

Tuskegee Airman, Negro League Baseball and PVIL Legend

John "Mule" Miles -- 1922-2013



REMEMBER ME AS A PERSON AS A
HUMANITARIAN, AS A CHRISTIAN, AND A
TUSKEGEE AIRMAN, THAT WAS GIVEN THE
ABILITY TO PLAY BASE BALL AT THE
MAJOR LEAGUE LEVEL. *John "Mule" Miles*

John Miles, Jr., "Mule," a Negro League and Prairie View Interscholastic League legend and a Tuskegee Airman passed away on May 24 at age 90 in San Antonio, his home town.

Miles had been in declining health and under hospice care.

He was born on August 11, 1922 in San Antonio and though he picked up baseball in early childhood, it was both baseball and basketball that he excelled in at Phillis Wheatley High School, a PVIL member school.

"Wheatley was a special school," Miles once said. "I learned a lot from my teachers. They made you study. They were tough but they were fond of their students. They took an interest in us."

After high school, while employed as a mechanic at Fort Sam Houston in 1942 he was U.S. State Department officials asked him to participate in a new air training program in Alabama providing civilian mechanics to support the 99th Pursuit Squadron. Miles was one of 50 blacks selected to go to Alabama to train and provide ongoing support for the Tuskegee Airmen in training.

For his service, Miles is considered an original Tuskegee Airman.

"We had it hard at Tuskegee; buildings weren't completed when we got there, it was hard, but we made it, I wasn't complaining, because at Tuskegee, I learned a trade, I learned how to work with my hands – to do something," Miles recalled.

His baseball career began in 1946 when a scout from the Negro Leagues saw him play for the Kelly Air Force Base Bombers and offered Miles a tryout. He was signed as a third baseman and outfielder by the Chicago American Giants after a tryout in Jackson, Miss.

Miles played four seasons with the Giants. In 1947, he had a .250 batting average and hit a record 11 home runs in 11 consecutive games, a feat unequalled by anyone in Major League Baseball. In 1948, Miles hit 277 home runs.

Candy Jim Taylor, Miles' manager with the Giants, gave Miles the nickname "Mule," saying that he "hit like a mule kicks."

Miles played with greats such as Jackie Robinson, Hank Aaron, Ernie Banks, and Satchel Paige.

"Playing in the Negro Leagues was one of the greatest things I ever did, to play baseball at the major league level," he said. "I didn't make a lot of money, but I had a lot of fun."

Among his many honors, Miles was inducted into the Texas Black Sports Hall of Fame in 2000, to the San Antonio Sports Hall of Fame in 2003, to the Texas Aviation Hall of Fame in 2009, and to the PVILCA Hall of Fame in 2010.