

Robert “Ducky” Jones, Detroit Tigers’ Third Baseman (1917-1925) and His relationship with Managers Hughie Jennings and Ty Cobb

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The classic definition of a journeyman ballplayer is one who, although not distinguishing himself as a star, does establish himself as a reliable day-by-day performer. This definition applies to Robert Walter “Ducky” Jones, nine year veteran third baseman for the Detroit Tigers (1917-1925). His career was more than hits, runs and errors. Jones played for two members of Baseball’s Hall of Fame, the renowned Hughie Jennings from 1917 through 1920 and Ty Cobb from 1921 until the end of his major league career in 1925.

Jones, a native of Clayton, California and long-time resident of San Diego, was born on December 2, 1889 of Welsh ancestry. He began his professional career with the Ogden, Utah Cannons in 1913 and moved up to the San Francisco Seals of the Pacific Coast League in 1914. The Detroit Tigers and Hughie Jennings called Jones to the major league in 1917. The left handed hitting Jones played until the 1921 season. Frank J. Navin, owner of the Detroit team appointed Ty Cobb manager of the Tigers and with the help of Cobb, Jones batted .303 in 1921, his best year in the major leagues. He was selected for the second team of American League All-Stars in 1921, selected by *Baseball Magazine*. Jones never reached this peak of excellence again. The third baseman touched the lives of baseball luminaries such as Harry Heilmann, Walter Johnson, and Tris Speaker.

The Detroit Tigers released Jones in 1925. He completed his nine year career with a respectable .265 average. By modern-days standards, Jones was worth over a million dollars per year. He continued to play in the minor leagues for five years, retiring in 1930.

Subsequently, Jones, his wife Ella and two daughters settled in San Diego. He operated a Shell service station for over twenty years. Jones enjoyed hunting and watching his grandson Jeff Mason, play baseball. Mason eventually reached Triple A competition playing for the Phoenix Giants. Jones died on August 30, 1964, at the age of seventy-four. Jones, a quiet man, made the most of his talents. His professional career extended over eighteen years. He associated with and played against many interesting

baseball personalities. Jones, playing for Jennings and Cobb, experienced a unique career in professional baseball during the first Golden Age of Sports.