

GLENN BURKE

b. November 16, 1955

d. May 30, 1995

ATHLETE

"They can't ever say now that a gay man can't play in the majors, because I'm a gay man and I made it."

"Glenn was comfortable with who he was. Baseball was not comfortable with who he was."

Glenn Burke was the first Major League Baseball player to come out to his teammates and managers during his career.

Born in California, Burke attended Berkeley High School, where he excelled in multiple sports. He briefly attended University of Nevada on a basketball scholarship before the Los Angeles Dodgers drafted him. Burke played minor league baseball for four years until his major league debut in 1976.

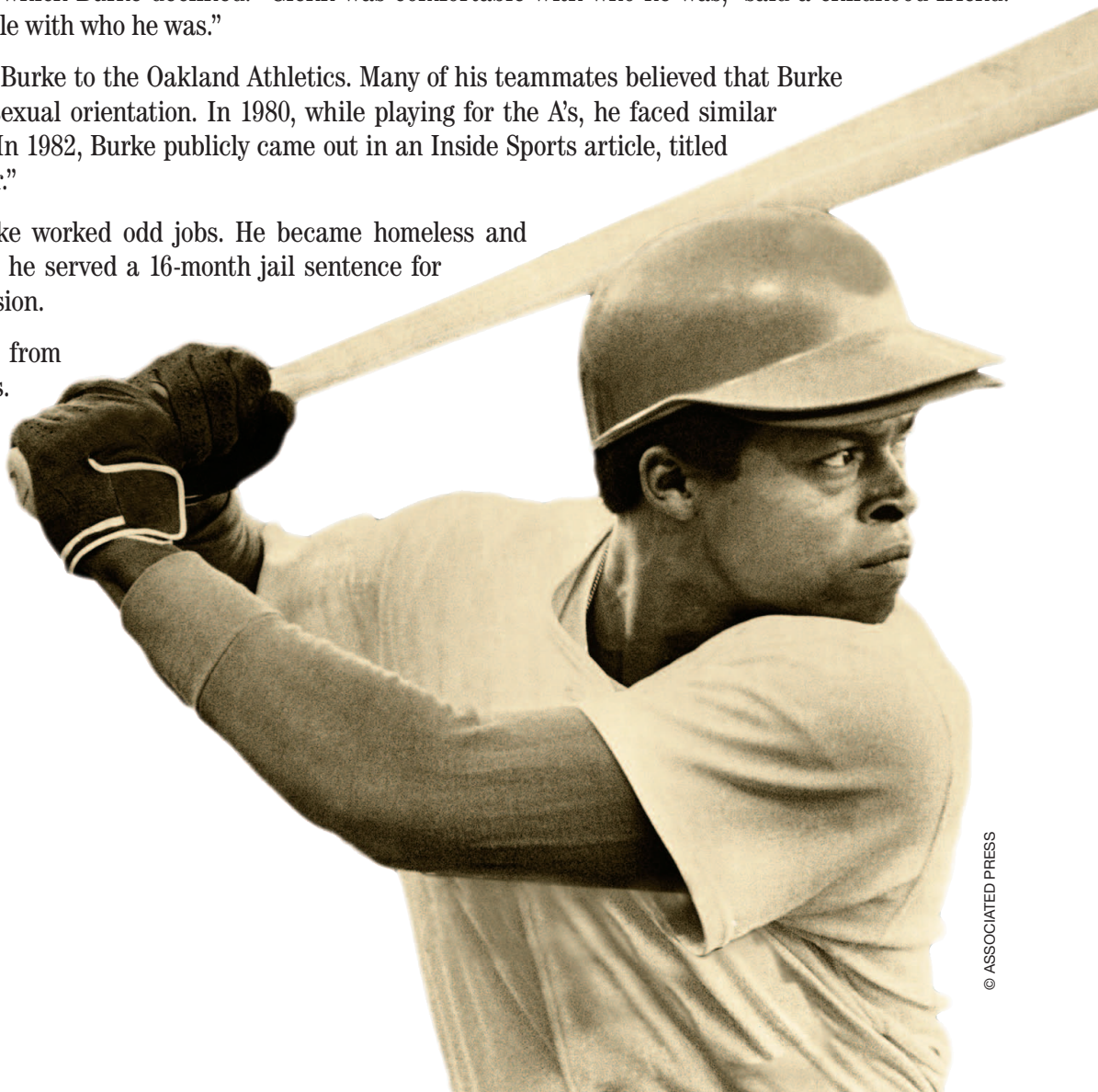
Burke is known as the originator of the "high five." After Dusty Baker hit his 30th home run of the season, Burke greeted his teammate at home plate with an open palm. "His hand was up in the air, and he was arching way back so I reached up and hit his hand," Baker said. "It seemed like the thing to do."

While with the Dodgers, Burke began to openly express his sexual orientation. The Dodgers manager offered the outfielder a bonus to marry a woman, which Burke declined. "Glenn was comfortable with who he was," said a childhood friend. "Baseball was not comfortable with who he was."

In 1977, the Dodgers traded Burke to the Oakland Athletics. Many of his teammates believed that Burke was traded because of his sexual orientation. In 1980, while playing for the A's, he faced similar discrimination and retired. In 1982, Burke publicly came out in an Inside Sports article, titled "The Double Life of a Dodger."

After leaving baseball, Burke worked odd jobs. He became homeless and began using drugs. In 1988, he served a 16-month jail sentence for grand theft and drug possession.

In 1995, Burke died from AIDS-related complications. A documentary about his life, "Out. The Glenn Burke Story" (2010), aired on sports channels.



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