

## Jackie Robinson

Jackie Robinson, baseball great, became a wonderful role model for young people. But it wasn't always so. At one point during his youth, he began to run with a neighborhood gang. In later years, he recalled that while he had wished for a better life as a boy and teen, he had no understanding that a gang was not the way to achieve it.

An older friend finally came to Robinson and made him realize how much he was hurting his hard-working mother, as well as how much he was limiting himself. Robinson said, "He told me that it didn't take guts to follow the crowd, that courage and intelligence lay in being willing to be different."

Robinson listened, left the gang and traded his wishbone for a backbone. He began to work on developing his own physical potential and, within a few short years, became a sensational athlete. Starring in football, basketball, baseball and track at UCLA, he was the first person to win athletic awards in all four sports at the university.

He went on to play pro football with the Los Angeles Bulldogs before being drafted for World War II duty. After the war, he signed with the Brooklyn Dodgers. Not only did Jackie Robinson become the first black baseball player in the major leagues, but he was voted rookie of the year.

His story reminds us all that backbone accomplishes more than wishbone.

--Beecher Hunter