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## Flood forgotten in Rich Era He Helped Create

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*The Sporting News*

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# Flood Forgotten in Rich Era He Helped Create

By OSCAR KAHAN  
Assistant Managing Editor

ST. LOUIS—Richard Reeves called Curt Flood one of "The Last Angry Men" in an article in a recent issue of Esquire magazine. He also could have called Flood a forgotten man.

Flood is the rebel who sued baseball over the reserve clause and lost. But his loss helped pave the way for today's player gains. And Flood himself no longer is angry. He just is disillusioned.

The price he paid was high.

When Reeves started out to find Flood, one of Curt's friends told the writer, "Maybe you better leave him alone. Look, he took on something big and it broke him."

**FLOOD INSISTS** that he put away some of the money he earned as one of the finest center fielders in recent baseball history. But his litigation cost him \$100,000 in legal fees. He fled this country for the island of Majorca in 1971 and spent five years there running a bar. Since coming back to the United States, he hasn't really worked for the past two years.

When August A. Busch, Jr., recently picked an all-star team to cover the 25 years of the Cardinals' ownership by Anheuser-Busch, Inc., the club president named Flood as his center fielder. That's how good he was.

Flood is 40 now and no longer capable of playing baseball, but he would like a job in the game, although he contends he is the last

man the baseball establishment will ever touch.

**FLOOD'S "CRIME,"** as Reeves described it, was the suit he filed

on January 16, 1970, after the Cardinals had tried to trade him to the Phillies. He refused to go on a basic principle: "I am a man, not a consignment of goods, to be bought and sold."

A federal district judge ruled against Flood in August, 1970. While the case was wending its way to the U.S. Supreme Court, the Phillies traded Flood to the former Senators under an agreement that his appearance in a Washington uniform would not prejudice his case. But, having sat out the 1970 season, Flood couldn't make it back. He played in 13 games, batted only .200 and called it quits.

The Supreme Court upheld the reserve clause's restrictions on players' rights in a 5-3 decision against Flood June 19, 1972.

**"HE LOST,"** Reeves wrote, "but the Flood case did help set in motion a series of events that won those rights for other men, people like Reggie Jackson, who was able to sell his talent to the New York Yankees for \$600,000 a year. But by that time Curt Flood was home, alone, in Alameda, Calif."

When Reeves reached Flood by telephone, Curt told him, "Please, please, don't come out here. Don't bring it up again. Do you know what I've been through? Do you know what it means to go against the grain in this country? Your neighbors hate you. Do you know

what it's like to be called the little black son of a bitch who tried to destroy baseball, the American Pastime?"

Reeves and Flood finally met at a junior high school in Sacramento, Calif. A friend had asked Curt to speak there at a Martin Luther King Day assembly. Most of the kids did not know who Flood was. But a 14-year-old boy did know what Flood had done and he asked, "What did the free agents give you? Do they write you to thank you, or call?"

**"NO,"** FLOOD said, "no one has called."

Later, talking with Reeves about the six-week trial of his case in federal court, Flood said, "Not one ballplayer came. My roommate didn't come. I roomed with Bob Gibson for 10 years. Maybe I wouldn't have shown up either. I would have been afraid, too."

Flood now shares a comfortable townhouse in Alameda, just across the Oakland line. He came home to be near his 92-year-old mother, who lives nearby, and his children in Los Angeles.

"What can you do?" he said. "You sit in Alameda and think about all the things you should have done."

But there's no doubt in his mind that his suit against baseball was something that he should have done.



Curt Flood . . . Alone and Forgotten