

Distinguished Achievement Citation

Branch Rickey

Class of 1904

It is appropriate and a great pleasure to award the first posthumous Distinguished Achievement Citation to Branch Rickey, one of Ohio Wesleyan's most celebrated alumni.

This year, we mark the fiftieth anniversary of Branch Rickey's integration of major league baseball by signing Jackie Robinson to the Brooklyn Dodgers as the first black player. In celebration of this historical event, all major league teams are wearing a commemorative patch during the 1997 baseball season.

Mr. Rickey, who coached Ohio Wesleyan's baseball team during his undergraduate days, often told of a road trip in 1903 when the team's only back player was refused lodging in an Indiana hotel. Angered by this discrimination, the coach insisted that the hotel manager allow the player to sleep on a cot in his room. Mr. Rickey often cites this incident as a harbinger of his subsequent renowned deed which changed the face of the sport and which was such a significant event in the history of the United States.

A Major in World War I, with active duty in France, he held many positions of leadership in a variety of organizations around the country. In 1957, he was vice chairperson of President Eisenhower's Committee on Government Employment Policy.

In addition to receiving Bachelor of Literature and Bachelor of Arts degrees from Ohio Wesleyan, Mr. Rickey earned a doctorate in law from the University of Michigan, and received eight honorary degrees, including an LL.D. from his alma mater in 1947.

He served Ohio Wesleyan as a very active national chairperson of the five-year "Thrust Toward Fulfillment" capital campaign and was a Life Trustee of the University. Several of his children, nieces and nephews and a number of grandchildren and great-grandchildren attended Ohio Wesleyan.

With conferral of the Distinguished Achievement citation, we express admiration for Branch Rickey for his contribution to the improvement of race relations, for his pioneering achievement in major league baseball and with pride that he was a son of Ohio Wesleyan.

May 17, 1997

