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NEWS RELEASE

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Buck O'Neil, the legendary Negro Leagues star and one of baseball's greatest ambassadors died on October 6, 2006 in a Kansas City, Missouri hospital. He was 94. O'Neil was a dear friend of both the Jackie Robinson Foundation and its founder, Rachel Robinson.

The grandson of a slave, O'Neil was raised in Florida and spent his youth toiling in celery fields. His baseball prowess proved to be his escape from farm work. Barred from attending local Sarasota High School and the University of Florida due to his skin color, O'Neil went on to become an electrifying first baseman who won a pair of Negro Leagues batting titles with the Kansas City Monarchs, the same club he later managed to a pennant. O'Neil's best years came during the 1930's and 40's.

"The Jackie Robinson Foundation mourns the passing of Buck O'Neil. His kind and generous spirit was a tremendous asset not only to baseball as an institution but to the country as a whole," said Della Britton Baeza, President and CEO of the Jackie Robinson Foundation.

By the time Jackie Robinson had broken baseball's color barrier, O'Neil was too old to take advantage of the opportunity to play in the Major Leagues. But the perpetually extroverted and gregarious O'Neil never bemoaned this fate.

"Waste no tears for me. I didn't come along too early -- I was right on time," he once told a *Sports Illustrated* reporter.

O'Neil was a pioneer in Major League Baseball in his own right. He became the first African American coach in the big leagues, with the Chicago Cubs in 1962. O'Neil was responsible for the signing of two eventual Hall of Famers in Lou Brock and Ernie Banks.

"Buck O'Neil was a true American hero and a warming and loving friend," said Rachel Robinson, Founder of the Jackie Robinson Foundation. "His persistence, generosity and commitment to baseball and social progress made him a legend and an outstanding role model. He will be forever remembered."

O'Neil was a driving force behind the creation of the Negro Leagues Baseball Museum in 1990. The Kansas City, Missouri based museum is currently building a Buck O'Neil Education and Research Center.

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