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They Still Call Me Coach

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They Still Call Me Coach

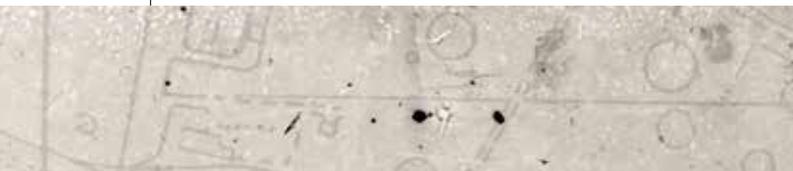
STORYTELLER: John Ivory, Sr.

OLD NORTH DAYTON

I'M JUST GLAD TO BE FROM NORTH DAYTON AN' DAYTON'S BEEN A GOOD PLACE.

I lived in that house over on Troy Street, ya know, the one that's still next to Evans Bakery. We lived there, eleven of us kids, and I was number eight. And my cousins lived a few blocks down. I have a lot of good memories here. I remember where we got into trouble, which places we knew not to go to an' where I played little league because we had a pretty good little league system.

It's funny, ya know...I wasn't planning on coaching little league but my brother was coaching a team and I used to play so I started helping him out. Then another coach got sick and I ended up taking over his team. I was only



18, ya know, not much older than the guys on the team. I kept coaching for about 16 years, and I met a lot of people during that time. One time there was a little girl I seen, started working with my brother, an' we started talking and everything. In fact her sister was the first girl to play little league, and I was the only one willing to take her. Later, that girl on my team would be my sister-in-law. **MY WIFE AND I JUST HIT IT OFF. GOOD GOLLY, IT'LL BE 39, NO 38 YEARS THIS AUGUST.**

I coached until my kids started growing up. Then I watched the kids while my wife worked and I got a job making pies and cakes at Bluebird Bakery on Kiser Street. I had to work nights so I had to give up the teams, because of my work. After I left the bakery, I was unemployed for a while and I learned my first lesson—don't quit a job until you have another one lined up. So then I got into roofing an' later went to work construction with my brother-in-law. Mostly all the jobs I had were in north Dayton, an' I liked 'em all because each day was different. Roofing especially, you got to see and learn about the city, and the people you meet was interesting.

I'd say I'm a people person, and people still see me around and these guys just say, "Hey coach how ya doing?"

BACK THEN I DIDN'T REALIZE THE IMPACT I WAS MAKIN' ON THESE KIDS LIVES, BUT THINKING BACK TO IT NOW, ONE STORY STANDS OUT TO ME. This boy, he was a street kid, but boy did he love baseball. He passed away when he was young, and before the burial his mom came up to me and told me she had a problem. She said she wanted to bury him in his baseball uniform, but he loved his jersey so much he wore it all the time and she just couldn't let it go. She asked me if she could have my uniform to bury him in; so I gave her my uniform for him to be buried in. Now that was a memory that was kind of touching from when I coached.

I still think about going back to coaching. Especially now since I'm retired, but maybe one day ... if the timings right. It's just that the kids aren't the way they used to be. I don't know if I could do it. Kids nowadays, they don't understand respect. You know, you just can't lie an' cheat your way through anything or you know cuss an' be a bully. You gotta answer to what you do. I was always fair to my kids when I was coaching, I had a good time with those kids. I still got kids who I used to coach, now in their 40s and 50s, come up to me and tell me I should coach again. I keep telling em' the time has gotta be right. I do miss them kids, and them young kids is when they need it the most.

I'M COMMITTED TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD YA KNOW. I JUS' WANNA HELP KEEP NORTH DAYTON GOIN'. I KNOW WE'VE GOT PROBLEMS, BUT PEOPLE ARE GETTIN' TOGETHER AN' TALKIN'. My in-laws, brothers, sisters, we still meet for dinner every two months, an' I know a lot of families aren't like that now, but different groups like the neighborhood association are pretty active.

IT DON'T HAVE TO TAKE A LOT. IT'LL BE BETTER.