

Jules Tygiel -- historian

Jules Tygiel, one of the preeminent historians of American baseball and the leading expert on the life and career of Jackie Robinson, died in San Francisco on July 1, 2008, after a 2 ½ year battle against a neuro-endocrine tumor of the pancreas. He was 59 years old. Jules joined the history faculty at San Francisco State University in 1978, after teaching at the University of Tennessee and the University of Virginia.

Jules's work on the history of baseball helped both to legitimize sports history among academic historians and to show non-historians how sports history can illuminate larger patterns in the American past. In his large and significant body of scholarly work, he established a reputation for careful research, clear and graceful writing, and the selection of topics that speak not just to our understanding of our past but also to an understanding of ourselves and our society. Jules's scholarly contributions came in two areas: the history of baseball and the history of California.

Born on March 9, 1949, in Brooklyn, Jules was eight years old when the Dodgers moved to Los Angeles. In his first book, *Baseball's Great Experiment: Jackie Robinson and His Legacy* (1983), Jules explored the integration of major league baseball, a pivotal event in the history of sport, and analyzed the process of integration itself. As he explained, "The dynamics of interracial relationships among players, coaches, and managers provide rare insights into what occurs when nonwhites are introduced into a previously segregated industry." Jules not only probed this dynamic of integration, but also its limits. In the end, *Baseball's Great Experiment* is as much about race in America as it is about baseball. Named to the "best book" lists of the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and other papers, *Baseball's Great Experiment* also brought

Tygiel a Robert Kennedy Book Award. In 2003, *Sports Illustrated* called *Baseball's Great Experiment* one of the top fifty sports books of all time.

Jules followed *Baseball's Great Experiment* with articles on baseball history that were collected and expanded into two books: *Past Time: Baseball as History* (2000) and *Extra Bases: Reflections on Jackie Robinson, Race, and Baseball History* (2002). *Past Time* shows how each generation of Americans has reinvented the national pastime to fit its own reality and perceptions. The *New York Times* named it a Notable Book of the Year, and the Society for American Baseball Research gave it the Harold Seymour Award in 2001, an award that recognizes "exceptional scholarship, superior writing skills, and the full range of conceptual, theoretical, investigative, and analytical skills employed by accomplished historians" with preference for "those who had broken new research ground." *Extra Bases* focuses on the broader cultural context of baseball--how developments in baseball have reflected American society and the ways in which it has changed.

Jules's writing and wry sense of humor made him much in demand across the country as a speaker, including delivering the keynote address for the *Ninth Annual Cooperstown Symposium on Baseball and American Culture*, National Baseball Hall of Fame, in 1997. He appeared regularly on radio and television talk shows, including "Good Morning America," "Talk of the Nation," and the ESPN series "Sports Century" (1999-2001). He was often a guest on KQED's *Forum* on opening day of the baseball season. Jules was a consultant to the Baseball Hall of Fame, and was part of the effort to get the Hall of Fame to change Robinson's plaque to include his place in history as well as on the field, which was done on June 25 of this year.

Jules was also a pioneer in the early phases of fantasy baseball. He and Richard Zitrin founded one of the first such in the country, which they named the Pacific Ghost League, in honor of the old Pacific Coast League that preceded the arrival of major league teams on the West Coast. Each league member was a team "owner," who choose a team based on actual big league players; using the statistics of the actual players, participants determined the winners of match-ups between the different teams. Jules's team, the Tygiel Productos, was often league champion, sometimes by large margins.

Jules's work on the history of California began with his Ph.D. dissertation, "Workingmen in San Francisco, 1880-1901," which he completed at UCLA in 1977; it was published in 1992 as part of a series of outstanding dissertations. Jules's work on the history of California continued with *The Great Los Angeles Swindle: Oil, Stocks, and Scandal in the Roaring Twenties* (1994). One reviewer noted, "Tygiel owes nothing to mystery novelist Raymond Chandler in weaving an account that is suspenseful and has a cast of characters who often are not what they seem to be. . . . The Keatings, Milkens, and Boeskys of the 1980s should stand in awe of the wreckage left by Julian Pete. Never were the lessons of history so ignored by those doomed to repeat it." *Barron's* specified that it "should be required reading for anyone interested in the history of American finance." Kevin Starr, the dean of California historians, exclaimed, "I can hardly wait for the movie!" Jules's most recent contribution to California history, and to national history as well, is *Ronald Reagan and the Rise of American Conservatism* (2004); though Jules was the faculty advisor for the SF State

Young Democrats at the time he was writing it, one reviewer called it "the most balanced account of Reagan's life."

Jules received two highly competitive awards from the National Endowment for the Humanities and received San Francisco State University's second annual Excellence in Professional Achievement Award in 2008.

Jules also wrote on current events for the general public by contributing op-ed pieces to the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *New York Newsday*, among other publications.

At San Francisco State, Jules taught advanced courses on the history of the United States, 1916-1945, the history of California, the history and literature of baseball, and computer methodologies for historians. His seminars for senior history majors included "San Francisco and Los Angeles," "California in the Great Depression," and "the San Francisco State Strike." His graduate seminars focused on the 1920s and 1930s. He had a lasting and positive influence on many students to whom he taught history during his 31 years as a history professor at SF State.

His students describe him as "a hard-working and generous mentor , " remembering that "his expectations were high and he cared about grammar, language, and nuance." They agree that he "always pushed for an individual's best work and shared his love of the life of the mind." One recalled that he "delivered his criticism in a direct way," and another that he was, at the same time, "easy-going and kind with a delightful sense of humor." He was, one said, "a good friend to so many of us. . . . Given the breadth and depth of his research, his dedication to teaching, his wit and wisdom and good nature, working with Jules was a gift to me as a student. . . . his

example has served as a model of academic integrity, accomplishment, and commitment." Another student once noted that Jules had a "profoundly moral conscience" and those who knew him would all agree.

Richard Hoffman, chair of the history department from 2000 to 2007, said of Jules, "Jules gave so much the department and his colleagues--as if we were part of his extended family. He tirelessly gave of his time and energy to things that really mattered, from hiring new colleagues to helping with their promotion and scholarship." Jules's colleagues elected him to nearly every departmental committee, and he served as chair of the hiring committee during years when the department was extensively rebuilding, to replace retirements. He was elected to the Academic Senate where he served as chair of the Faculty Affairs Committee, and he was also elected to the University Promotions Committee. Since September 11, 2001, he organized annual forums on the historical and contemporary significance of the events of September 11. The standing-room-only programs that Jules organized and moderated steered clear of particular political ideologies or partisan critiques and instead provided students and the general public with thoughtful critical commentary that stimulated critical thinking.

Jules's friends and colleagues have remarked how well he was able to balance the academic world with his family, with baseball, and with the arts. His love of movies and theater added a dimension to his life that few of his colleagues knew about. He loved baseball at all levels, from the Giants to the minor leagues, and greatly enjoyed outings to minor league teams in northern California with family and friends.

Jules's friends and colleagues remember him not only for his scholarship, teaching, and service to the university, but also for his compassion and willingness to

put his own comfort aside when called upon to support his friends in times of need. His colleagues and friends will miss his quick wit and gentle humor. In one of his last messages to his colleagues, he quipped that, "As of yesterday, the latest prognosis is 'weeks to months.' I'm opting for months."

In 1982, Jules married Luise Custer. They have two sons: Charles, 24, and Samuel, 17. Charlie, who is developmentally delayed, lives in a supported living setting in the Santa Cruz area. A colleague recalls that watching Jules "interact with Charlie was phenomenal--patient, guiding, gentle, loving, and fatherly." Jules and his wife worked for several years with other families to create Camphill Communities California, a residential village for disabled young adults in Soquel, California, where Charlie works during the day gardening and cooking. Sam, who has inherited his father's love of baseball, will be a senior at Urban High School. Jules described his family this way in the introduction to *Past Time*: "I thank my son Sam for developing an interest in baseball and making my springs and summers (and falls and winters) more enjoyable. As those who know him are well aware, my son Charlie cares less for baseball, but he enriches my life in innumerable other ways. Most of all, I thank my wife, Luise Custer. I cannot imagine a better and more loving companion on life's unpredictable journeys."

Jules was preceded in death by his father in 2006, and is survived by his mother. His vibrant mind and gentle spirit still resonate in the hearts of colleagues, students, friends, and extended family. Most fortunate of all are his wife and children who lived each day in the warmth of his ways. Donations can be made to Imagine Supported Living at www.imaginesls.org or Camphill Communities California at www.camphillca.org.

Publications by Jules Tygiel:

Books

- Ronald Reagan and the Rise of American Conservatism* (Longman, Library of American Biography, 2004).
- Extra Bases: Reflections on Jackie Robinson, Race, and Baseball History* (University of Nebraska Press, 2002).
- Past Time: Baseball as History* (Oxford University Press, 2000).
- The Jackie Robinson Reader*, editor (Dutton/Signet Publishers, 1997).
- The Great Los Angeles Swindle: Oil, Stocks and Scandal in the Roaring Twenties* (Oxford University Press, 1994; Paperback Edition, University of California Press, 1996).
- Workingmen in San Francisco, 1880-1901* (Garland Press, 1992).
- Baseball's Great Experiment: Jackie Robinson and His Legacy* (Oxford University Press, 1983; Paperback Edition, Vintage Books, 1984; Second Paperback Edition, Oxford University Press, 1993; Third Paperback Edition with new Afterword, Oxford University Press, 1997).

Articles in Books and Scholarly Journals

- "The Integration of Baseball in New York, 1947-57," in *The Glory Days: New York Baseball, 1947-1957*, ed. John Thorn (Museum of the City of New York/ Collins, 2007).
- "Foreword," *Shades of Glory: The Negro Leagues and the Story of African-American Baseball* (National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum/National Geographic Society, 2006).
- "Ronald Reagan and the Triumph of Conservatism," in *What's Going On?* (University of California Press, 2004).
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- Introduction to *Metropolis in the Making: Los Angeles in the 1920s*, William Deverell and Thomas Sitton, eds. (University of California Press, 2001).
- "The Polo Grounds," in *American Places: Encounters With History* (Oxford University Press, 2000).
- Introduction to *Oill!* by Upton Sinclair (University of California Press, 1997).
- "Jackie Robinson Meets Ken Burns," *Journal of Sport History* 23 (Spring 1996).
- "Henry Chadwick and the Invention of Baseball Statistics," *Nine* 4 (Spring 1996), 198-216.
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- "Tramping Artisans: The Case of the Carpenters in Industrial America," *Labor History*, 22, (Summer, 1981), pp. 348-76.
- "Housing in Late 19th Century America: Suggestions for Research," *Historical Methods Newsletter*, 12, (Spring, 1979), 84-97.

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- "The Julian Petroleum Scandal," *Los Angeles Times* (December 3, 2006).
- "Jackie Robinson: The Formative Years," *Los Angeles Times* (December 3, 2006).
- "Integration in Oakland," *Museum of California History Magazine*, October/November, 1989.

"The Signing of Jackie Robinson: The Untold Story," with John Thorn, *Sport*, (June, 1988).
"The Court-Martial of Jackie Robinson," *American Heritage*, (July/August, 1984).

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"Democracy's Evil Twin," *Los Angeles Times Opinion Section*, Sunday, (October 30, 2005).

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California Faculty (December 2004).

"Is the Army Just for the Poor and Lower Class?" *History News Network* (October 13, 2004).

"The Rightwing Roots of Bush's Foreign Policy," *History News Network* (August 26, 2004).

"Would It Be Better for Democrats If the Protesters Stayed Home?" *History News Network*
(August 23, 2004).

"Reagan's Vision Triumphed ... But Is His the World We Want to Live in?" *History News Network*
(June 14, 2004).

"The Reagan Legacy - The Decidedly Contested Success of Reaganomics," *San Francisco Chronicle* (June 13, 2004).

"Sports: Move Over Babe and Ty, Here Come Rickey and Barry," *History News Network* (April 1, 2002)

'Changing Times Overshadow Bonds' Feat," *New York Newsday*, (October 1, 2001).

"Salaries Are Escalating, but They Don't Guarantee Winning," *Los Angeles Times Opinion Section*, Sunday, (December 17, 2000).

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"The Business of Baseball," *Reviews in American History* (Spring, 1991).

"Baseball by the Book: Baseball History in the 1980s," *Baseball History* (Winter, 1986).

"The Negro Leagues Revisited," *SABR Review of Books*(1986).

In Its Own Image by Benjamin Rader, in *Reviews in American History* (March, 1985).

"Pensions and Power: A Review Essay of Peter F. Drucker, *The Unseen Revolution: How Pension Fund Socialism Came to America* and Jeremy Rifkin and Randy Barber, *The North Will Rise Again: Pensions and Power in the 1980's*," *New Labor Review*, (Fall, 1980), pp. 211-221.

Reprinted Articles and Book Excerpts

From *Past Time: Baseball as History*:

Chapter 7, 'Baseball's Shot Heard 'Round the World' Reprinted in *Baseball and The American Dream*, ed. by Robert Elias (M.E. Sharpe, 2001).

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From *Baseball's Great Experiment: Jackie Robinson and His Legacy*:

Sports Illustrated (June 20, 27 1983).

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The Armchair Book of Baseball, volume II, edited by John Thorn (MacMillan, 1985).

Major Problems in American Sport History, edited by Steve Riess (Houghton Mifflin, 1997).

The Jackie Robinson Reader, edited by Jules Tygiel (Dutton/Signet, 1997).

A Dream Deferred (Simon and Schuster Custom Publishing, 2000).

Sports in Literature by Bruce Emra (NTC/Contemporary Publishing, 1999).

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A Cardinals Reader by Steven Gietscher (University of Illinois Press, 2005).

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