

Writing Her Story

Women in Indiana quietly do extraordinary things every day. *Writing Her Story* celebrates their accomplishments and sheds light on the resilience and strength of Hoosier women. These articles showcase the women who have helped *move Indiana women forward* and who inspire others to do great things in their own lives. Women in Indiana have an important role to play. You can make a difference by:

- Learning more about the issues affecting women in Indiana.
- Voicing your opinion on issues important to you
- Serving as an advocate for women
- Mentoring another woman
- Join ICW's mailing list or social media outlets to be notified of upcoming events, programs and resources available to women

Go to www.in.gov/icw to learn more about the Indiana Commission for Women.

Sources:

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- National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, *Peanut Battle*, <http://baseballhall.org/news/personality/peanut-battle>
- National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, *Female Sensation*, <http://baseballhall.org/news/personality/female-sensation>
- National Visionary Leadership Project, *Mamie "Peanut" Johnson*, <http://www.visionaryproject.org/johnsonmamie/#1>
- Negro Leagues Baseball Museum, *Toni Stone*, <http://coe.k-state.edu/annex/nlbmuseum/history/players/stone.html>
- Women Talk Sports, *African American Women in Baseball: The Other Integrationist*; <http://www.womentalksports.com/items/read/3893/1543100>

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Women of Baseball

Toni Stone, Mamie "Peanut" Johnson and Connie Morgan

"Just to know that you were among some of the best male ball players that ever picked up the bat made all of my baseball moments great moments."

~Mamie "Peanut" Johnson

Spending an afternoon at the baseball field is still an American pastime. Each year in August, the Indiana Civil Rights Commission and the Indianapolis Indians host an annual Civil Rights Game at Victory Field. It will be an opportunity to celebrate "the importance the Negro League Baseball had in the battle for civil rights," according to ICRC Executive Director Jamal Smith. The Negro League Baseball pushed boundaries by offering talented young men the opportunity to play baseball when major league baseball teams would not let them play. Greats like Hank Aaron, Willie Mays and Jackie Robinson all started their careers in the Negro League.

However, the Negro League Baseball pushed another boundary that is rarely recognized when the *Indianapolis Clowns* signed three young women as regular baseball players. Originally hired as a publicity stunt, these women demonstrated they could play baseball with the men. In 1953, the *Clowns* made history by signing Marcenia ("Toni") Lyle Stone, as the first woman to play as a regular on a big-league professional team. The same year, Stone was joined by Mamie "Peanut" Johnson, who was the league's first female pitcher; and, in 1954, Connie Morgan replaced Stone at second base.

Toni Stone played with Indianapolis for one year before being traded to the *Kansas City Monarchs*. During her time in Indianapolis, she appeared in fifty games, had a .240 batting average and even had a hit off pitcher, Satchel Paige. Stone was recognized in the Negro Leagues Museum in Kansas City, MO, and inducted into the Women's Sports Hall of Fame in 1993.

Connie Morgan was inducted into the Pennsylvania Sports Hall of Fame in 1995. According to the Baseball Hall of Fame's website, one of Morgan's fondest memories was when she played at Connie Mack Stadium in her hometown. When she walked out to second base, "it was the first time in history that a female from Philadelphia had taken the field in a professional baseball uniform."

In the late 1940s, Mamie Johnson had wanted to join the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League (AAGPBL) but wasn't allowed to try out for a team. However, she was determined to play baseball; and, during her three seasons with the *Clowns* (1953-1955), Johnson played with several Negro Leagues stars, including Hank Aaron and Satchel Paige. In fact, she credited Paige with helping her improve her curveball. Johnson ultimately finished her career with 33 wins and only 8 losses; one of the best pitching records in the Negro Leagues.

In 2008, Johnson became the only woman to be drafted by a major league baseball team when she was selected by the Washington Nationals in a ceremonial Negro League Draft. During the event, every MLB team drafted one player who was denied access because of the color of their skin. In an interview, Johnson didn't regret not being allowed to join the AAGPBL. She said, "I'm very glad I wasn't picked because if I had been picked by the girls, I wouldn't be who I am today."