

Testimony on Bill 36-0218

By Johnny Clenance

Good afternoon members of the 36th Legislature listening and viewing audience. My name is Johnny Clenance. I am here today before this august body to present testimony into the record in support of Bill No: 36-0218 to rename what is now known as Prince Street in Christiansted, St. Croix to the Jerry Browne Street. It is a well-deserved honor to one of our native sons who with the support of family, friends and hard work was able to establish a career in the Major League Baseball league for 10 consecutive years.

However, I approach my presentation as a friend who knew Jerry from when he was approximately 6 years old through his older brother Cordell Codrington (deceased). We trained racehorses together, along with Calvin Luis and Patrick Phillips in the yard where the family resided. The yard was large and ball games were played with Tennis balls by Jerry and his friends while we took care of the horses. There was no smooth ground and Jerry and the other participants had no fear of sliding on that hard surface with stones and rough ground. Bruises and cuts were incurred, however that did not stop the games from being played,

Jerry's career grew from the back yard to Little League baseball on a team by the name of Reds managed by his uncle Norman Williams Sr.(deceased} better known as "Wampy". It also needs to be noted that Jerry would not have developed in the manner he did without his uncle's no-nonsense approach and his mother's determination to raise funds through food sales in order for the team to travel. The philosophy was if all the members of the team could not travel the team would not travel. A philosophy instilled by the manager Norman Williams Sr. and strongly supported by Jerry's mother Ms. Iris Browne (deceased).

I communicated with Jerry by phone calls throughout his Minor League and Major League Baseball careers both through the good times and the rough times. The rough times was Jerry's ability to battle through the bad days such as the double headers that were played in the Minor League in excess of 100 degrees and the racial slurs that were being hurled by the fans on occasions at the black players. These are just a few of the hurdles he endured on the road to a successful Major League career which included as stated in Bill 36-0218 having the opportunity to be on the same team, Oakland Athletics as Hall of Famers Rickey Henderson and Dennis Eckersley. The challenges he encountered illustrate that talent is not the sole

ingredient necessary to be successful in any career you may endeavor to pursue, perseverance is also a key component in order to obtain your goal.

Jerry's nickname in baseball was the "Governor". This was the monicker that was given to Jerry, it was in reference to the former Governor of California Jerry Brown. There is a sports show that replays the highlights of the games of all the major sports that is played in the United States and internationally. One of the sportscasters had fun with the nickname of the "Governor" as when Jerry had a good game both fielding and hitting, he would state with every highlight of a critical hit or play he made on the field that the Governor was signing bills into law that were not in the best interest of the opposing team.

I vividly recall while fulfilling my duties at the Telephone Company as a Telephone Technician it entailed working on a very tedious problem with a technician on the mainland. It took approximately 45 minutes to one hour during which time I inquired as where that individual was stationed which was part of the trouble shooting process. Their response was Cleveland, Ohio. I immediately asked if they attended the baseball games. The technician responded that she and her husband were 20-year season ticket holders of the Cleveland Indians. Although Jerry had already moved on to the Oakland Athletics, I proudly told the technician that Jerry Browne was born and grew up on St. Croix; her response "are you talking about the Governor" I responded, "yes I was". She stated we miss him so much he gave it his all every day and was one of our better players.

In closing as referenced above we are much more appreciated by individuals abroad than by our own. I encourage the members of this committee to continue to alter that trend and support Bill 36-0218 recognizing Jerry Browne for his accomplishments during his Major League Baseball career and his commitment to the youth of St. Croix.