



Early arrivals at the Stadium warmed themselves under a blanket before the start of the Indians' season opener against the Yankees. From left are Elaine Sayre, Smithville; Lilly Young, Fredericksburg; Greg Downey, Smithville, and Dale Perry, Wooster.

Robinson sends crowd into frenzy with homer

By Robert Dolgan

At 21 minutes past 2 p.m. yesterday at the Stadium, Frank Robinson of the Cleveland Indians struck a home run in his first time at bat as the first black manager in baseball history.

A crowd of 56,204 watched. Thirty years from now a minimum of one million people will tell their grandchildren that they were present when Robinson reached for a low-outside pitch hurled by Doc Medich of New York and blooped it over the left field fence.

That's the kind of event it was, overshadowing Cleveland's 5-3 victory in the opening game of the season.

The crowd nearly went berserk over the hit. A man in the left field boxes, startled by the improbable shot, dropped the pork chop he was eating onto the concrete and began clapping. A long-haired girl nearly vaulted the railing.

"I came here to see Robinson mostly," said excited Maniverse Hopkins, a Cleveland. "It's a historical moment. Wait until Hank Aaron gets here with Milwaukee. The place will probably be jammed."

"I missed the homer," said James McConnell of East Cleveland. "We were driving in when he did it and we heard it on the radio. We gave each other five."

Not everybody was happy about the clout. "He better hit because he can't manage," said Phil Rigano, 19, of Wapakoneta, O. He is a confirmed Yankee fan.

Rigano was wrong, of course. If Robinson continues to hit a home run in every game he will be the greatest manager, bar none, in baseball history.

Aside from the home run, it was a typical opening day, with the usual ticket mixups and many people seeking haven from the cold in the cozy Stadium Club.

By the fourth inning, Mike Garcia, the old Cleveland pitcher, was there, and so were sportsmen such as lawyer Christopher Nardi, trucking executive Richard Lamb and builder Frank Culkar. The crowd was two-deep at the bar.

Outside, harried ushers removed youngsters from box seats when they couldn't produce the proper tickets.

Two youths who weren't caught were

Richard Curtis, 16, of University Heights, and Jack Carney, 15, of Beachwood. They bought mezzanine tickets for \$2.50 and sat in the \$4.50 box seats. "I saw 18 games like that last year," said Curtis.

Robert Hoelzel, 15, of Walsh Jesuit High, complained that his school group was let down by the Indians. "We ordered 30 reserved seat tickets last Friday," he said, "and when we got here they didn't have them. They sent us to three different gates and we even went up to see the man in group sales. They said they couldn't do anything for us, so now we have to buy cheaper tickets. We won't be able to sit together the way we wanted."

Deborah Savoca, 15, of Mentor, said she, her sister and brother couldn't find a place to park. "All the lots around the Stadium were filled," she said. "We looked for a spot until the fifth inning, then we just went home."

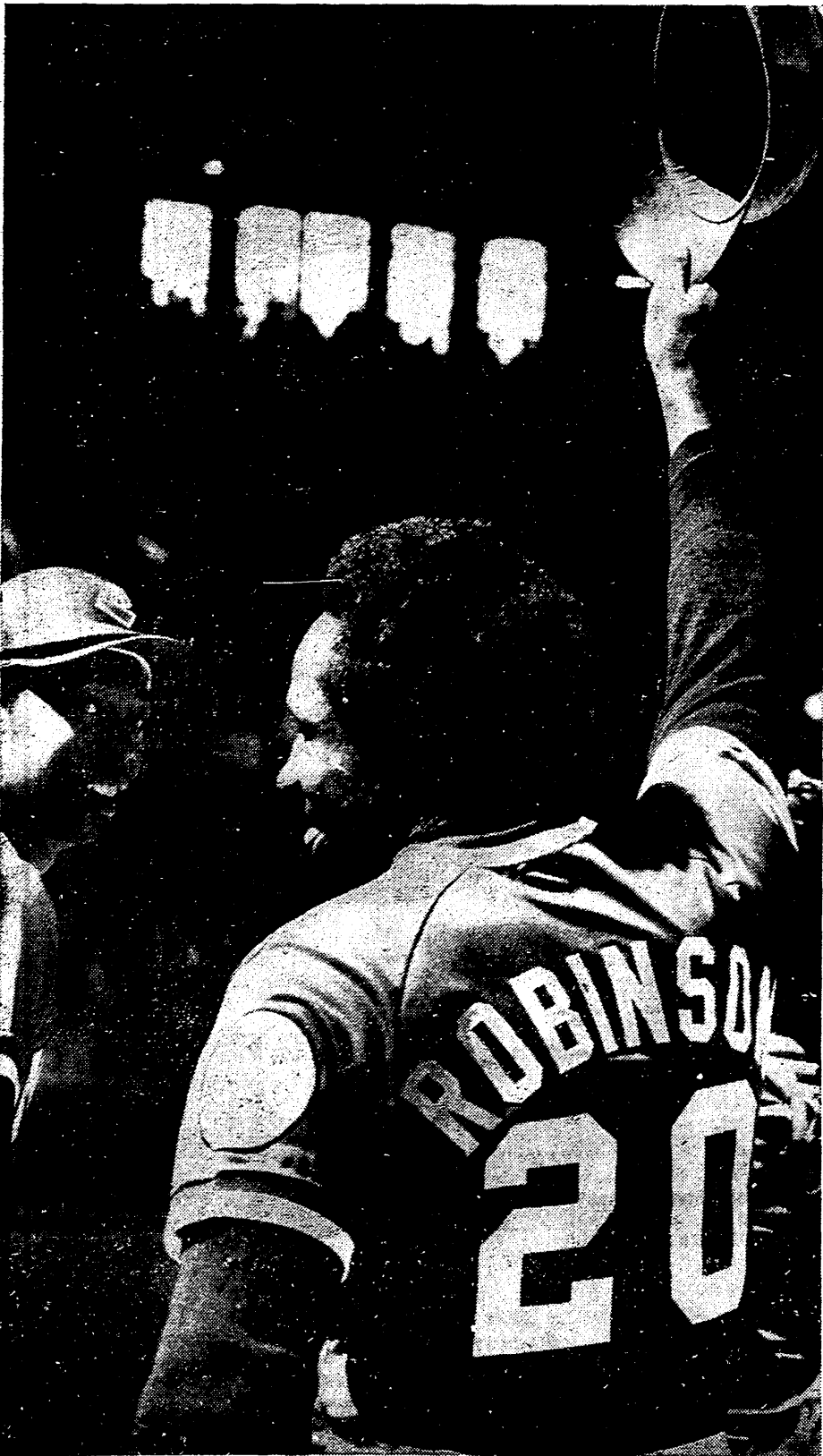
Police reported two 'overheated' cars caught fire in traffic jams, one at Lakeside and Ontario and the other on W. 3d St. near the Stadium. Both fires were put out without incident. A fire extinguisher was taken off a Cleveland Transit System bus to douse the one on Lakeside.

The Plain Dealer photos by

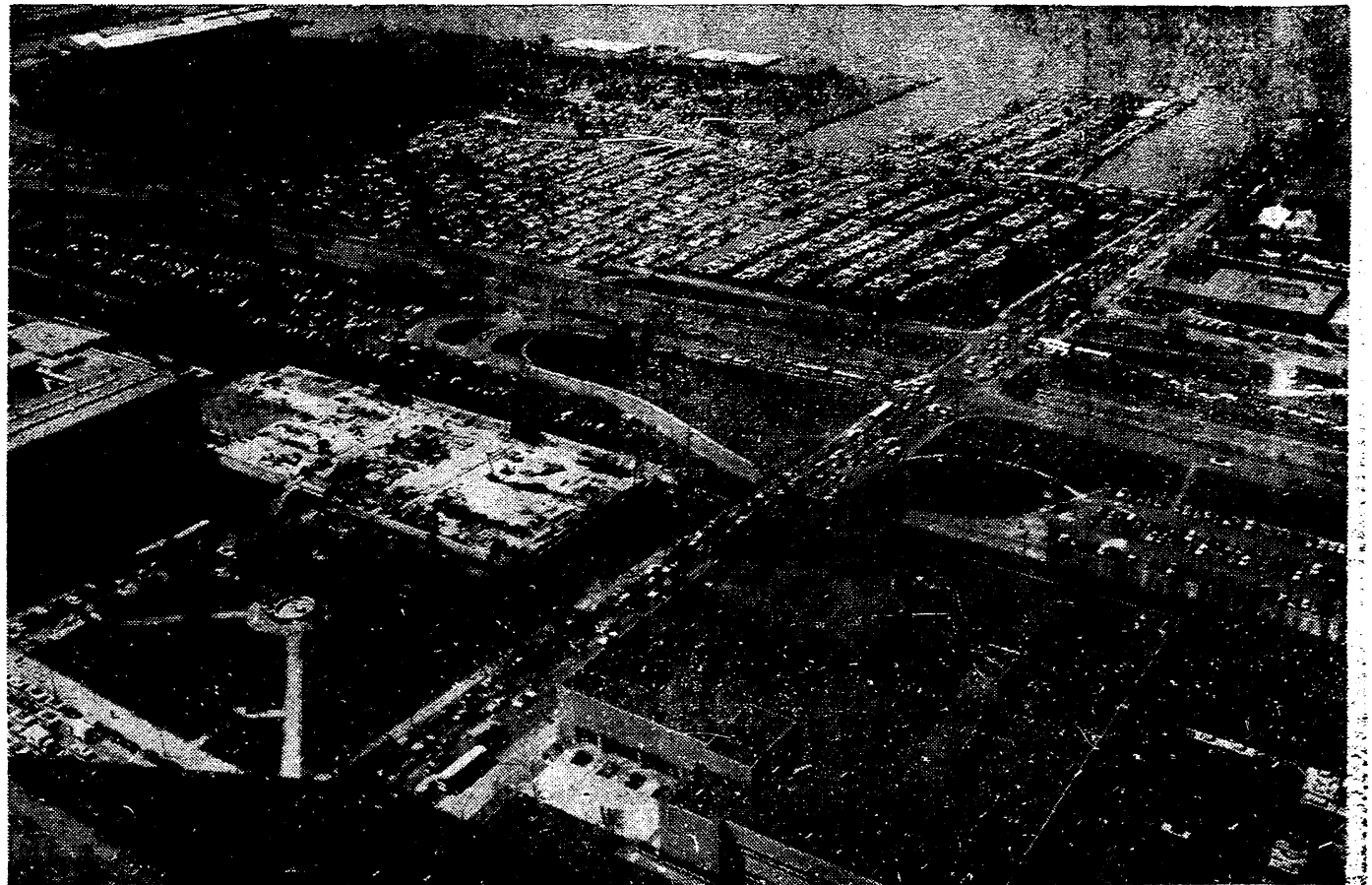
Robert E. Dorksen
William A. Wynne
William G. Vorpe



With not quite the form that made her late husband a Hall of Fame baseball star, Mrs. Jackie Robinson threw out the first ball yesterday as the Indians opened the 1975 season at the Stadium.



Manager-sluggish Frank Robinson (20) tips his hat to opening day crowd at the Stadium after his first-inning home run. At left is Tribe centerfielder George Hendrick.



More than 56,000 persons went to the Stadium yesterday for the Indians' season opener, many of them at about the same time. This photo, made from the top of Erieview Plaza, shows traffic backed up on E. 9th St. to an invisible point south of Lakeside Ave. NE, and a full parking lot east of the Stadium.