

State Historical Marker Honors Robert Smalls

From The Beaufort Gazette: BEAUFORT, SC — Tabernacle Baptist Church and the late Robert Smalls were honored Monday, January 26, with the rais-

ing of a state historical marker on the church grounds. The tribute ceremony, led by Beaufort City Councilman Fred Washington, Jr., was at-

tended by Smalls' great granddaughter, Ms. Janet Nash of Cape May, N.J. Smalls was a Civil War hero who commandeered a Confederate ship and surrendered it to Union forces. Born a slave, Smalls served as a U.S. congressman during Reconstruction.

Tabernacle Baptist Church was honored as the "mother church" to a number of black Beaufort County congregations. In remarks to the assembly, the Rev. D.R. Bodison, pastor of Tabernacle Baptist Church, urg-

ed the audience to "move forward in the spirit of Robert Smalls." Smalls would have been embroiled in controversial legislative issues, the Rev. Bodison said. "I believe the General (Smalls) will say to us today, 'Stay in the trenches. Fight for the legislation,'" the pastor said.

"The General wants us to be right in there for (state senate) reapportionment. The General wants us to be in there for desegregation." In closing remarks, Washington reminded the

spectators that although they came from different walks of life, the ceremony had united them in spirit. The example of Smalls' life should inspire people to work for his ideals of education and opportunity, Washington said.

"This dedication is a symbol that all members of society, if given the opportunity, have something to give," Washington said. "The opportunity that's what we must continue to fight for. That's what this man (Smalls) tells me."

Attorney Speaks At Appalachian

Attorney Judith Hawthorne Washington of Durham was guest speaker at Appalachian State University, Boone, on Friday evening, February 6, in recognition of Black History Month. Ms. Washington spoke on "The Mission of Black People in the Eighties" with a special emphasis on the relationship of black males and black females. Attorney Washington is a member of the board of directors of North Carolina Prisoner Legal Services, Inc., the North Carolina Association of Black Lawyers, the North Carolina Academy of Trial Lawyers and other bar associations. She is actively involved in community and educational activities. Ms. Washington is married to Attorney Harold "Hap" Washington, and is the mother of twin sons, Kenneth and Kevin.

The program was sponsored by the Black Student Association at Appalachian State University.

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SPORTS TALK



George Brett

Baseball fans compare it to sipping from the Fountain of Youth. Setting up house in the Garden of Eden. Snatching a pot of gold from the end of the rainbow.

Nice, but impossible. This, at least, is what fans were saying about a .400 season until 1980, when 7UP Super Star George Brett of the Kansas City Royals came within a dozen or so hits of the magical mark. The American League's Most Valuable Player finished the year at .390, as he chased to the wire a 39-year-old legend that has been as elusive as a cure for the common cold.

That legend, of course, is Ted Williams' 1941 season. The Boston Red Sox slugger batted .406 in a baseball season that ended just months before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. It was an even dozen years before George Brett was born.

The odds on anyone hitting .400 today are neck-and-neck with winning the million dollar lottery. The Elias Sports Bureau, the people who handle statistics for Major League Baseball, figured that before the beginning of the 1980 season the chances of a career .300 hitter—Brett had a .310 lifetime average—batting .400 in an average number of plate appearances was not so good. Say one in 1,919,940,000,000,000.

Until the last few weeks of the season, Brett seemed well on his way to bucking the enormous odds. And, unlike a singles hitter like Rod Carew, who batted .388 in 1977, the Royals' third baseman was also well on his way to banging more than 20 home runs and driving in well over 100 RBIs. Nagging injuries and a tendency for pitchers to throw around him finally dropped Brett out of the magic circle.

Only eight players have cracked .400 since the turn of the 20th century. The names come right off a Hall of Fame shrine—Rogers Hornsby, Ty Cobb, George Sisler, Harry Heilmann, Ted Williams. Although Brett fell short, he still posted the second highest batting average—next to Williams—in the major leagues since 1931.

Brett had one advantage in his pursuit plus several disadvantages. Playing on Kansas City's artificial turf, he has enjoyed the benefit of having his hot infield grounders take unplayable hops. Yet, he has had to cope with fielders who wear bigger gloves than they did 40 years ago and pitchers who, because of the designated hitters rule, remain in the game longer. And, guys hitting .400 with only a short time left in the season, usually find themselves placed under the microscope by the media.

"No sooner did I check into my hotel than I'd get a call from a reporter in Chicago," Brett remembered. "Five minutes later, it would be someone from New York. It never seemed to end."

Unlike Roger Maris who became physically ill from the attention paid to his home run chase of Babe Ruth in 1961, Brett handled the media blitz with aplomb. He could even laugh at it.

"He was just worried that all the attention might cause problems on the club," said one teammate. "George doesn't have one of those gigantic egos. He still acts the same way he did when he was making \$500 a month."

Raised in El Segundo, California, George is the youngest of four ballplaying brothers. Brother Ken is a veteran major league pitcher who spent the latter part of 1980 with the Royals.

Brett broke into the major leagues in 1973, after two sub-300 years in the minors. Then he came under the tutelage of the Royals' batting coach Charlie Lau.

"I saw the work Charlie had done with Hal McRae, Joe Rudi and the others and I said, 'Okay, let's go,'" Brett said. "So we hit extra every day the rest of 1974. I finished the year at .282, which meant I hit .360 the second half. Then we hit extra every day the following year until I got all the fundamentals down. He made me a good hitter."

Lau taught Brett to go to the opposite field and to concentrate on hitting the ball where it was pitched. He stopped going for the long ball and his average continued to soar. Since 1975, George has hit over .300 in all but one season.

And in one season he nearly hit .400

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