

"Reverend Myers Is Uncle Buddy" by Carole E. Gregory. Jan. 2023 copyright

***Year by year you lost your Mississippi river accent in our Ohio steel mill town,
a deep baritone lost souls came forward after hearing your sermon's cry,
your sound - the one different from New Orleans where women hide gumbo recipes.
Your "Jesus Keep Me Near the Cross" singing mother uses fish caught in Lake Erie for
her gumbo taste while her down South neighbors add slices of sausages & less fish,
more chicken & celery.***

***Okra, tomatoes, and onions coming from Grandma's garden awaken neighbors
as you wait patiently for your mother to sing our meal finished.***

***Summer sitting on the front porch,
neighbors wave & ask where the good smell is coming from?***

***While we wait for Grandma Mary,
you put a baseball game on television,
turn down the volume & hear a white man call the game.***

***Black & white play different ball,
& the Negro Baseball League has great pitchers & catchers & in fielders & out fielders
& home run hitters***

***whom Jim Crow mostly blocks from playing since the Coloreds win too much,
everything is stats & most wins.***

***Colored players keep stats off & on,
but you said that did not cramp our playing & clowning & never before seen ball style.***

***Crowds cheered Babe Ruth & Ty Cobb,
a newsman said Josh Gibson hits a ball
a mile, catches everything, & it's
too bad he's Colored.***

***At first Black & white played together,
the white players spiking our legs
since the umpires didn't call it.***

***Our men didn't have any protective gear until Bud Fowler got tired of being spiked in
his legs, leaving the field on crutches. No penalties.***

***So you said Bud made leg shins from a wooden barrel & started sliding feet first into a
base.***

***The smartest & meanest men lasted,
Oscar Charleston looked for trouble,
pulling the hood off a Klansman,
women naming sons after him.***

Later on Norman

***Vincent Peale saw Jackie Robinson
steal home on Yankee Yogi Berra,
President Obama receiving a photo of
that MLBbaseball iconic moment.***

*I liked to hear you tell me about our Colored magical teams!
You loved the Baltimore Elite Giants, the Philadelphia Stars, the Birmingham Black Barons, the Cleveland Buckeyes, the New York Cubans, and the Atlanta Black Crackers.
Then owners stopped hiring Coloreds
so we played each other in big cities,
Bullet Rogan umpiring behind home plate with a gun. Don't argue with his calls.
You loved baseball so much you added plays to your Sunday sermons:
" In my walk, I'm passing third base,
on my way home."
When he was old and could not show up the white pitchers,
the Cleveland Indians signed Satchel Paige,
the Colored pitcher whose fast ball few batters could hit,
a bunch of Negroes driving far to sit
in the bleachers - cheering,
younger pitchers stealing from him.
Momma told you I had your taste - loving vanilla ice cream in a ginger ale float,
& one summer day I looked over my shoulder from my third base position, you were
standing there - watching my softball game.*

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