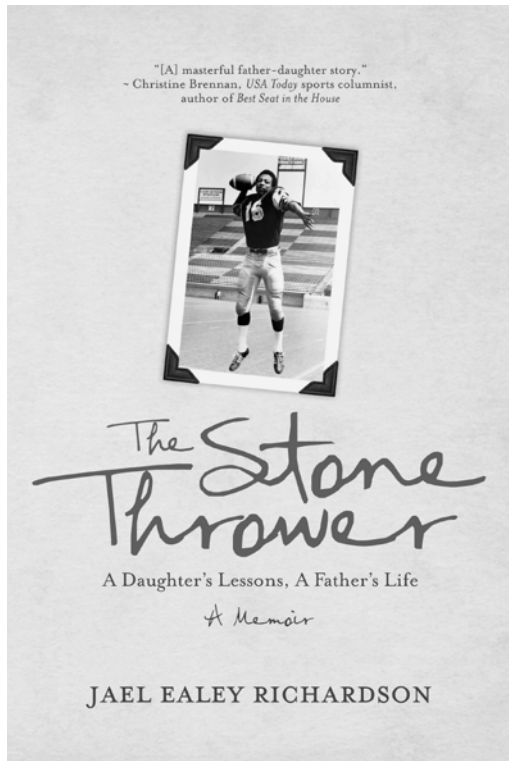


The Stone Thrower: A Daughter's Lessons, A Father's Life

Jael Ealey Richardson

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Portsmouth, Ohio sits quietly on the north side of the Ohio River. In the 1800s one could see slavery in Kentucky on the south side. The imaginary line running down the middle of the river created a real divide for African Americans under the law and in society. Jael Ealey Richardson explores that divide and its meaning to her life in "The Stone Thrower: A Daughter's Lessons, A Father's Life." And she does it with deft and descriptive writing.

For most of my life I have felt watery like an ocean, my sense of self, disoriented and bottomless, my blackness lost and out of place in a country known for cold winters, covered in whiteness. And I don't know how I got here, to this place of uncertainty. I just know it has something to do with my father.

The father in the book's subtitle is Chuck Ealey, undefeated local high school quarterback, undefeated University of Toledo quarterback and Grey Cup winning quarterback of the Hamilton Tiger-Cats. He was born Charles Ealey, Junior, in Portsmouth, Ohio, in 1950. He lived in North End, the "colored" side of the town. Known as Junior by family members, he was raised by his hardworking and loving mother, Earline. He rarely saw his father, Chuck Senior. A boyhood friend, Al Bass, recalled that, "None of the boys from the North End lived with their fathers."

Like most teenagers, Jael (pronounced Jay-ell) had a need to fit in, but was it with African Canadians with a Caribbean background, a culture with which she had little connection, or with white Canadians, the culture in which she grew up. She explores her journey to find her sense of place while growing up in Mississauga and attending the University of Guelph. However, in order to achieve this, she needed to uncover her father's history.

Most of the author's early knowledge of her father's life came from newspaper and magazine clippings found in the basement of the family home. However, she required more intimate and

detailed information, so she went on a quest to discover the story of her father's life. How did this Black boy from the poor side of town end up at the private Catholic high school? Why did the National Football League not draft a quarterback with a 3-year, 35-game undefeated record? How did he end up in Canada with the Tiger-Cats?

The Stone Thrower details how his daughter learned that her father's football success reflected the determination and drive that moved him from a life of poverty to a life of success, and how he would not accept anything less than what he deserved. She learns of his great resolve to play quarterback and thrive as an African American through the tumultuous times of America in the 1960s. Martin Luther King Junior is quoted at the beginning of the section about Chuck Ealey's time in Toledo. It reflects Jael's discoveries about her father.

The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.

Jael Ealey Richardson's life is an echo of that imaginary line that divided the Ohio River during slavery days. It is part of the continuing story of African Americans migrating to Ontario, escaping a divided society and creating their own opportunities in order to use their abilities to the fullest. By creating their place in Canadian society, African Americans have been integral in building this province.

By exploring family, faith and fame, *The Stone Thrower: A Daughter's Lessons, A Father's Life* provides an insight into the complicated role of race, culture and status in Ontario's society.



Peter Meyler