



Racer

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returned to prominence.”

What sets Major Taylor apart from the other racers and athletes of his day – and after – is not only his tremendous physical strength and endurance, but his strength of character, says Tolman.

“It’s a tough sport, it’s a team sport,” she said, in need of mentors, coaches, teammates and opponents who respected your right to be on the track or road. “Major Taylor was utterly alone. They ganged up on him. They’d literally push him into the fences and not even give him a chance.”

Despite the hostility he met on many tracks, Taylor met these challenges with “remarkable dignity,” says Tolman.

Major Taylor’s great granddaughter Karen Donovan says he was a prolific letter writer and diarist, which solidifies his reputation as a gentleman. Donovan told *The Skanner News* that she spent a lot of time with her grandmother and Major Taylor’s only child,

Sydney, who spoke often of her champion father.

“I understood Major Taylor held deep, moral values,” she said. “He set the bar so high it’s a little intimidating.”

She says he was raised in a two-family environment. On the weekdays, he spent his time with the Southards, and on the weekends, with his paternal family.

“He probably had a serious conflict,” she said. “It certainly had to have an influence. He just wanted to be treated like his White playmates.”

Taylor’s fairly pristine life has led many in the entertainment business to embellish or outright invent things about his life, Donovan said. She’s received a number of film scripts that included scandalous sex and drinking.

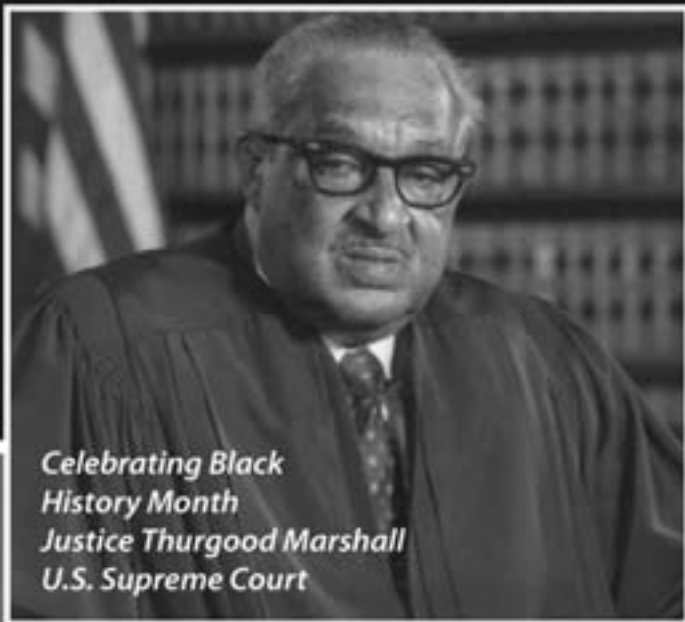
“They take so much creative license it’s insulting,” she said. Others, however, have tried to stick closely to the man’s actual story. There hasn’t yet been a finished film version of his life,

He wasted much of his winnings on failed investment and business opportunities

but a website has been set up advertising the film “Major,” set to be directed by Kenneth Berris. It is currently in pre-production.

But Donovan says Major Taylor was far from perfect. He wasted much of his winnings on failed investment and business opportunities. In the later years of his life, he became estranged from his wife and daughter, dying largely penniless save for a massive collection of memorabilia. Much of that collection was donated to the

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