you think that the public ought to know about and don't?

BELL: Well, they write about some of them. We had a kid when I first started named Samuel Bennett, we had George Meyers, Ted Trent and Davis and Wells, Willie Wells, one of the greatest of all the shortstops.

SHAFFER: This was in the 1920's?

BELL: Yeah, this was in the twenties. Right here, playing on Compton and Market. He started with us in 1924 and he played through 1931. But some of the old ball players now won't speak up like they should. They have favorites. But I don't care what color a ballplayer is, if he can play I give him credit for playing. I haven't seen no ballplayers who could beat

Wells. They used to send scouts out to scout the colored ballplayers to pick the All-Stars and they had some scouts looking at Wells and one of the scouts wrote back that, "They got a shortstop out there that you could put six big-league shortstops out there and they couldn't catch the balls that he catch, if you put them all out there at one time. But we used to say little things like that, but he was the greatest fielder I've seen. We had a lot of good ballplayers, outfielders, catchers, infielders, first basemen. We had a great first baseman named Buck Leonard who played out East with me; and George Suttles, a big fellow we used to call Mule Suttles; and an outfielder named Turkey Steams who

BELL: hit the ball as far as anybody, as often as anybody; and Chino Smith; John Beckwith; and Oscar Charleston, supposed to be the greatest ballplayer back when McGraw saw him and said that he was the greatest ballplayer he had seen. Course there has been other ballplayers come up since then, you know.

CORTINOVIS; Do any of them live in St. Louis?

BELL: We have one, more than one. Bill Drake, he's about the oldest ballplayer. He's about 75 years old. He lives here and we have another boy by the name of Moody.

CORTINOVIS: I'll have to write some of those down and see if I can get in touch with any of them.

BELL: I know Drake, I talk to him all the time. Some of those ballplayers if they would just tell you what they know, tell the truth. I often read something in the papers when they interview some of those fellows. This Holway has interviewed about forty of the ballplayers.

CORTINOVIS: The fellow who wrote the article about you in American Heritage?

BELL: Some of those boys, now I can't remember everything myself, but I don't like to add nothing on. I know some of those fellas was adding on some things.

CORTINOVIS: Some things they like to forget too. I mean, they try to forget some things. I have interviewed other people and they would just as soon forget about some things—you know, they don't like to bring it us. I know a boy named (Lennie) Pearson and they interviewed him for the paper. See, I scored from first base different times on a sacrifice. I scored against Bob Lemmon. Some guys say that there was no way you could do it, that I had to cut across the field. I used to score from first base a lot of times on a single and I scored from second base a lot of time on a sacrifice fly to the outfield. Mr. Holway interviewed Pearson and

BELL: Pearson said, "Oh, Bell never did touch second base, he always cut across the field." (Loud laughter). He said, "While we was watching the ball, he'd cut across the field." But those guys say those things. Mr. Holway said that he knew that he shouldn't put that in there, but he did.

SHAFFER: It's a good line.

BELL: Just like Satchel Paige said that I was so fast that I could turn off in the room; the light and get in bed before it got dark^ and that I was sliding through his legs at second base

and the ball hit me in the back. Well, that's just something that Satchel says.

SHAFFER: Well, Satchel has become famous for that.

CORTINOVIS: He should have been a comedy writer.

BELL: I broke the record from second base. The record in the major leagues is 13.3 and I did it in 12. A guy named Swanson had the record, with Cincinnati, I believe, and Archie Deacon, a St. Louis boy broke his record.

SHAFFER: Is that swinging the bat and then running.

BELL: No, that's just starting from the plate.

SHAFFER: Were you right hander or left hander?

BELL: I was a switch hitter.

SHAFFER: Were you ever clocked on how fast you could get down to first base?

BELL: Here in St. Louis they say that I got on the base in 3 seconds.

SHAFFER: That's faster than Mickey Mantle.

BELL: Between first and third base, I could go there in about four seconds and a half. Course, by the time you get there you begin to slow down.

SHAFFER: Yes, to first base only would be just a straight shot.

BELL: We had a whole lot of fast men. Not just one. We had a whole lot of great hitters, home run hitters, great fielders, and great managers. One of our greatest ballplayers organized the Negro League, Rube Foster.

BELL: He was one of the greatest pitchers of all times. I didn't get to see him play myself. I seen him as a manager; he was managing his team, the (Chicago) Union Giants. The young people don't know about him. I didn't know about him as a pitcher, I had to go by what the older ball-players told me. See, in 1895 they had black players. It's in this book. Only the Ball was White.

SHAFFER: Did he interview a lot of people, the one who wrote that book?

BELL: Peterson. Yes he did, then he had some to help out, you know, working with him.

CORTINOVIS: It was John Holway who wrote this article and who interviewed Mr. Bell, though. I was noticing that you were born in Starkville, Mississippi. Just yesterday I called on a lady in St. Louis, Mr. John Peoples, Maggie Peoples, and she was born in Starkville, Mississippi. Her mother taught school there forty years. Her mother's name was Mattie Quinn.

BELL: Oh, sure, Mrs. Quinn. I know some of them live here now.

CORTINOVIS: Well her daughter is Mrs. Peoples. She is very active for a long time in many Negro women's organizations and yesterday she gave me a lot of stuff and I also interviewed her. She was telling me about her mother and that now the elementary school in Starkville is named after her mother. The Mattie Quinn Elementary School.

BELL: Oh, sure I know a lot of the brothers and sisters.

CORTINOVIS: SURE, she came from a family of nine. I thought you must know her because Starkville couldn't be that big of a town.

BELL: Well, I lived on a farm about two miles from town. They have the Mississippi State College there too. I just lived about a mile from the college.

CORTINOVIS: Mrs. Peoples told me yesterday that they owned some property which the school wanted to buy, so she went down last fall and settled it all.

CORTINOVIS: She worked her way through Lane College by doing laundry bundles for the boys at Mississippi State College.

SHAFFER: How come you decided to leave Starkville?

BELL: Well, just conditions down there. World War I was over, but there was a lot of work here in St. Louis in 1920 when I came. You could just live better and make more money.

CORTINOVIS: So you found a job at the packing house, then. Which one?

BELL: It's Swift now, but it was the old Independent.

CORTINOVIS: That's a shame now after all those years they have closed up completely. There a lot of people out of jobs now. Some of them had to leave town. I even know one man who took a job in Madagascar in a packing house.

SHAFFER: We're just about out of the tape. Are there any special questions that you want to ask? We have talked a good deal about the leagues.

BELL: He asked me a lot about the clubs I was playing ball on.

SHAFFER: Where did you play in Los Angeles by the way? I'm from Los Angeles.

BELL: When I first went out there we played in the White Sox Park over there by the Jefferson School and then in later years we played in Wrigley Field.

CORTINOVIS: You mean that there was a Wrigley Field in Los Angeles too?

SHAFFER: Yes, you see the old Los Angeles used to be owned by the Chicago Cubs. As a farm team of the Cubs. I guess that the stands and all at the field are torn down now. The city took it over when the Dodgers came in. The Dodgers didn't play there—they thought it was too small and they played in the football stadium until they built Dodger Stadium.

BELL: We had a colored park they called the White Sox Park. It was over on Jefferson and Cooper over there.

SHAFFER: Yes, I know that area. I used to live not far from there and played baseball in that area.

BELL: He tells me that he used to play baseball and that he's 35 years old. I thought he was about 18.

CORTINOVIS: Well, you wouldn't believe how old Mr. Bell is either.

SHAFFER: That's right. He told me when he was born, so I knew.

CORTINOVIS: Yes, Mr. Bell, you only look about fifty.

SHAFFER: He's in remarkably good shape, isn't he? I wish I was in as good a shape as you are now.

CORTINOVIS: That's from running around all those bases. Tell me, when you played at Compton and Market, was it a regular ball park with stands then?

BELL: Yes.

CORTINOVIS: Because the only thing that I used to remember being there was the circus.— Ringling Brothers.

BELL: They built a park and had lights. We had lights before the big leagues had lights, seven years before. I believe Cincinnati was the first major league to have lights.

CORTINOVIS: That was during World War II wasn't it? Because so many people couldn't come any other time?

Well, Mr. James Cool Papa Bell, I see that we are completely out of tape and we have taken up too much of your time this afternoon anyway. I can't thank you enough for coming. This will be a very valuable addition to our collection of tape recordings in St. Louis Negro history. Thank you.