



CITY OF BIRMINGHAM

MAYOR RANDALL L. WOODFIN

PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST

May 14, 2021

The Sanders Family
Birmingham, Alabama

Dear Sanders Family,

On behalf of the City of Birmingham, I wish to offer my deepest condolences for the loss of your beloved relative, James "Jake" Sanders. It is never easy to accept the loss of a loved one, but the presence and support of family and friends can be of great comfort during this time of bereavement.

Mr. Sanders was born on August 31, 1934, in Fairfield, Alabama. As a youth, he loved the game of baseball. Mr. Sanders and his friends would gather to play baseball with a broomstick, a tennis ball and even a rock. At the age of 12, his father took him to a Birmingham Black Barons game at Rickwood Field. That game convinced the young Sanders that playing baseball would be his life's calling. By the time he attended Fairfield Industrial High School, Mr. Sanders had big baseball dreams. His favorite baseball player, Willie Mays, had attended his high school several years earlier. The visit impressed him.

In 1955, Mr. Sanders began his career as an outfielder in the Negro League with the Birmingham Black Barons. The following year, he went on to play as an outfielder with the New Orleans Bears and the Detroit Stars. During the 1957-1958 season, Mr. Sanders played as an outfielder for the Kansas City Monarchs. He had such an impressive season with that, that his skills caught the attention of Major League Baseball, and he briefly signed a contract with the Los Angeles Dodgers as an outfielder. Unfortunately, he was cut from the team for another individual due to the color of his skin. Even through there was a lot of discrimination and racism in the sport at the time, Mr. Sanders remained highly passionate about baseball.

Before his passing, Mr. Sanders enjoyed sharing the stories of his days in the Negro League. He visited the Negro Southern League Museum weekly to share stories with museum patrons. When Mr. Sanders used to reminisce on those days, he would say, "Negro League was no joke. They could hit, they could run, they could throw... Just to say you played in the Negro League with some of the greatest ballplayers in life, that was an honor."

I know there may be few words to fill the void you are feeling at this time, but I hope you can find some consolation in embracing the fond memories of Mr. Sanders. When someone you love becomes a memory, the memory becomes a treasure. In your time of sadness and sorrow, remember this saying, "You cannot lose a person, only their body, for the rest of them can be found in your heart and mind." As you grieve at this time, please know that others care and share in your loss. Mr. James "Jake" Sanders will be truly missed.

Once again, you have my deepest sympathies.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "R. Woodfin".

Randall L. Woodfin
Mayor of the City of Birmingham