Her memoir, Stealing Home, came out in 1996 from Harper-Collins. In it, she discussed her childhood, her family life, the difficulties that came with integrating her all-white school and neighborhood, her marriages, her father’s politics, and her parents’ partnership. She has since published two young-adult novels and seven children’s books.

She plans to write at least one more.

In 1997, the golden jubilee of Jackie Robinson’s history-shaping appearance on a ball field, Sharon attended the ceremony at a Mets-Dodgers game at Shea Stadium. Her son threw out the first ball, and her mother and President Clinton gave speeches. That same year, Sharon joined Major League Baseball as vice president of educational programming, teaming up with the publisher Scholastic to create a program for character development in children. After twenty years in nursing, Sharon was ready for her next chapter. Her program, Breaking Barriers: In Sports, In Life, was born.

Around that time, Jesse, then twenty-nine, got sick and fell into a coma for two weeks. He was diagnosed with adult-onset type 1 diabetes, like his grandfather. “It runs in my father’s family in the males,” says Sharon. “They get a very virulent form of diabetes and heart disease. It had skipped a generation with my brother, and I knew my son was going to get it. I just knew.”

Though Jesse survived the coma, his symptoms worsened. In 2013, he had a heart attack, which proved fatal. He was thirty-four.

On April 15, 2017, Sharon arrived at Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles, ten miles from Pasadena, where Jackie Robinson grew up. Seventy years had passed since that immortal day at Ebbets Field in Brooklyn when Jack Roosevelt Robinson in his white Dodgers jersey strode pigeon-toed across the grass to the infield dirt.

Guests and dignitaries gathered in the left-field plaza: Sharon’s mom, Rachel; Sharon’s brother David, who lives in Tanzania, where he runs a coffee cooperative; the extended Robinson family; Jackie’s teammates Sandy Koufax, Don Newcombe, and Tommy Lasorda; Dave Roberts, the team’s first Black manager, now in his second year; Dodgers part-owner Magic Johnson; and Dodgers CEO Stan Kasten ’76LAW. Nearby, blue curtains veiled a statue — the first ever for Dodger Stadium.

“Anniversaries let us focus not only on the past, but on where we are now.”

“We introduce kids to nine values that I associate with my dad’s success on and off the field: courage, determination, teamwork, persistence, integrity, citizenship, justice, commitment, and excellence,” Sharon says. “We use those values to provide strategies to help kids overcome obstacles in their lives.” The curriculum includes an essay contest, for which two grand-prize winners are honored at the All-Star Game and the World Series.

Sharon is also vice chair of the Jackie Robinson Foundation (JRF), a scholarship program for low-income students of color that her mother founded in 1973. Martin Edelman ’66LAW is cofounder and secretary. The chair is Gregg Gonsalves ’89SEAS, who attended Columbia as a Jackie Robinson Scholar.

“The JRF is my mom’s baby,” Sharon says. “She is very powerful and self-directed, and very clear in what she wants to accomplish. She doesn’t take on something that she’s not going to push to be successful.”

This spring, the JRF broke ground on the Jackie Robinson Museum, scheduled to open in SoHo in 2019. It won’t be just artifacts and baseball. “There’s no civil-rights museum in New York City,” Sharon says. “We feel this museum will fill that gap, and we’re excited to get it done in my mother’s lifetime.”

Though Sharon is dedicated to this work, she’s also looking ahead. “My mother is ninety-four, and I’m very much supporting her during this phase of her life,” she says. “But I know it’s important I figure out my next phase.”

The essays for the Breaking Barriers contest are about facing adversity, and many of them center on illness — a topic Sharon knows well. She has lupus (an autoimmune inflammatory disease) and high blood pressure. In 2008 she had a double bypass.

Sharon Robinson loves the water. She divides her time between New York and Delray Beach, Florida. The beach in Delray is beautiful; the water, healing.

“I’ve been trying to figure out who I am since my son died,” Sharon says, matter-of-factly. Fortitude and grace suffuse her; there are no stats for that.

Jesse had two children. Jessica is six, and Luke is eleven. They live in Massachusetts, and Sharon hopes to see more of them. She’s been thinking more about the next phase of her life. “Slowly,” she says, “I’m beginning to visualize what that will look like.”

Her favorite time to walk the beach is sunrise, when the fishermen are setting out in their boats. A golden rim appears on the watery horizon — a crown, lifting as if for the first time — and the world feels calm.

“I have one more book I’m going to do for kids,” Sharon says, peering into the future. She laughs, almost bashfully. “Then maybe I’ll get to write some love stories.”

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