

BASEBALL

IN THE MILITARY

AMERICA'S PASTIME GOES TO WAR

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A LOOK BACK AT THE PLAYERS
WHO LEFT THE GAME THEY
LOVED TO SERVE THEIR COUNTRY

TED WILLIAMS AT WAR



YOGI BERRA:
A WITNESS TO D-DAY

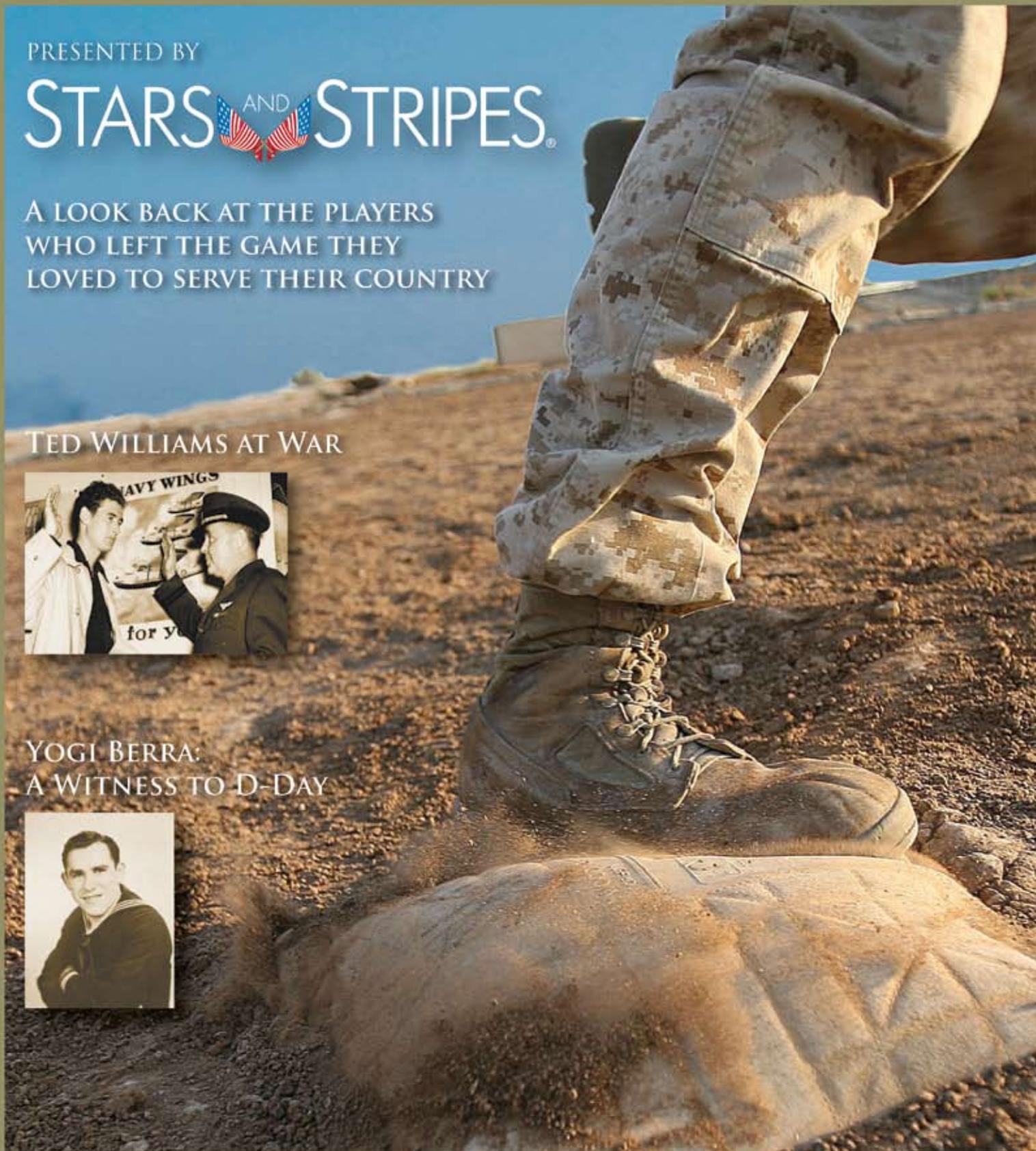


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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

January 15, 1942.

My dear Judge:-

Thank you for yours of January fourteenth. As you will, of course, realize the final decision about the baseball season must rest with you and the Baseball Club owners -- so what I am going to say is solely a personal and not an official point of view.

I honestly feel that it would be best for the country to keep baseball going. There will be fewer people unemployed and everybody will work longer hours and harder than ever before.

And that means that they ought to have a chance for recreation and for taking their minds off their work even more than before.

Baseball provides a recreation which does not last over two hours or two hours and a half, and which can be got for very little cost. And, incidentally, I hope that night games can be extended because it gives an opportunity to the day shift to see a game occasionally.

As to the players themselves, I know you agree with me that individual players who are of active military or naval age should go, without question, into the services. Even if the actual quality of the teams is lowered by the greater use of older players, this will not dampen the popularity of the sport. Of course, if any individual has some particular aptitude in a trade or profession, he ought to serve the Government. That, however, is a matter which I know you can handle with complete justice.

Here is another way of looking at it -- if 300 teams use 5,000 or 6,000 players, these players are a definite recreational asset to at least 20,000,000 of their fellow citizens -- and that in my judgment is thoroughly worthwhile.

With every best wish,

Very sincerely yours,

Hon. Kenesaw M. Landis,
333 North Michigan Avenue,
Chicago,
Illinois.





CHEMICAL WARFARE SERVICE: WORLD WAR I'S HOUSE OF HORRORS

THE LITTLE-KNOWN SERVICE OF BRANCH RICKEY, TY COBB AND THE GREAT MATTY

Imagine that you are scared, cold and hungry, on foreign turf, fighting in the trenches against an enemy that wants nothing better than to annihilate you and your comrades. Imagine that as you inch forward in battle the enemy begins to lob cylinders of gas in your direction and then follows up immediately by shooting directly at you rifle pellets filled with something you vaguely remember as being called “phosegene gas.” A sickly smell now fills the air. You are so glad that you had your gas mask on even though it is unwieldy and adds more weight to your tiring body. Now imagine that you look towards your side where your buddy is, and see that he could not reach to his belt quickly enough to put his mask on over his face so that you see that he took in a small breath of “exposed” air. Then imagine within an instant his terror-stricken eyes opening wide, his face turning purple as he looks through you – and within seconds he is dead.

Such scenes of horror dominated trench fighting in France during World War I and three of the most influential and celebrated baseball icons of all time – Ty Cobb, Christy Mathewson, and Branch Rickey – served in a special elite unit to combat this terror, the Chemical Warfare Service, at the very same time in the same division during the most crucial time of the war. How was it that these three extraordinary men, none of them youngsters pining to show off their youthful mettle, would end up leaving the safety of the baseball diamond and their families and voluntarily join the service to defend their country overseas and battle the enemy in a most brutal fashion?

Precious little has been written about this trio and

their link in war but it is a story that reveals much about qualities of character that resonate on the ball field and in the battlefield. Rickey was 38 years of age and the sole support of four young children. Matty, already retired from baseball after notching 373 victories, was also 38 with a family. And Cobb, fresh from leading the American League in batting, a feat he would accomplish more often than any man in the history of the game, was the “youthful” age of 32. He was also the sole support of his family. Without question, all three could have easily stayed home and aided their country by using their celebrity to head war-bond drives or some similar activity to raise needed capital. But the answer to the question of why they chose the Chemical Warfare Service not only reflects their intense patriotism but also speaks volumes to the strength of their personal character and leadership capabilities. To fully grasp the sacrifices these men made during a time of war, one must first learn of the importance and unique role of the Chemical Warfare Service.

The Chemical Warfare Service, or “The Gas and Flame Division” as it would commonly be called, was created at the height of the war to quell a growing public alarm as news of gas attacks such as described above began to filter home and soldiers on the front lines wrote their families about “gas attacks,” a deadly and virulent horror of war introduced on the battlefields by the Germans two and a half years earlier. At first, soldiers were given simple gas masks to carry as potential protection but the masks were cumbersome, ineffective, and required the men to breathe through large, unwieldy tubes. By 1918 the military was increasingly concerned and redoubled

efforts to meet the gas threat. After all, eight million men had died during the bloody war in just four years! During the summer of 1918, the brass hatched a plan, secret at first, to repel the attacks with a new elite fighting unit officially named The Chemical Warfare Service. Choosing Washington, D.C., as a backdrop to heighten the importance of the plan, they gathered the most influential members of the press to break the news. They wanted news of the unit to receive the maximum amount of coverage possible not only as a way to scope out men of extraordinary leadership capabilities, but to inform the public that they would stem the frightening consequence of the German gas attacks in a most effective way.

Major General William L. Sibert told the waiting press corps that the military would combat this “inhuman” form of warfare by recruiting baseball players and athletes with exceptional skill. Significantly, he also said that the armed forces would not simply rely on the youngest members of the public to resist these attacks. He emphasized: “We do not just want good young athletes...we are searching for good, strong men, endowed with extraordinary capabilities to lead others during gas attacks”. The die was cast. The “Gas and Flame Division” would only be open to men, strong of body and mind, who had proven themselves to be leaders as athletes and capable of exercising superior judgment in an emergency. Long before Tom Wolfe coined the phrase, they were looking for men with the “right stuff,” and what better pool of men to draw from than baseball players who proved their leadership capabilities at the highest level of play? Men like Branch Rickey,



Ty Cobb (right) during his service



How was it that these three extraordinary men...would end up leaving the safety of the baseball diamond and their families and voluntarily join the service to defend their country overseas and battle the enemy in a most brutal fashion?

who volunteered to serve in this new and important squad, would be commissioned as a major. Similarly, his friends Mathewson, nicknamed “The Christian Gentleman” because of his gentle ways, and the fierce Cobb, already American icons, would be recruited as captains. By August, all three had been accepted into the “Gas and Flame Division.”

The pace of the war accelerated quickly. Within a few weeks of their acceptance, the three men’s lives intersected in a way much different than when their days were filled with baseball. In September, Cobb and Rickey were told to immediately report for duty and secretly sail with their division to France to join others, including Matty, who had already been stationed near the front lines for weeks. The war was at a critical stage. The three were to join one another, with Rickey taking command of the unit. They were tasked to prepare for battle with special orders to anticipate German gas attacks where the heaviest trench fighting would be, then turn the tables on the enemy by quickly spraying their flanks with jets of flame from tanks strapped onto their backs. Then, once their tanks emptied, they were to lob special “gas grenades” at the fallen Germans and clear the area. The men were primed! The trio’s unit already had participated in several operations supporting allied tanks and infantry. Now their ranks would swell by a fresh batch of men, including three of baseball’s best.

By September, the Germans threw caution to the wind and mustered as much of an attack in France as they could. The battles in the northeast of France would be the most decisive in the war. If the Germans won, the war would continue indefinitely. Then, as the “Gas and Flame Division” and its famous recruits readying for combat would learn, even preparing and training for dangerous duty could have disastrous consequences. It was during their final training run that tragedy did strike one of the three. Cobb, in his 1961

autobiography, “My Life In Baseball,” graphically described what happened: “I will never forget the day when some of the men, myself included, missed the signal (to snap their mask into position). Men screamed...when they got a whiff of the sweet death in the air, they went crazy with fear and I remember Mathewson telling me ‘Ty, I got a good dose of the stuff. I feel terrible’...I saw Christy Mathewson doomed to die.” Cobb felt that his life was spared only through “the touch of Divine Providence.” Cobb



was lucky. We shall see that Matty was not.

But fate would have things in store for the trio other than trench warfare, because as October turned to November the rumors of surrender proved true. On Armistice Day, November 11, 1918, the Germans surrendered. The bloodiest world war was finally over. Within weeks, the three, their lives changed forever and inexorably linked by their valor as military men, returned to the United States where they and countless

others were met by a war-weary nation wanting desperately to move on. By early 1919, Rickey re-joined the Cardinals and honed one of the shrewdest baseball minds ever. A sick and tired Cobb announced his retirement but after several weeks regained his strength and decided to return to the game he loved. Cobb played eight more years before retiring for good with a .367 lifetime batting average, the highest of all time. The consequences of the gas, however, would linger within Matty’s once strapping system. Upon his return, Mathewson never really regained his health. Sadly, in 1925, after a long series of illnesses, at the age of 45, he succumbed to tuberculosis, his body having been compromised from the exposure to gas from his service to the country and complications inherent from his weakened system.

Today, all three men are enshrined in the Baseball Hall of Fame. Their leadership qualities, the very traits that moved them to join the military elite in the “Gas and Flame Division,” resonate to this day. Ty Cobb is still widely recognized as being one of the top two or three baseball players of all time. Christy Mathewson, whose life ended prematurely because of his service in the “Gas and Flame Division”, is a beloved figure, recognized as being amongst the top pitchers ever. And the patriotic Branch Rickey’s place in our culture grows with each year. When he helped set the stage for the civil rights movement by helping Jackie Robinson shatter the color barrier, nearly 30 years after his service in the “Gas and Flame Division,” the “Mahatma” – as members of the press affectionately called him – opened the door for the equal rights for everyone.

BY FRANK CERESI

BASEBALL GOES TO WAR

THE NATIONAL PASTIME IN WORLD WAR II

The national pastime played a key role in the American war effort during World War II, and it is a story that has not been fully told.

From the frozen tundra of Iceland to the jungles of the South Pacific; from the deserts of North Africa to the Nazi stadium in Nuremberg, American soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines played baseball whenever, and wherever, they could.

All told, over 500 major league and more than 2,000 minor league baseball players went into the armed forces. Among the first of these was Bob Feller, the right-handed star pitcher for the Cleveland Indians. Feller was the sole support for his family because his father, an Iowa farmer, was dying of cancer, and because of this he could have easily gotten a deferment. Instead, upon hearing of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, he drove to Chicago and reported to a Navy recruiting office.

“We were losing the war,” Feller said. “We needed heroes.”

Feller subsequently served as a gun captain on board the battleship Alabama and saw action in the Atlantic and then in the Pacific theater, participating in numerous battles. But baseball was not left behind. Feller played baseball and softball in Scotland, Iceland and on numerous islands in the Pacific.

Among the many other baseball stars serving were Stan Musial, Joe DiMaggio, Ted Williams, Warren Spahn, Yogi Berra, Pee Wee Reese, Phil Rizutto and Hank Greenberg.

Baseball on the Homefront

Given the loss of professional players to the services, there was much speculation that professional baseball

would be suspended for the duration of the war.

However, In his famous “green light” letter, to Major League Baseball Commissioner Kennesaw Mountain Landis, President Roosevelt expressed his personal hope that baseball would continue during the war because of its impact on the citizenry. (see letter on page 3)

Baseball responded to this request, maintaining a full schedule of games and drawing on teenagers, over-the-hill veterans and “the lame, the halt and the blind” to fill out the major and minor league rosters.

Among the more unusual replacement players was Pete Gray, an outfielder for the St. Louis Browns. Gray had lost his right arm in an accident, but nonetheless managed to bat one-handed, as well as field fly balls and grounders in the outfield and then throw them into the infield by a remarkable method of flipping and rolling the ball.

Although the quality of play may have suffered during the war years, the fans turned out in droves to follow their favorite teams, with servicemen in uniform admitted free.

Baseball also got its fans to support the war effort financially, with the players taking part of their salaries in war bonds. The players and owners were also active in fundraising drives.

In one notable fundraising extravaganza, Washington Post sports columnist-turned-impresario Shirley Povich packed 30,000-seat Griffith Stadium for an exhibition game between the Washington Senators and a team of Navy All-Stars featuring such players as Feller, Rizutto and DiMaggio. (Needless to say, the All-Stars won.)

Also helping to attract a crowd were singers Kate Smith and Bing Crosby and a guest appearance by Babe Ruth.

The event raised \$2 million enough to construct a Navy cruiser.

Another successful innovation of the war years was professional women’s baseball – specifically the All American Girls Professional Baseball League formed by Chicago chewing gum magnate William Wrigley. Working on the assumption that professional baseball would be suspended at some point, Wrigley organized a women’s league as a way of maintaining fan interest in the game.

Teams were organized in six Midwestern cities (eventually growing to eight) and the women chosen were instructed to “look like ladies and play like men.”

All players were required to attend charm school classes and to wear short skirts and knee socks. The latter provided precious little protection when sliding into bases. Heavily chaperoned and forced to endure long bus trips from city to city, the players nonetheless thrived on the rugged routine and they became a popular attraction for millions of people throughout the region.

Even today the alumnae of the League (which folded in 1954) are an active, though dwindling, group, maintaining an alumnae association with regular meetings and publications.

In the wake of the popular movie “A League of Their Own,” the ladies are enjoying a second burst of celebrity status.

One of the most poignant examples of baseball’s appeal could be seen in the internment camps established in several western states for the Nisei or Japanese-Americans. More than 100,00 were interned during the war and in most of the camps baseball fields were built and leagues were formed.

Baseball in the European Theater

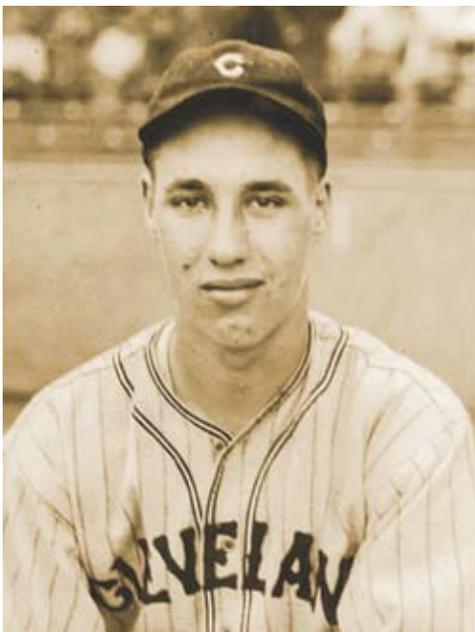
By early 1942, American servicemen were beginning to pour into Britain in preparation for the eventual invasion of the Continent and the push towards Berlin. By 1944, 1.5 million Yanks were in Britain and they were playing baseball all over the kingdom.

The British, deprived of professional sports for the duration of the war, flocked to watch these games which were reported on regularly by the press. Numerous eminent individuals including Queen Mary, Mrs. Winston Churchill and assorted dukes, bishops and local officials attended these games and often threw out the first ball.

Numerous games were organized to raise funds for the war effort, with an estimated \$344,000 being raised by baseball in 1943 alone.

Following the Normandy invasion, baseball crossed the channel and was soon being played all across Europe in the wake of the advancing U.S. troops.

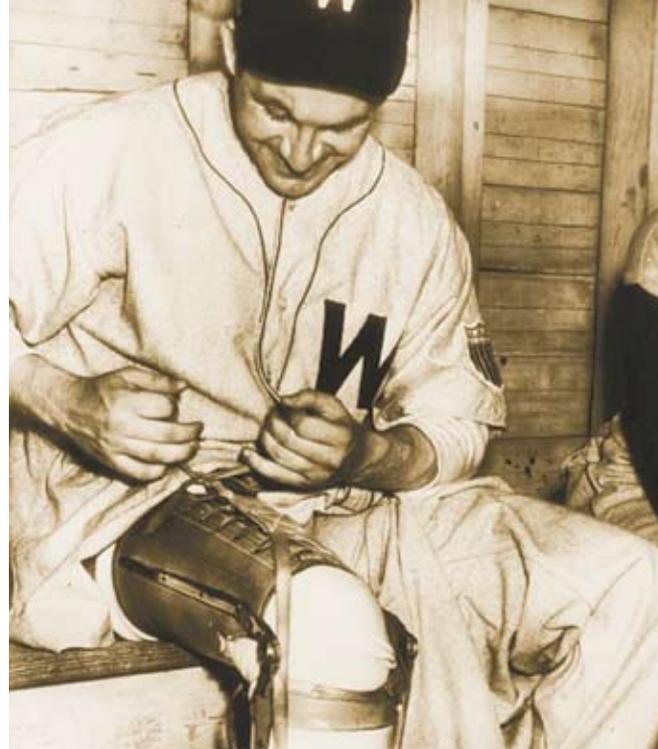
Among those troops was private Warren Spahn who



Bob Feller



Bert Shepard



participated in the battle of the Hurtgen Forest and the Battle of the Bulge

In both campaigns, German soldiers wore captured American uniforms to infiltrate U.S. lines and, according to Spahn, baseball terms and lore were used extensively by the Yanks as identification tactics.

“If you saw an unidentified man approaching the lines,” Spahn said, “you might yell out ‘who plays second sack for the Bums?’ (Translation: who plays second base for the Dodgers?).” “If he didn’t know the answer, he was a dead man.”

Bert Shepard, an Army Air Corps pilot who was shot down by the Germans and imprisoned in a German POW camp said, “Every time a new prisoner came into the camp he was besieged by guys wanting to know how their favorite team was doing back home.”

Shepard himself provided one of the most amazing baseball stories to come out of the World War II. When he was hit by German anti-aircraft fire during a strafing run his leg was shattered. After parachuting to the ground he was rescued from an angry mob of German villagers by a German medic who amputated the leg and saved Shepard’s life.

Following the American liberation of the camp, Shepard came home and was fitted with a prosthesis. Shepard, who had been a pitcher in the Washington Senators’ farm system, returned to the minor leagues and was soon called up by the Senators. Amazingly, Shepard pitched a game on his artificial leg and won. Repeated surgeries, however, sidelined him as a major league player although he did continue to pitch in the minor leagues.

As the servicemen advanced across Europe, baseball went with them and rudimentary fields were hastily built along the way, from the low countries of Holland and Belgium to the Bavarian Alps.

Among the millions of British subjects who were exposed to baseball was a young lad by the name of Gary Bedingfield. The boy fell in love with this strange

and wonderful Yankee import and has continued to be a fan ever since. Bedingfield now maintains a Web site “Baseball in Wartime” – the only one exclusively devoted to baseball in World War II.

Of the war’s aftermath Bedingfield writes:

“On May 7, 1945, the day after the German surrender, engineer units, formerly engaged in building combat bridges and airfields, enthusiastically set about transforming the battlefields of Europe into ballfields, while hundreds of athletic officers set in motion the administration and organizational requirements. Never before had there been an athletic program of such magnitude. The amount of equipment required was colossal, and shortly after VE Day, the War Department made available an inventory of sporting goods that included 85,964 ball gloves, 72,850 baseballs and 131,130 bats. By mid-summer 200,000 troops were playing in competitive leagues, military duties were scheduled around games and combat units temporarily put aside the emotional and physical scars of recent battles in their pursuit to be the best team in their region. While the Cubs and Tigers battled for the World Series crown back home, the GI’s World Series in Europe took place before 50,000 servicemen in a stadium in Nuremberg, Germany. Just six years earlier a similar sized crowd had reached a deafening tone as they cheered a vast array of Nazi armament that paraded before them. On this day, former National League pitcher Sam Nahem, with able assistance from Negro League hero Leon Day, led the OISE all-stars to a thrilling five game victory against the mighty 71st Infantry Division.”

Baseball in the Pacific Theater

As in Europe, baseball was played throughout the Pacific during the war. As the Marines went ashore on island after island across the Pacific, the Seabees followed, clearing land for baseball fields in such exotic locales as Tarawa, Guadalcanal, Saipan and Guam. (According to Bob Feller, the best field was on the island of Ulithi)

Army troops also played the game extensively in Australia, the Philippines, New Guinea and elsewhere,

as did Navy sailors. Every ship of any size had at least one team and virtually every port visit resulted in games against Army or Marine teams or teams from other ships.

Perhaps the most famous competition was the Pacific World Series held in Hawaii between teams of Army and Navy All-Stars. Most of them were star players from the major leagues. Admiral Chester Nimitz threw out the first ball.

The Marines had their own “little World Series” in January 1945 between the All-Stars of the Second Marine Division, based on Saipan, and Third Marine Division All-Stars, based on Guam.

The star pitcher for that series was James “Jimmy” Trimble, a graduate of St. Albans School in Washington D.C., who had been signed by Clark Griffith of the Washington Senators. He is still rated the best high school pitcher in Washington D.C. history and many of his surviving contemporaries think he could have been the next Walter Johnson or Bob Feller.

Trimble volunteered for a hazardous scouting mission on Iwo Jima and was killed in hand-to-hand fighting when the Japanese overran his position.

Gen. Graves Erskine had the baseball field on Guam named Trimble Field in his honor.

Before the war began baseball was, of course, segregated on the home front, and that practice persisted in the armed services. In their segregated units the black soldiers, sailors and airmen formed baseball teams and leagues just as their white counterparts did.

The evils of segregation persisted also, with even legendary African-American players such as John “Buck” O’Neil not being exempted.

O’Neil played on nine championship teams during an 18-year career in the Negro Leagues. He was a player, a coach and manager, and many say he perfectly represented the spirit of the Negro Leagues.

Despite qualifying for an exemption from military service, O'Neil insisted on doing his part and he joined the Navy Seabees and was sent to the South Pacific. (One of the Seabees' more pleasant duties was using bulldozers to carve baseball fields out of islands from New Guinea to the Aleutians.

Assigned to Subic Bay in the Philippines towards the end of the war, O'Neil recalled an incident there in which he and his fellow soldiers took a load of ammunition to a destroyer.

"We got there in an LST, and started sending ammunition up. Then somebody started blowing taps. The little ensign on the deck got on and said, "Attention Niggers!" When he said that I went up that ladder and said, "Do you know what you're saying? I am a Navy man! I just happen to be black. I'm fighting for the same thing you are."

The captain was called and the ensign berated. O'Neil continued, "The thing about it was when he sat back and thought about it, he started to cry. I said, "don't cry, just don't do it anymore."

Japanese Baseball

An interesting sidelight to the story of baseball in World War II is Japanese baseball. Americans introduced baseball to the Japanese in the late 19th century and in the 50 years leading up to the war the game grew steadily in popularity. In the 1930s baseball or "basa baru" as the Japanese called it – was played at the professional level with an eight-team league and two seasons.

Baseball historian Gary Bedingfield notes on his Baseball in Wartime Website: "During World War II, the Japanese professional league continued to play until August 1944. Just as in the United States, the game served as a major morale booster to civilians and servicemen, and despite being at war with the nation that introduced them to baseball, the Japanese people could not curb their

insatiable appetite for the game.

"Professional teams such as Kyojin (Tokyo) and the Hanshin (Osaka) Tigers played 80-plus games a season between 1940 and 1943. However, the draw on manpower reduced teams to a 35-game season in 1944, playing one game every four days. By 1945 nearly all professional players from Japan's eight teams were in military service and 69 of them were killed, including national superstars Eiji Sawamura and Shinichi Ishimaru."

Not only were the Japanese passionate fans of their own teams, they followed the American game closely as well and many American baseball stars such as Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig toured Japan and received wildly enthusiastic receptions.

Interestingly, Washington Senators catcher Moe Berg worked on the side as an intelligence agent for the U.S. government and he took advantage of several pre-war tours of Japan to take home movies of several Japanese cities. These films were later used in the planning of Jimmy Doolittle's famous raid over Japan in 1942.

War's End

Following the war the major leaguers came back home (with the exception of two – Washington Senators outfielder Elmer Gedeon and Philadelphia Athletics catcher Harry O'Neil, both of whom were killed in combat). Many of the players retired because they had become too old or (like perennial All-Star Senators shortstop Cecil Travis) because of war injuries.

Most, however, returned to the ballparks, where they faced a tough year of readjustment. Even those who went on to great success had lost several years of prime playing time.

A Seattle computer specialist, Ralph Winnie, did an analysis of the data on the major leagues and published a

projection of what their stats would have been if they had not served during the war.

Bill Gilbert, in his 1942 book, "They Also Served," summed up the findings:

"Winnie discovered that Williams would have become the all-time RBI champion if he hadn't lost those three years during World War II and two more in Korea. He also would have hit 222 more home runs, giving him 743, second only to Hank Aaron's 755. Instead, he hit 521 and ranks eighth.

DiMaggio, Mize, and Greenberg all would have hit more than 500 home runs. As it was, none of them came close. DiMaggio had the most, 361, 2 more than Mize, and 30 more than Greenberg.

For pitchers, Winnie's formula shows Feller would have won another 107 games, giving him 373 for his career instead of 266, plus another 1,070 strikeouts, five no-hitters instead of three, and 19 one-hitters instead of 12.

Feller would have ended his career with twenty-one full seasons instead of seventeen years and six weeks in 1945. Spahn would have had the third most wins in history instead of fifth."

Gilbert adds: "The players who lost that time and those additional numbers have never expressed any sense of bitterness or resentment. Feller, Slaughter and Williams are typical. Appearing on "Major League Baseball Magazine," they spoke unselfishly about the time they lost during World War II."

Feller said, "I'm very proud of my war record, just like my baseball record. I would never have been able to face anybody and talk about my baseball record if I hadn't spent time in the service."

BY JAMES C. ROBERTS
PRESIDENT, WWII VETERANS COMMITTEE

VETERANS HISTORY PROJECT

COMMISSIONED BY CONGRESS to collect and preserve the recollections of wartime veterans, the Veterans History Project, a program of the Library of Congress American Folklife Center, archives narratives of service from veterans of World War I through the current conflict in Iraq. Each story is unique, but taken as a whole the Project puts a familiar face on the universal realities of war.

Former major leaguer Bob Feller is among 55,000 veterans whose firsthand accounts of service are preserved in the Project's archives.

On Dec. 8, 1941, Bob Feller enlisted in the Navy, becoming the first Major League Baseball player to volunteer for combat service following the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Feller served as Gun Captain aboard the USS Alabama, and missed four seasons during his service in World War II, being decorated with five campaign ribbons and eight battle stars. One year after his return to major league action, in 1946, he registered an incredible 348 strikeouts while pitching in 48 games, starting 42 of those games. That year Bob was 26-15 with an ERA of 2.18 while pitching 36 complete games. He led the American League in strikeouts seven times and had 200 or more strikeouts five times.

Bob pitched in 570 games during his career, and pitched in 40 or more games in six seasons. Bob also threw three no-hit games, including the only Opening Day no-hitter in baseball history in 1940. He had 46 shutouts during his career with 10 of those coming in 1946. Many

baseball historians have speculated that Feller would have won perhaps 350 games with well over 3,000 strikeouts had he not joined the military. Even still, he was honored as "The greatest pitcher of his time" by the Sporting News.

The Veterans History Project relies solely on volunteers nationwide to interview veterans and submit their recollections, as well as diaries, memoirs, letters, and photographs, to the Library of Congress. Those interested in supporting the Project are encouraged to download a VHP Field Kit from the Veterans History Project Web site at www.loc.gov/vets, request a kit via email at volhp@loc.gov or call the toll-free message line at (888) 371-5848.

World War II interrupted the careers of more than 4,000 professional baseball players. For Cecil Travis it was more than an interruption. It was a permanent diversion from the road to the Hall of Fame.

Cecil Travis was born on a farm in Riverdale, Ga., on Aug. 8, 1913. His professional baseball career began in 1931 at the age of just 17, when he hit .469 with Chattanooga of the Southern Association. The young infielder was called up by the Washington Senators in May 1933, getting five hits in his first game.

Despite his youthfulness, Travis quickly established himself as one of the American League's outstanding players. Had he not been playing for the perennial second-division Senators he would have been hailed a superstar. Playing shortstop and third base, Travis had compiled a lifetime batting average of .322 by 1940, and his 1941 season was by far his best. Playing in 152 games for the Senators, Travis batted an outstanding .359 (second only to Ted Williams' incredible .406) and led the league with 218 hits.

Travis had reached the top of his game, but just as quickly his career was put on hold. He entered military service in January 1942, and thought he might be in for a year or so. Twenty-eight at the time, he would be away from the game for almost four years.

He reported to Camp Wheeler, Ga. as a buck private during the dark days following Pearl Harbor. His greeting from Col. Charles P. Sutherland was: "Well, son, you've finally caught up with a world championship outfit."

Travis learned to be a soldier and played baseball in his spare time with the Camp Wheeler Spokes. In May 1944, Sgt. Travis was assigned to the 76th Infantry Division's combat training facility at Camp McCoy, Wis., where he found time to play ball with the division team and helped them capture the Wisconsin State semi-pro championship.

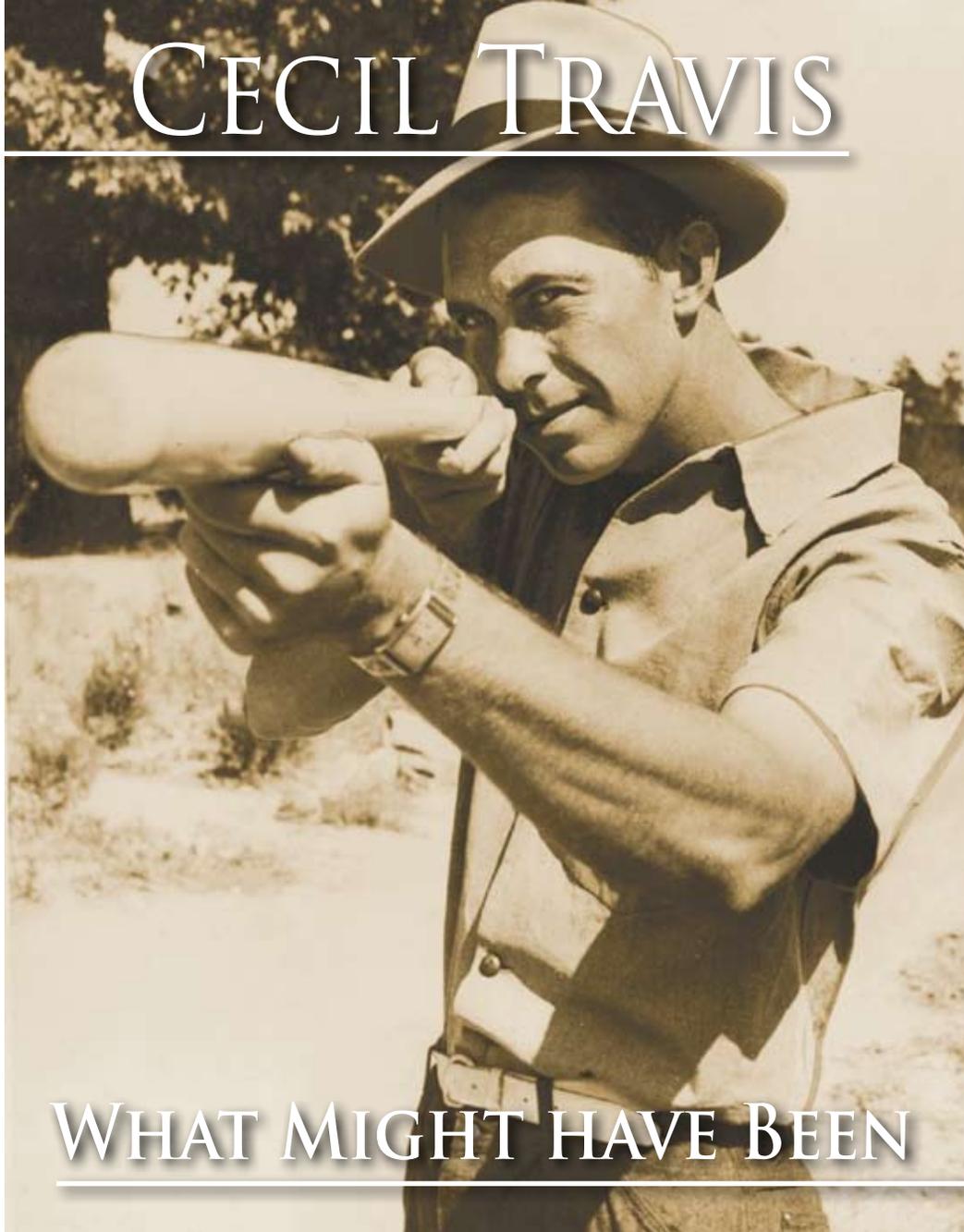
Travis was sent to Europe with the 76th Infantry Division in late 1944 and entered combat in January 1945. "Heck, you was in that snow," he recalled some years later, "and you was out in that weather, and you was lucky you got to stay in an old barn at night. The thing about it, you'd sit there in those boots, and you might not get 'em off for days at a time. And cold! You'd just shake at night. Your feet would start swelling, and that's how you'd find out there was something really wrong – you'd pull your boots off, and your feet is swelling."

The 76th Infantry Division advanced more than 400 miles against hostile resistance in 110 days of combat. Together with the 6th Armored Division it formed the spearhead of the Third Army's plunge across Germany toward Czechoslovakia. The division was within 50 miles of the Czech border when the war in Europe ended.

Sgt. Travis received a Bronze Star and four battle stars during his time in Europe. He received his discharge on Sept. 6, 1945, and immediately returned to the Senators. "It was amazing the way Cece swung in his drill at Griffith Stadium yesterday," reported John B. Keller of the Washington Evening Star on Sept. 8, 1945. "His easy left-hand stance at the plate was no different from that he assumed when he was one of the sensations of the American League in offense."

But the truth was the 31-year-old was seriously out of condition. He was slow afoot, his bat speed was sluggish and his feet still hurt. Travis played his first major league game in four years on Sept. 8, 1945. He played 15 games

CECIL TRAVIS



WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN

before the season ended and batted an uncharacteristic .241.

Everyone, including Travis himself, hoped the offseason rest and spring training would bring back the magic. In 1946, manager Ossie Bluege played him a lot of the time at third base where less range was required, and there were days when he looked like the pre-war All-Star he had been. But those days were few and far between. Travis batted just .252 in 1946 and struggled to keep his average above .200 in 1947. For the first time in his career, he found himself sitting on the bench.

One month before the end of the season he was honored with "Cecil Travis Night" at Griffith Stadium, with General Dwight D. Eisenhower in attendance. Why honor a player who was little more than a bench warmer at that stage? Because Cecil Travis was one of the nicest, most honorable gentlemen to ever play the game of baseball. When major league umpire Bill McGowan was chatting with a group of soldiers after a USO show during the war, somebody asked, "Who would you say was the player who had given you the least trouble in a major league game, the one you think most admirable in

his conduct on the field and at bat?"

"Cecil Travis," McGowan replied without hesitation.

Travis left the game as graciously as he had come into it. "My problem was my timing. I could never seem to get it back the way it was after laying out so long. I saw I wasn't helping the ballclub, so I just gave it up."

Travis declined an offer to manage in the minors and returned instead to his family cattle farm in Georgia. "I would like to have done better when I came back," he said, "but I feel lucky to have come back at all.

Cecil Travis was 93 when he passed away at his home in Riverdale, Ga. on Dec. 16, 2006.

He was inducted into the Georgia Sports Hall of Fame in 1975 and added to the Hall of Stars at Washington's RFK Stadium in 1993. Despite his .314 career average being better than 19 of 21 Hall of Fame shortstops, he has been overlooked by Cooperstown.

BY GARY BEDINGFIELD
WWW.BASEBALLINWARTIME.COM

YOGI BERRA: A WITNESS TO D-DAY



In the wartime spring of 1943, a 17-year-old baseball hopeful named Lawrence Peter Berra didn't know quite what to expect. The stumpy, moon-faced kid better known as Yogi was getting his first taste of professional baseball, a \$90-a-month neophyte with the Norfolk (Va.) Tars of the Class B Piedmont League.

Normally a tranquil city of 180,000, Norfolk was another part of the New York Yankees' fertile farm system. But Norfolk wasn't normal or tranquil during World War II. Overwhelmed by the war industry, the port city had been transformed into a jam-packed habitat of 750,000, a population mostly tied to the burgeoning naval bases and construction shipyards, following Pearl Harbor.

To the shy youngster from a close-knit Italian neighborhood in southwest St. Louis, the whiff of war was everywhere. Norfolk was teeming with servicemen and defense workers. And Berra was on borrowed time as a civilian.

On May 12, just as he celebrated his 18th birthday, Yogi received a notice from Uncle Sam to take his pre-induction physical. A postponement enabled him to finish the baseball season, and he batted a respectable .253 in his first year in organized ball. Berra caught people's attention with an incredible 23-RBI performance in a doubleheader against Roanoke.

But the ballgames would be over for a while. He would become one of 4,000 minor-league ballplayers in the war effort. As eager as any young fellow to serve his country, Yogi opted for the Army. He was led to believe he had a month to report, giving him enough time to visit his parents and three brothers and sister back home. But the recruiting officer told him differently. "You're in the Navy now," he was told. And so the future baseball legend reported for six weeks of boot training in Bainbridge, Md., then to Norfolk, of all places, at the Little Creek base for amphibious training. He had not a clue as to what lay ahead.

A bit bored by the daily regimen, Yogi decided to volunteer for a new kind of Navy boat, called the

Landing Craft Support Small (LCSS) Rocket Launcher. He later admitted being attracted by the word "rocket," sensing adventure, like something out of the Buck Rogers comic books he'd been reading.

"I didn't think about it being dangerous," he said of his new duty. "Anyway, I wanted to be doing something."

Rocket boats – 36-foot wood-and-steel crafts with six-man crews and armed with six twin-fifty machine guns and twelve rockets – had been tested the previous year by the American and British navies. They were to play a major part in the coming invasion of Europe. They demanded that the men learn their jobs well. Lives were depended on teamwork. The mission was also a top-drawer secret.

For five weeks, Seaman 2nd Class Lawrence Berra and his comrades trained intensively at Little Creek. After the secret training, they were moved to Lido Beach on Long Island, then embarked across the Atlantic for a dangerous day that would change history.

The D-Day invasion was set for June 4, 1944. But General Dwight Eisenhower cancelled the perilous operation because of torrential rain and near-hurricane winds. Yogi, a devout Catholic, never lost faith. Admittedly bothered by the tension and waiting for what Eisenhower called "Operation Overlord," the code name for the invasion of southern France, Berra believed he was too young to die. He didn't dwell on the magnitude of it all.

In the still-dark morning hours of June 6, Yogi Berra's boat was lowered out of the Bayfield and into the English Channel. They were a few miles from the shore of Normandy, and would wind up 300 yards off Omaha Beach. "Our job was to help soften the German defenses for the troops who were wading ashore behind us," Berra said. "We went in ahead of the LCI's and blasted with our rocket guys, knocking out gun emplacements and obstacles."

The rocket boats worked as a team. They fanned out, 100 yards apart, then dashed right toward the beach. When the invasion started, Berra could barely see the sky because there were so many planes, flares and

explosions. There was one moment when all the fire and flame of the invasion got to him and he poked his head up over the side of the LCSS. "Get your head down" yelled his commander, "if you want to keep it on."

When The Longest Day ended, the Allies paid a heavy price. Luckily for Berra's boat, no one died during the invasion which landed the Allied troops, who eventually liberated France and helped bring Germany's defeat 11 months later.

For the next two weeks, the LCSS crews worked the Channel, constantly on alert for German air raids. Then they were sent to Bizerte, Africa, preparing for another invasion of a stretch of land in France known as Yellow Beach. It was there Yogi was grazed in the hand by a German machine-gun bullet, before the LCSS rockets blew out the Nazi nest of gunners. When the Americans landed and secured the beach, Berra remembers the Frenchmen greeting them, coming out of shelled homes with bottles of wine and bouquets of flowers.

Over the years, Berra has remained low-key about his service, as he has been as humble as everything else in his remarkable life. He became one of baseball's premier players, gaining fame as a great New York Yankees catcher from 1946-63. He was named Most Valuable Player three times, and won more world championships (10) than anyone in the game's history. He is beloved and known by millions for his unwittingly wise aphorisms ("it ain't over til it's over"). His namesake museum and learning center on the campus of Montclair State (N.J.) University teaches thousands of students each year the importance of character education.

Like many veterans of World War II, Yogi Berra maintains a reserve and dignity that symbolizes his generation.

"I never said that I was in the service, unless someone asked me," he said. "There are other things to think about."

BY DAVE KAPLAN

Dave Kaplan is director of the Yogi Berra Museum & Learning Center, and co-author of Yogi Berra's new book, "You Can Observe A Lot By Watching" (John Wiley & Sons).



A teenage Yogi Berra (right) is standing proudly with his father Pietro and brother John shortly after joining the Navy.

JIM CROW ON TRIAL

JACKIE ROBINSON'S 1944 COURT MARTIAL

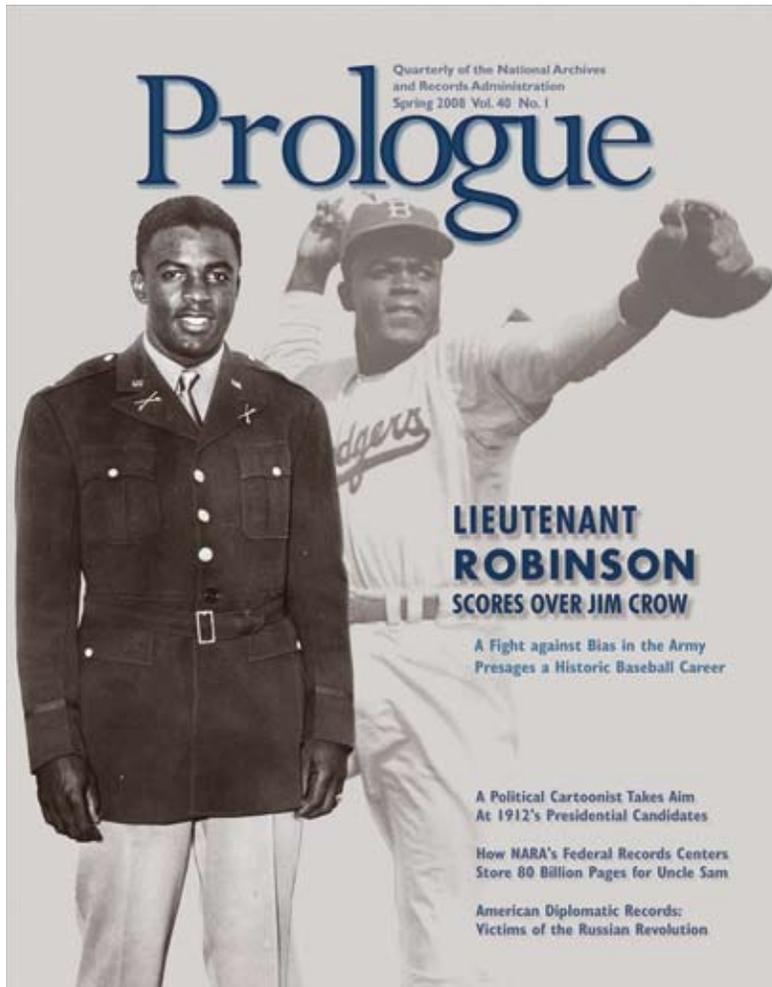
In early 1944 25-year-old cavalry-trained officer, 2nd Lt. Jack Roosevelt Robinson, found that he had been reassigned to Camp Hood, Texas, a posting many Negroes hated, given its racial climate. Robinson became attached to a tank unit, the 761st, later to distinguish itself in the Battle of the Bulge. Hood had a dismal reputation among black officers and enlisted men, not only because of the post's reputation as a strict observer of Jim Crow practices but because neighboring towns were viewed as especially inhospitable.

Exactly a month after D-Day—assault landings in which black soldiers had participated—Lt. Robinson became involved in a bus incident on base. The civilian driver ordered Jackie to move back in seating, a request he refused, suggesting the driver merely drive. Later, at his stop, Jackie and the driver, joined by the bus dispatcher, continued to argue – with the latter referring to Robinson as a “nigger.” When Military Policemen (MP's) arrived, a crowd had formed, adding to the turmoil. The MP's asked the black lieutenant to go to military police headquarters to talk over the situation. Upon arrival, a white MP ran up to ask if they had “the nigger lieutenant,” agitating Robinson once more.

Inside, perceived racial remarks and unsolicited observations convinced the young officer he would not be treated fairly. Thus, he repeatedly challenged other persons' versions of the bus episode and failed to remain in the facility until called to give his own account. As a consequence, later that month the ex-UCLA athlete learned that he was to be subjected to a general court martial. Major charges included a show of disrespect toward a superior officer and failure to obey a direct command. Thirteen depositions attesting to Robinson's alleged misbehavior had been taken.

Lt. Robinson and fellow black soldiers determined to seek help elsewhere, primarily from the NAACP and the Negro Press. Robinson also wrote the War Department's top race relations trouble-shooter. In a three-page letter he asked if black newspapers should be informed of case specifics to guarantee that the trial would receive spotlighted attention elsewhere. The defendant-to-be closed, “I don't mind trouble but I do believe in fair play and justice.”

During the war such incidents occurred frequently, especially in the South. Only two months before, Army boxers Joe Louis and “Sugar Ray” Robinson encountered their own high-profile transportation problem. The two often journeyed from camp to camp to engage in boxing exhibitions for their employer, Uncle Sam. This time a white MP at Camp Sibert (Ala.) brusquely informed Louis



that Negroes could not use the bus station telephone when the bus the pugilists were waiting for did not arrive. This news enraged the black press. In its view discriminatory treatment called into question why black Americans needed to risk lives overseas at all when flagrant ethnic unfairness flourished at home.

Periodically, War Department officials, tired of dealing with accumulating bad publicity from ugly racial disputes, tried to draft remedial directives. However, they discovered it was one thing to issue an order; it was another to get local commanders to enforce it. Thus, Army brass could not have been happy to learn about the impending Robinson court-martial and that the Pittsburgh Courier and the Chicago Defender, two of the best and most zealous Negro weeklies, were on the story.

In addition, the Camp Hood Inspector General's Office sought higher-level help in the case. On 17 July a telephone conversation took place between “Col. Kimball” at Hood and the XXIIIrd Corps' Chief of Staff, Col. Buie.” Kimball referred to Robinson's predicament as “a very serious case . . . full of dynamite,” and added, “I am afraid that any officer in charge of troops at this Post might be prejudiced.” Col. Buie nonetheless begged off assisting. Interestingly, a medical retiring board ruled just before the trial took place that because Robinson had

continuing medical problems because of an old football-related ankle injury, he was fit only for limited duty.

On Aug. 2, with Robinson's transfer to another tank unit whose commander signed off on strategically-altered charges, the court martial trial took place. His previous commander, Col. Paul Bates, spoke glowingly of Robinson's past job performance and leadership qualities, adding that he had wanted Robinson to go overseas as one of his officers. The Army-appointed defense attorney, Capt. William A. Cline, skillfully brought out inconsistencies in prosecution witness accounts, introduced persuasive evidence of racial hostility toward the defendant, and shed doubt on the prosecution contention that while at police headquarters Robinson clearly received recognizable and specific orders at all. Ultimately, the panel of adjudicators ruled that the defendant was “Not Guilty.”

After the episode, Lt. Robinson used the chronically-bad ankle as justification for early release from military service, a release which the Army granted with dispatch. Discharge took effect in early November just as his old unit, the 761st, was encountering heavy battle conditions in Europe, eventually suffering heavy casualties. If Robinson had gone overseas, he might have been severely injured or even killed. Soon after, he began playing with the Kansas City Monarchs in the Negro Leagues where Brooklyn Dodgers scouts discovered and recruited him.

Baseball's integration effort would require the selfsame qualities Robinson demonstrated before and during the court martial. Under girding documents reveal a proud and intelligent young man resolved to confront racism wherever and whenever he encountered it. In this particular encounter between Jim Crow and an uncommonly tough and racially defiant black person, it was Jim Crow who knuckled under. The Army subsequently atoned for this and other race-based injustices and relatively soon after began to integrate. Jack Robinson would thereupon vault into new and different realms of combat.

Robinson's appointed role in life was as catalytic agent for racial change—within the military, baseball, and eventually the larger society beyond. After taking on racial bigotry in the Army, he was to confront it again in baseball, and later as businessman and full-fledged civil rights activist. In each encounter he conducted himself with extraordinary dignity, courage, and resolve. As we look back to a bygone era, we are called to acknowledge that not just the military and sports sectors – but an entire nation – owe a respectful salute to a remarkable soldier against intolerance for his continuing effort to prick America into better utilizing all of its human resources.

BY JOHN VERNON
FROM THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES



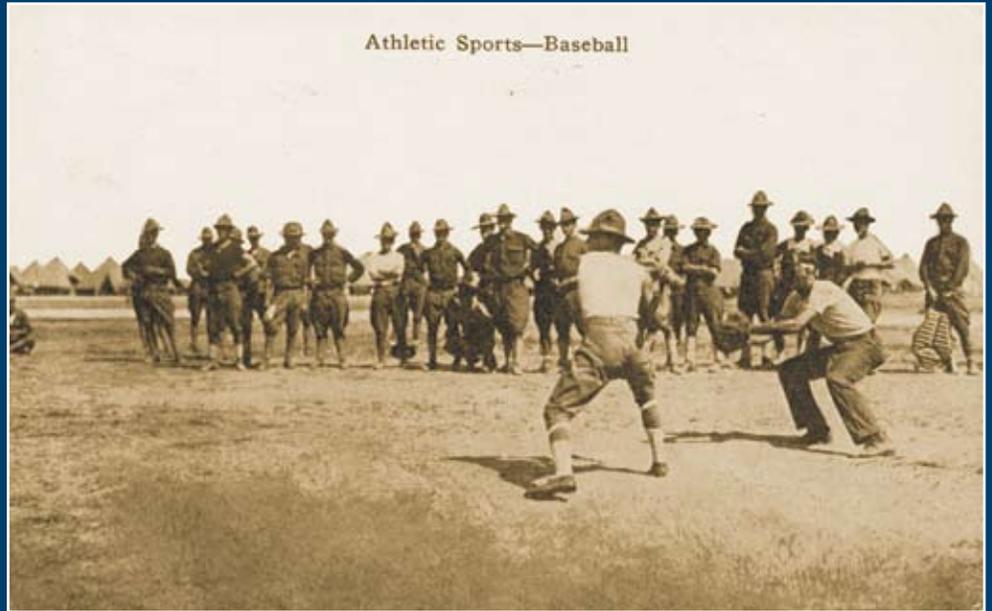
Under Secretary of the Navy Franklin Delano Roosevelt leads major league ballplayers in a patriotic march on the baseball diamond during World War I.



Prior to taking the baseball diamond, professional women's ballplayers salute the American Flag during World War II.



Babe Ruth signs baseball bats in support of American troops during the 1920s.



A World War I era postcard featuring men playing the National Pastime.



Baseball Team on the USS Maine.



Three weeks after D-Day, Dutch Leonard of the Washington Senators is signing an autograph for anxious troops in France.



Native boys playing baseball in the Pacific Theater during World War II.



The United States Coast Guard playing ball in sub-zero temperatures in Antarctica.



Washington Senator Buddy Lewis and his buddies dream of playing ball at Kelly Air Force Base.



Brooklyn Dodger Pee Wee Reese teaches youngsters the finer points of baseball.



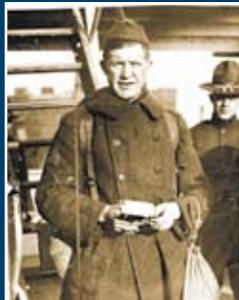
Soldiers everywhere still wanted to play ball at home or abroad!



Mickey Vernon (left) and Johnny Pesky (right) meet the youngsters when serving in the United States Navy during wartime.



Joe Dimaggio signs autographs.



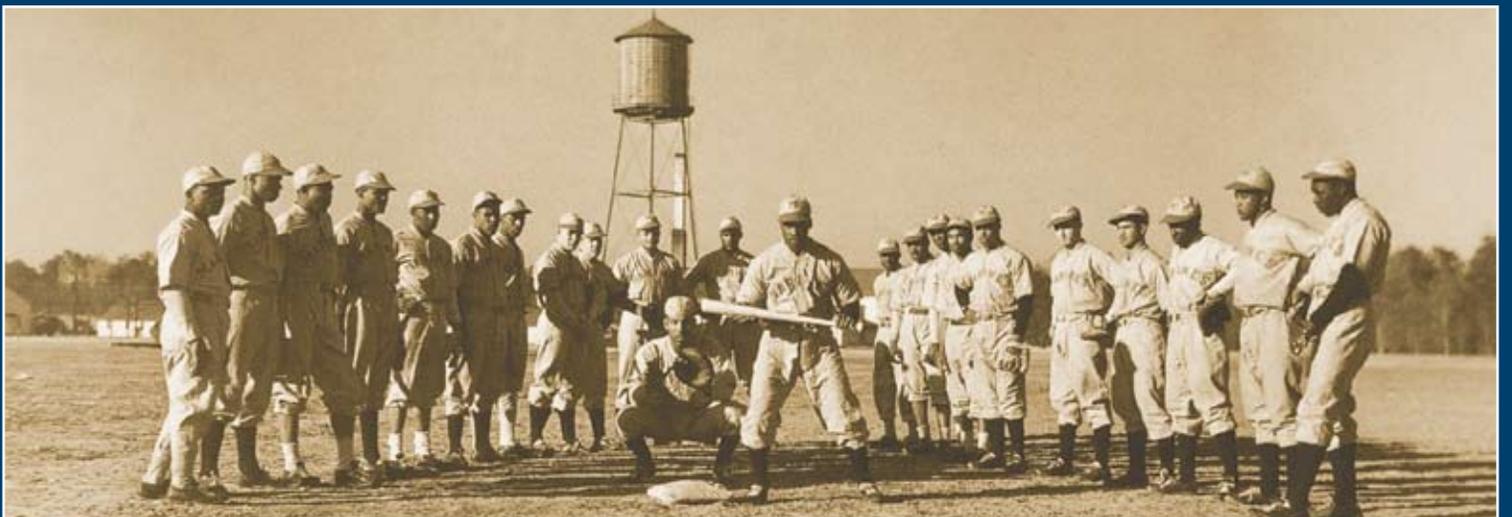
Grover Cleveland "Pete" Alexander.



Bill Veeck



Walter Johnson (left) shakes his friend Babe Ruth's hand during a War Bond Game in 1944. A smiling Rogers Hornsby in catcher's gear looks on.



A group of black and white soldiers ready for combat...on the baseball diamond!

TED WILLIAMS AT WAR

ENROLL HERE
FOR
FLIGHT TRAINING
IN THE
U.S. NAVY



Many who serve in the armed forces and end their tour of duty without ever experiencing combat wonder how they might have measured up. Baseball superstar Ted Williams served three years in the United States Navy and Marine Corps during World War II, but as a flight and gunnery instructor based Stateside. He was headed to the Pacific in mid-1945, but before he saw combat, the Japanese surrendered.

Williams is the only member of baseball's Hall of Fame to serve in both World War II and Korea. Back in baseball after the Second World War, winning another MVP, and

helping the Red Sox win a pennant, he hadn't expected to be recalled to war – but that's exactly what happened when the Marines were forced to call up large numbers of Reserve pilots in early 1952.

He was 33 years old, with a young daughter, and admits he wasn't happy about being summoned back. He knew that had Congress not slashed funding for the Marines, the Corps would have been adequately staffed.

When Ted reported for his second tour of duty, he decided he didn't want to take the easy route of exhibition baseball

and morale-building P.R. visits to different bases. At some level, he must have wondered how he might have performed had he ever been tested in combat. He made it clear that if the Marines wanted him back because they needed men to fight, he sought no favored treatment and he wanted to fight.

He'd only flown propeller craft in World War II. Now he learned to fly the F-9F Panther jet, and earned assignment to the elite squadron in Marine Air, VMF-311. He arrived at K-3, the Marine Corps base in southern Korea near the seaside town of Pohang. He flew his first combat mission on Valentine's Day 1953.

Capt. Ted Williams flew dive-bombing missions over enemy lines during the Korean War, his Panther jet slashing down from the skies while the enemy threw everything they could against him – anti-aircraft and small arms fire alike. These were harrowing combat missions; his Panther jet took hits on more than one mission.

On just his third mission, on 16 February 1953, Ted's plane was hit – apparently by ground fire during a dive-bombing run over North Korea. His plane lost its radio and lost its hydraulics. He couldn't maneuver the plane as well as he would have liked, and couldn't put down its landing gear. When smoke began to come out from under the fuselage, it was clear there was no way he'd get back to his base. Fellow VMF-311 pilot Lt. Larry Hawkins saw Ted's plane drifting off course, heading out to sea and toward North Korea. He caught up with Williams and signaled him to follow, locating an Air Force base and radioing ahead to clear the tarmac. Ted landed wheels-up, scraping metal in a shower of sparks and smoke and dirt. When the aircraft ground to a halt, he popped the canopy and bolted from the plane seconds before it was consumed in flame. Ted had to hitch a ride back to base that afternoon in a two-seat trainer aircraft. At 0808 the next morning, he was up again on Mission No. 4, attacking pre-designated troop concentrations.

It's difficult to conceive of today. A star ballplayer like Alex Rodriguez flying close air support in Afghanistan, being shot at by Al-Qaeda and Taliban fighters as he flew in at 1,000 feet to strafe and bomb their columns in the Panjshir Valley?

To be fair, though, none could know how today's men would respond were they situated in the circumstances faced by ballplayers like Williams and Jerry Coleman and Lloyd Merriman over 50 years ago.

In all, Capt. T. S. Williams flew 39 combat missions in Korea. His plane was hit on other occasions, but never as badly as on that third mission. In late April, though, the Boston Globe ran a five-column front page headline "Flak Hits Ted Williams' Plane" with the subhead "Sox Slugger Lands Safely After Raid." It was Ted's 22nd mission, on April 27. He'd been part of a mission of 23 aircraft that hit the port city of Chinnampo, defended by anti-aircraft fire. Ted's Panther jet was hit in the tip tank, fortunately depleted of fuel at the time. It was, the Associated Press reported, his "second brush with death in 2 ½ months."



When smoke began to come out from under the fuselage, it was clear there was no way he'd get back to his base. Fellow VMF-311 pilot Lt. Larry Hawkins saw Ted's plane drifting off course, heading out to sea ...

Among the pilots on the April 27 mission was Maj. John Glenn. Ted Williams was indeed in the Corps' elite squadron and one of his squadron mates was John Glenn. The two men remained friends after their service and Glenn said of Ted, "He did a helluva good job. Ted only batted .406 for the Red Sox. He batted a thousand for the Marine Corps and the United States." Generous in his praise, Glenn has on more than one occasion said, "Ted flew about half his missions as my wingman." The two did fly together on several occasions, and at least one mission was just the two Marine pilots on a predawn raid. All told, though, a thorough review of squadron records shows only seven missions in which the two men flew together. Numbers aside, Williams did serve several missions as John Glenn's wingman.

For the record, Ted's other commanding officers accorded him above average performance ratings and remembered him favorably. It speaks volumes that Glenn

chose Williams as his wingman. The 22 April mission, Ted's fourteenth, departed K-3 at 5:25 AM. At 6:07, the two attacked a road bridge with two 500-pound bombs and 75 rounds of 20MM ammunition. At 6:31, they attacked another bridge, dropping two more 500-pound bombs and twelve ATARS. There was meager automatic weapons anti-aircraft fire, but no damage was received. The aircraft returned safely to base at 7:05. You don't fly on a mission with just one other pilot watching your wing if you don't trust that man implicitly.

Ted Williams went on to win three more batting titles – 1954, 1957, and 1958 – and led the league in on-base percentage four more times. After Korea, he added another 197 home runs to his career totals, and truly left everyone wondering how well he might have done had he not lost nearly five full years of playing time. Most projections put him within a couple of dozen home runs of Babe Ruth's record.

There is no question that Ted Williams remained proud of his service, and it's likely that his own appreciation for what he had done grew as the years passed. He could well have taken the easy route, but he put himself in harm's way. He escaped serious injury, but only barely. He almost paid the ultimate price.

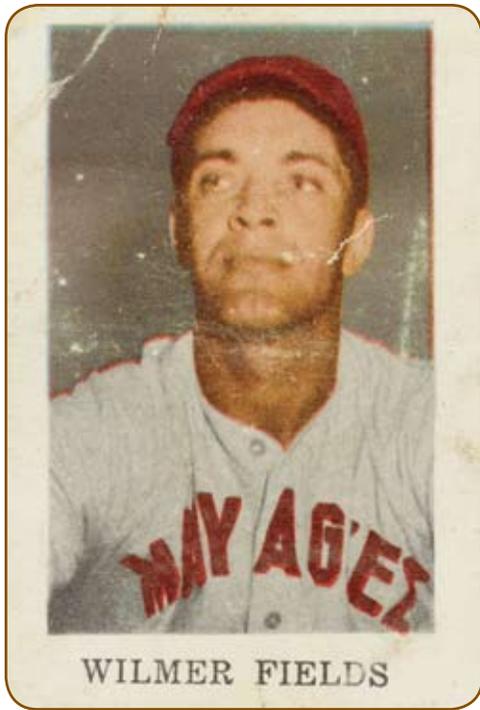
In later years, one could even see the pride he felt in the Marine Corps. At any event he attended, he always stood visibly straighter – even if he had to struggle to his feet or be helped to stand up – with pride in his bearing, when the colors were presented and the National Anthem was performed.

Asked what he felt best about, looking back on his life, he told Jeff Idelson of the Hall of Fame, "The two things I'm proudest of in my life, is that I became a Marine pilot and that I became a member of Baseball's Hall of Fame."

BY BILL NOWLIN

This original article is informed by the research and writing in the book "Ted Williams At War" (Rounder Books).

TIME OUT FOR WAR: FROM “MY LIFE IN THE NEGRO LEAGUES” BY WILMER FIELDS



My hitch in the U.S. Army lasted from November 1943 until May 1946, and I'll never regret that experience. It gave me the opportunity to communicate with all different types of people and deal with all different types of problems. I met soldiers from all over the United States, but it seemed as if most of them came from the Midwest. I took basic training and technical training at Camp Plachea, La. Those were the days of adjustment to rules, regulations, and leadership. I made sergeant in less than 90 days thanks to a bunch of great guys. We made a home away from home together, which helped us overcome what can often be a very hard situation otherwise.

After a while, we boarded a ship in New York and sailed for England. This experience drew us even closer. We left New York harbor on Mother's Day 1944, and I still remember looking out a small ship window as we plunged into the ocean. The Statue of Liberty was the last scene I remember as we sailed away from the shore. Most of us in the company were not prepared for the problems that go with riding a ship across an ocean. I was put in charge of the kitchen duties, and that meant getting used to the ship. One good, sharp turn and we'd find all our kitchen utensils – and sometimes soldiers, too – thrown into one corner of the room, depending on which way the ship had leaned.

We docked in Liverpool, England upon arrival, but we couldn't see anything because of the fog. Eventually, we were able to make out the English docks and nearby surroundings. After departing the ship, we marched through the war-battered streets of Liverpool. The German bombs had done quite some damage. We then boarded freight trains and traveled to a place called Barry Docks, which were located not far from Cardiff, Wales. We were housed for six months in Cardiff, and

the barracks there became our home. During that time, our duties included pulling guard duty and unloading arriving ships. Our recreation was limited, but sometimes we played baseball and football on the side of a hill nearby. Also, we had a Red Cross facility where we'd play ping pong and a few other games. I won the ping pong championship of South Wales, England. One time in South Wales, some rubbing alcohol was found while unloading a ship. I can't say everything that happened, but some of the soldiers fought all night and when reveille sounded early the next morning, they stood in formation in just their underwear. I spent the whole day trying to explain to the captain what had happened without anyone getting punished.

I remember one day a sergeant in our company complained that he had a terrible headache. When he told me how his pain originated, I challenged him right then and there about his ability to drink liquor. I had never had a drink of whiskey until that day. The sergeant said he would buy me 17 drinks of a French whiskey called pastige. This was one of the biggest mistakes I have ever made. I drank the drinks and then I walked back to the barracks. I almost died. This was the first and last time I ever indulged in a whiskey drink.

Our next stop was Marseilles, France. On the trip there, I got sick and lost 30 pounds. I was taken to a hospital in Paris, but that didn't give me much relief, so I was taken back to Marseilles. Soon afterwards, we went across the English Channel and landed on the shores of Le Havre, France, on some sort of mission. Anyway, it looked like plenty of action had taken place there. Once we landed, we boarded some vehicles that took us to an open field next to a turnip patch. Since we had been eating spam and jam every day, those turnips sure tasted good to this country boy! One day, we decided to leave our area and do some sightseeing. We had been sleeping in mud, and we felt the need to move. Anyway, we walked for a while and then spotted a small church that was quite a building to behold, so we went on in and prayed. Next thing you know, we had fallen asleep; that's how tired we were. After we got back to camp, we boarded some

boxcars and headed back to Marseilles. We were placed in an old, bombed-out building that had no windows and had blankets for beds. The temperature was below-freezing, so I didn't take off my socks for 11 days. When I finally did, my feet were so tender that nothing could touch them.

While in France, we had Frenchmen helping us to unload ships. They would bring a bottle of wine and a piece of French bread for lunch. Food was very scarce, and they would offer the American soldiers whatever they had to eat. They didn't know that we were without food for long periods of time. Neither one of us complained about the conditions that existed for a worthy reason: We were trying to win a war. I can't remember one fight between the French and Americans.

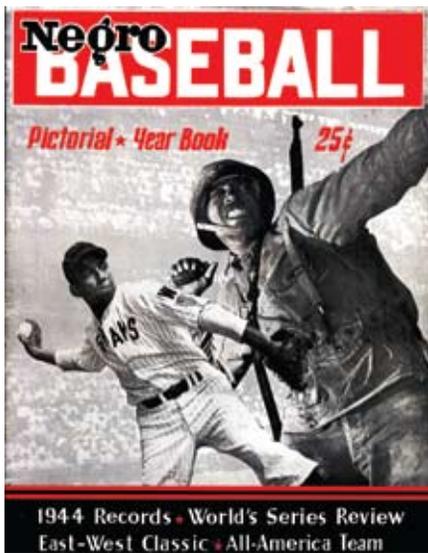
While we were stationed at Marseilles, the company chose a couple of us to take some rest and relaxation in Nice, France. They chose us on the basis of what we had contributed to the company. I really appreciated that vacation.

After returning to camp, we received orders to prepare for duty in the Pacific. The war was over in Europe, and we were sent to a staging area to get ready to depart for the Pacific. The soldiers said they would follow me anywhere. I felt real good about that. Knowing that I had contributed to the soldiers' well-being and that they would possibly keep those memories forever was special. Over 40 years later, I can still see some of the faces of my buddies, and I reminisce about our good and bad times.

While at the staging area, I came in contact with a hospital outfit that was made up completely of white soldiers. I was put in touch with the first sergeant who asked me if I knew of any company that played baseball in the area. It turned out this company had a baseball team that had been together for several years. I told him that maybe we could play his company, so we scheduled a game. We played on a former battleground in France, and we beat them 5-0. The first sergeant asked me to join his company and go to Japan with them. Apparently, he knew the right



African-American infantrymen including Hall of Famer Wilbur "Bullet" Rogan (seated far left over bats)



"Spoon" Carter of the Washington Homestead Grays adorns the patriotic cover of the Annual Negro League Yearbook in 1945.

people to make this come about. But before anything happened an order came down for my company to sail for the States: The Japanese had surrendered!

Sailing home from France was another experience that will stay with me forever. We were four or five days in the Atlantic when a storm hit us. It was so severe that the ship couldn't move, so we had to change course and take a different route home. Instead of landing in New York, we had to land in Boston. When we disembarked there, my mind went over the many trials and tribulations that we had confronted and come through. It was good to be back in America!

During my Army career, I found out that the lessons my parents taught me would play an important part in dealing with unpleasant situations that existed from time to time. One lesson in particular that my parents taught me was that it was imperative to appreciate other people. The ability to converse with a high official or a private in the military was my ultimate goal. This is why a captain tried to get me to re-enlist so that I would become a first sergeant of a company. The Army taught me never to ask someone to do something that you wouldn't do yourself.

Treat every person as a human being, and don't lie to make yourself superior or important.

Upon my arrival in America, I received a telegram saying my father had had major operation. In two days, I had secured a 30-day furlough. Since it was harvest time, it was a good time for me to go home. My dad survived the ulcer operation, and I harvested his corn and hay crop. He was so pleased, and I felt so good inside to be able to help him – a truly deserving man. It allowed me to repay a small portion of the good life he had given me.

After my furlough was up, the Army sent me to Camp Plachea again. It wasn't far from New Orleans, and my stay there was a memorable one. This is where I first met my wife, Audrey. I went to see her every night. She came from a large family where love and discipline were a way of life. Audrey and I were married before I left New Orleans to be discharged at Fort Meade, Md. I talked with Audrey every day and night.

BY WILMER FIELDS

THE BALLPLAYERS OF BEDFORD

In the 1930s, Bedford was a small, rural town at the heart of rolling hills and lush valleys near Virginia's Blue Ridge Mountains. For the young men of this tight-knit community, the Depression years offered little in the way of prospects, and baseball helped wile away the summer hours and conjure up images of playing on major league teams. Baseball was truly the national pastime back then and for two young men – Frank Draper and Elmer Wright – it would weave an integral thread through their tragically short lives.

Frank Draper was tall, lean and fast. He was a star athlete at Bedford High School and after graduation, worked at Hampton Looms – the town's largest employer – becoming the centerfielder and leadoff hitter with the company's baseball team.

Meanwhile, Elmer Wright – the son of Bedford's deputy sheriff – was also establishing himself as a standout athlete. A hard-throwing, right-handed pitcher, Wright hurled for a number of local semi-pro teams before signing a professional contract with the St. Louis Browns in 1937.

Wright was assigned to Terre Haute of the Three-I League his rookie year where he won 10 and lost 13. He began the 1938 season with San Antonio in the Texas League, and spent time at Palestine and Johnstown. He was back with San Antonio for 1939 and 1940, hoping to attend spring training with the St. Louis Browns in 1941.

About 30 miles away in Roanoke, Va., a young catcher named Robert Marsico was making a name for himself on the Gilmer High School baseball team. After graduating, he landed a job with the Piedmont Label Company in Bedford. It wasn't long before Marsico was the starting catcher on the Piedmont Label baseball team.

Like many local youngsters, Draper, Wright and Marsico had joined Company A of the National Guard. But as the war in Europe took hold and the United States began to expand its fighting forces, it was announced in October 1940, that the company would be mobilized into the Federal Army for a period of one year.

Four months later, three young ballplayers were among those who reported for duty at the Bedford Armory. From there they were sent to Fort Meade, Md., home of the 29th



Elmer Wright, Robert Marsico, Pride Wingfield and Frank Draper in 1943

Infantry Division, and it was while returning from military exercises in North Carolina that news of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor reached the boys of Company A. For Draper, Wright and Marsico it meant there was no way they would be home in a year. They were now soldiers in Uncle Sam's army for the duration.

In September 1942, the 29th Infantry Division boarded the Queen Mary for the Atlantic crossing to Britain. On Oct. 2, 1942 they docked in Scotland from where the division moved by train to southwest England. It was the beginning of an intensive training program that would last until May 1944.

Nevertheless, Draper, Wright and Marsico still found a little time for baseball. In September 1943, they played for the 116th Infantry Regiment Yankees in a four-day tournament in London affectionately known as "The Little World Series". The 116th were a dark horse team at the outset – unknown to most of the other teams who were already playing in well-established military leagues around Britain. The Bedford boys were the backbone of the team. Draper's hitting, Wright's pitching and Marsico's defensive work behind the plate guided the Yankees to an unexpected place in the final against the Eighth Air Force Fighter Command Thunderbolts that saw the 116th win 6-3 for the ETO championship title.

That was their last chance to play any form of competitive baseball. For the remainder of 1943 and the first five months of 1944, the order of the day was intensive military training in preparation for the invasion of mainland Europe.

On May 18, 1944, the 29th Infantry Division was taken

in trucks to containment camps on the southeast coast. The countdown to D-Day had begun and it was a boring and anxious couple of weeks for the men of Company A. "Whenever we had time, I put on a glove and [Elmer Wright] pitched to me," recalled former college catcher, Hal Baumgarten. "Wright was fast. I had to put a double sponge in the glove."

On the morning of June 6, 1944, Tech. Sgt. Frank Draper, Staff Sgt. Elmer Wright and Private Robert Marsico were on landing crafts heading for Omaha Beach at Normandy, Company A of the 116th Infantry Regiment was to lead the D-Day assault. As the landing crafts approached the beach the enemy opened fire with artillery, mortar, machine-gun and small arms fire. Draper's craft shook with the horrifying impact of an anti-personnel shell that ripped through the side of the vessel and tore off his upper arm. Rapidly losing blood, the young soldier slumped to the floor and died in a pool of blood, seawater and vomit.

Wright and Marsico's landing craft made it to the beach. As the ramps dropped down the men of Company A met with a hail of deadly accurate enemy fire. Many were killed outright; others lay critically wounded, screaming for help. Those that could jumped in to the six-foot of water and desperately tried to make their way to the beach.

Hal Baumgarten, the young receiver who had played catch with Elmer Wright just days before, made it to the beach but an exploding artillery shell shattered his jaw. As he slumped to the ground, he looked to one side and there was the dead body of Staff Sgt. Wright.

Marsico suffered injuries to his right arm and leg in the chaos and carnage. He somehow survived the killing zone, but his injuries ensured he would never play baseball again.

The ballplayers of Bedford had suffered badly but the town sustained an even greater loss. Nineteen of the 34 Bedford boys of Company A died in the first bloody minutes at Omaha Beach. Two more died later in the day. Bedford suffered higher losses per-capita than any other American community in World War II.

BY GARY BEDINGFIELD.

HANK GOWDY

BASEBALL PLAYER AND WAR HERO



What an amazing life Hank Gowdy had! How would you like to have played major league baseball during the tough and tumble early years of the 20th century, been the star and Most Valuable Player of the 1914 World Series as a member of the championship “miracle” Boston Braves team and been a bona fide war hero who served his country in two world wars? Let me introduce you to Henry Morgan Gowdy, a man who epitomized, though his play on the baseball field and his exploits in the Armed Forces, the inexorable link between our National Pastime and service in the military.

Henry “Hank” Gowdy was born on Aug. 24, 1889 in Columbus, Ohio. His father was Horace C. Gowdy, an independent man of modest means and his mother, Carrie Burhart. From an early age, Hank was taught early on to work hard and do his chores but like so many of his friends, he would gravitate towards the playing fields once those chores were done. He played football, basketball and baseball at Hubbard Elementary and North High School in Columbus. Though he enjoyed all team sports he loved baseball and convinced an official from the Columbus Senators semipro team to give him a tryout. His talents on the ballfield began to blossom and he quickly ended up with Lancaster in the Ohio State League and within a few months gained more seasoning with Dallas in the Texas League. By this time, Gowdy was a strapping 6-foot-2, 180-pounder who was considered a team leader.

Hank’s major league career started in 1910, right during the height of the “deadball era” when he briefly played with John McGraw’s New York Giants. He only batted .214 that season and after a few games during the 1911 season, he was traded to the Boston Braves. In 1912 and 1913, he still had not quite found his stride, playing several games for the Braves but he returned to the minor leagues to hone his craft as a catcher for the Buffalo Bisons. It was a “make it or break it” time period for the youngster. Would he ever get back into the big leagues? But it was at Buffalo when he hooked up with a man who would become a major influence in his life.

During the latter part of the 1912 season the young catcher began to make his mark under the watchful eye of veteran manager George Stallings. Stallings, the son of a Confederate general, was a larger than life character known for his crafty, hard-nosed baseball ways. A superstitious and tough man who was never intimidated on or off the baseball diamond, Stallings had been managing in the baseball vineyards for years and had developed a reputation for being a fine judge of baseball talent. He was especially looking for men who not only had the necessary skills to play the game but who could lead the team on the field as well. Stallings spotted what he wanted in the young Ohioan and became one of Hank Gowdy’s most ardent supporters. The two seemed the perfect match. Both were hard-nosed, no-nonsense, natural leaders of men. That trait would serve prove to serve both men well.

Even though Stallings left the Bison in 1913, his “field general” Hank Gowdy ended up batting well over .300 for the year and became the mainstay of the team. By the year’s end Gowdy had developed leadership capabilities while playing perhaps the most vital position on the team . . . that of catcher. Their separation would be brief for Gowdy and Stallings would quickly reunite. By August of that year, Stallings would take over the helm of the major league Boston Braves, one of the majors’ oldest teams, and quickly recruit young Mr. Gowdy to help him anchor his new squad.

In the late 19th century, the Boston Braves (originally called the Beaneaters) were at the top of majors and won several championships, but by the time Stallings and Gowdy joined the club, the Braves were known as being the perennial losers of the National League. They were the Senior Circuit’s doormats! By 1914 they had been absolutely dominated for several years by John McGraw’s New York Giants. In fact, the Giants were coming off a season in 1913 in which they won 101 games while capturing the National League

pennant. Stallings' Braves ended up a distant fourth place. The Boston boys won 69 games but lost 82. Sure, that was an improvement of their last-place finish a year before in which they barely squeaked out 52 victories, but most people thought that the 1914 season would simply bring more of the same. That is, more misery for the woeful Boston Braves and more joy to the great New York Giants with their star pitcher Christy "The Christian Gentleman" Mathewson, at the top of his game.

But fate had other plans for Hank Gowdy, his manager George Stallings and their team, for 1914 would become a spectacular season that is still considered among the most thrilling single baseball season of them all. Not only did the Braves embark on the greatest team comeback in Major League Baseball history, coming back from being over 20 games behind the first place Giants on Independence Day 1914, but the team overtook its old nemesis with ease in September and went on to sweep the heavily favored American League Champion Philadelphia Athletics in the World Series, four games to none. Hank Gowdy was in his prime.

Much to Stallings' joy and McGraw's consternation, the "field commander" Gowdy got several clutch hits against Mathewson during the pennant drive in late August and early September. But, alas, Hank's star shown most brightly in the cool air and gusty winds when summer turned to fall, when baseball is played at its toughest and best, during the October classic, baseball's biggest stage, in the World Series. Having dispatched McGraw's men, this time the duo would face the cunning and patrician Connie Mack, the A's grand man who had carefully assembled what was thought to be the best team by far in baseball.

But Stallings, Gowdy and their men had other plans. Hank Gowdy would prove to be the original "Mr. October," long before Reggie Jackson claimed that moniker. Gowdy would hit six times safely and bat .545 for the World Series with three doubles, a homer and a triple. He was the peerless clutch hitter who anchored a team loaded with characters like Rabbit Maranville and grizzled vets like Johnny Evers. He also made key hits during all of the games and eventually won the final game with his bat by going three for four. His bat was, as they say, "on fire!" Later, Stallings himself would state flatly that Gowdy was the most valuable player during the "miracle" run.

Hank, a very patriotic man who pined to serve his country decided to lay down his bat for something more important. Soon he traded his baseball uniform for military garb and became the very first major leaguer to enlist in the Armed Forces during World War I.

For two and a half years, Gowdy continued to catch for the Braves but the clouds of war soon interrupted the thrills of baseball. Hank, a very patriotic man who pined to serve his country, decided to lay down his bat for something more important. Soon he traded his baseball uniform for military garb and became the first major leaguer to enlist in the Armed Forces during World War I. On June 1, 1917, Gowdy signed up to serve in the Ohio National Guard and eventually reported for duty on July 15, 1917. He was soon heading for the front lines in Europe. He would later say that he saw things "no man should see." Baseball and the cheering crowds from Boston seemed a long ways away. The fighting was tough and brutal against the Germans, a determined enemy.

Hank Gowdy's war record was quite impressive. He served with distinction in the 166th Infantry Regiment and became a part of the famed "Rainbow Division," the Fighting 42nd. Gowdy carried the colors during the war for this spectacular fighting unit. They became known as the "Rainbow Division" when dubbed as such by General Pershing. They, it seemed, had the uncanny "luck" of being surrounded by actual rainbows on their way to and during the heavy combat that they were a part of in France during the war. The men certainly needed all the luck they could muster because they were one of the first American Divisions to reach the Western Front. They fought side by side with the French and the fighting was brutal. It was "trench warfare" in the most violent sense of the word as the men engaged in "man to man" combat against the Germans, employing rifles and guns, and then when they ran out of bullets, the men fought each other with bayonets and knives.

Casualties were high but unlike so many of his counterparts in the Rainbow Division, Hank Gowdy returned to the United States in one piece! By this time, the returning war vet Gowdy was a bona fide war hero, as popular in Boston then the mayor himself. Hank gladly laid down his rifle and once again picked up his glove and returned to the game he

loved. He continued to play with the Boston Braves from 1919 through mid 1923. He was eventually traded to his old rivals, the New York Giants, still led by John McGraw. Certainly McGraw remembered Gowdy's clutch hitting as part of the "miracle" team. This time, though, they would be on the same team.

Gowdy played nearly 149 games for the Giants during a two and a half year stretch. He also played in the 1923 and 1924 World Series for the Giants. His team captured the title in 1923, lost it in seven games to the Washington Senators in 1924 and Gowdy stuck with the game as a player for a few more years. After 17 years in the majors as a player, Hank Gowdy, however, was not one to rest on his laurels. Although he never batted the ball for his team after 1930, he would be a major league coach for three different teams - the Braves, Giants and Cincinnati Reds. Also, as unbelievable as it sounds, when World War II broke out, Gowdy served his country for a second time and at the "ripe old age" of 53 he was commissioned a major in the United States Army. He again served with distinction and became, for an extended period of time, the Chief Athletic Officer at Fort Benning, Ga.

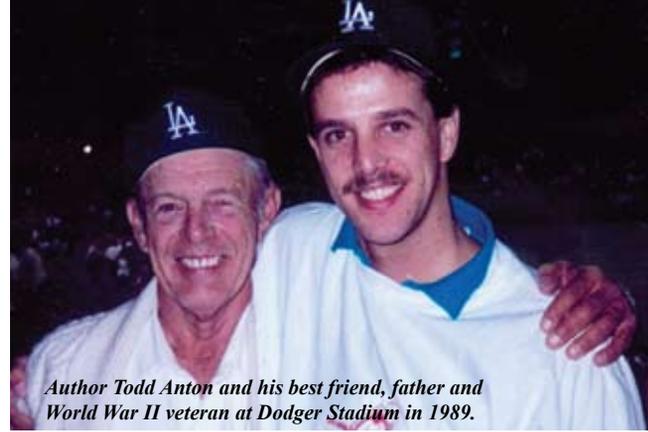
To this day, the baseball diamond at Fort Benning, where soldiers enjoy playing the National Pastime, is called "Hank Gowdy Field." Gowdy passed away at the age of 76 on August 1, 1966, while living in Columbus, Ohio. He left no children but to this day, in and around Columbus, there are relatives and old-timers who remember him well. A fine, moral and modest man who conducted himself with class on and off the ball field, now we know that without any fanfare whatsoever, he was also a tough military man, who when he left playing baseball at the highest level to serve his country, he saw the terror of war, up close and personal. For that, he deserves our eternal gratitude.

BY FRANK CERESI





Major leaguer Jerry Coleman in Korea.



Author Todd Anton and his best friend, father and World War II veteran at Dodger Stadium in 1989.

NO GREATER LOVE

You never forget your first game. You remember the first time you saw that field. You remember the first time you saw the grass, heard the organ playing and the vendors shouting. It was amazing, it was thrilling and there he was, your father holding your hand, reassuring you and taking you places you've never been before. For me, that moment was at Dodger Stadium and it was the early 1970s. Although we were devout Dodger fans, Dad had taken me there to see a great player in his opinion that only comes along once in a while – Roberto Clemente of the Pittsburgh Pirates. Funny though, I don't really remember all that much about the game's details, but what I do remember was this was my first national anthem with my dad.

I remember dad wept and I didn't know why.

My father served in combat in two wars: World War II as a member of the 70th Infantry Division (Trailblazers) in the ETO and in Korea/Japan from 1951-1954 as part of the 715 Transportation Truck Company based on the 38th parallel. Although he would tell my brothers and sisters some of the things he did, you could always tell he was holding something back. Something that was deep, painful and emotional. It always seem to come out during the national anthem.

All he would tell me was that "it takes a lot more than rope to keep that flag up there son."

As I got older, became an American history teacher and began interviewing veterans for Dr. Stephen E. Ambrose and working with him and his National World War II Museum to preserve the memories of the World War II generation, I was aware of the horrific, emotional experiences that dad must have gone through. So I began to ask, began to search on my own for that part of him that he held back. I still couldn't penetrate it, though, until one brief moment ... we went and saw "Saving Private Ryan." My dad had seen it with my mom a few days before and knew what to expect. However, my bother Brent and I didn't.

As we sat down and the movie began, dad draped his arms around each of our shoulders and he held us tight. It was a powerful moment and not a word was spoken the entire time. Shortly before the movie ended dad got up and left as he knew the moment was arriving when at the cemetery in Normandy an aged Private Ryan asks his wife to tell him his life had meaning and that "He was a good man." Dad could only bring himself to watch that scene only once and this moment struck the chord to me at why he wouldn't tell us anything. He didn't feel worthy. As we got in the car to drive home after the movie dad finally spoke up. Looking at me with tears in his aged eyes "You want to know how it was? You do? Well, that (meaning the movie) that is how the F- it was."

Astounded, I felt I had intruded.

Those he served with told me what they had witnessed and I saw my dad for what he really was: an 18-year-old kid – scared, away from home and jumping in to forward observation posts in France to direct artillery fire on enemy positions at the risk of his life many times,

seeing the deadly results of his fire missions on the towns as they marched or drove through. Not all the victims were Germans. Some were just kids. I learned about rescue missions in North Korean territory to evacuate Americans from rapidly approaching Chinese and North Korean forces while driving winding Korean roads without lights. When I asked him about it armed with names, information and evidence that I knew about what he did, he finally relented and it was amazing how it all came out and returned eventually back to baseball. As he would often tell me, it was baseball and playing it that kept them alive, and young. "Simply, Todd, it kept us human." He went on "Todd, that is why I cry at the ballgame. When that anthem is played I don't see the park, I see the faces of my friends who didn't come home and I see the man I wished I could have been."

Then my journey began.

Dad mentioned to me that I should write a book about the ballplayers who served and played the game. I was sure it had been done, and to some extent it has, as I told him. He was persistent, though, "Todd, you've got to let them tell it in their way as only they can. They have been blessed to play the greatest game on the face of the earth and also fought to save the greatest nation of the face of the earth. Don't you think that is a story worth telling? You will be surprised at what you will learn."

"OK, dad, I'll think about it."

"No. You will do it. Do you hear me?"

I was surprised at his urgency.

"Sure Dad. Sure, I'll do it."

Two days later he was gone.

You know when your dad dies everything changes – everything. I looked at the clock to note the time and then remembered the date – it was June 6th. It was D-Day! Are you kidding me?

Dad had asked me at one time that when that day comes "Please take my ashes to Dodger Stadium and to Normandy." Although Dad had not fought at Normandy I asked him why and his face lit up as he answered.

"Todd, I left Europe from Omaha Beach to go home. I left it all behind there to go home and become a husband and your father. My life began at Normandy."

As a result of our friend Mickey Hatcher, hitting coach of the Angels and a former Dodgers star, I was able to place a small portion of dad's ashes in center field at beautiful Dodger Stadium. The Angels went on to win that night. Amazingly, it was Flag Night and the pregame was hosted by Boeing Company and WWII planes filled the sky. It seemed so planned, so scripted ... so American. I haven't been able to stop crying at the national anthem since ...

Indeed, Dad was right. This journey took me places. I interviewed Johnny Pesky at Fenway Park, interviewed Vin Scully in his press box at Dodger Stadium and finally made my own journey to France, letting some of his ashes go on Omaha Beach surrounded by a brisk, cold surf and empty beach. It was a very emotional experience and it still is. I even taught baseball to French kids as my

Dad did in 1945 to pass the time.

So armed with a promise, I sought to write about these great and noble men, meeting such legendary players as Bob Feller, Jerry Coleman, Bert Shepard, Max West, Johnny Pesky, Dom DiMaggio, Don Newcombe, Tommy Lasorda, Dutch Schultz and broadcasters alike such as Ken Coleman, Ernie Harwell and the great Vin Scully – all veterans who said "yes" to me. With each interview it seemed that as if some inner determination kept me going, lessons in character from these men were beginning to make sense. I really believed I was living out my own Field of Dreams. I kept writing and interviewing. I kept going the distance. I wasn't going to give up. The then it all came together and made sense in one player: New York Yankee/Lt. Col. Jerry Coleman, USMC.

Much has been written, and rightfully so, about the legend himself Ted Williams. Some even call him the real John Wayne. Well, if that is the case then Jerry Coleman is the real Gary Cooper: silent, strong, determined and shy. Jerry Coleman flew combat missions in two wars (W.W.II and Korea). He walked away from baseball twice. He told me "When your country calls, you answer. It is as simple as that."

"No regrets?" I asked.

"Not a whisper," he said. "Look, Todd, the Marines destroyed my baseball career, but the greatest thing in my life was my time in the Marines no question about it. I just went from one championship team (Yankees) to another (USMC) is how I look at it."

Amazing.

I know I am not alone in this feeling. Jerry's broadcasting partner with the Padres, Ted Leitner, often asks him if the players and others "know just who it is they are talking to?" I know what Ted means. He is really saying, "Hey Jerry, does anyone know when they are talking to you, they are talking to a REAL American hero?"

"Why should they?" Jerry asks.

And all of us just stare back at Jerry in amazement. Are you serious, Jerry? He just shrugs his shoulders.

I wanted to give Jerry something, too. I had been working on this book for what seems an eternity. I wanted to get Jerry something that perhaps might open his eyes to see his uniqueness to us all. When I talked to Jerry back in 2003 for my book, he mentioned that his two Distinguished Flying Crosses and 13 Air Medals and three navy Citations are really just "merit badges." Awards do not mean anything to most combat veterans. How can a piece of metal sum it all up? What does a ribbon actually mean after watching friends die? This doesn't mean it is not appreciated. Jerry told me, "The awards are really for the person giving it rather than the one receiving it. The honoree has gotten to live a long life, in most cases raise a family. That is reward enough for me."

BY TODD ANTON

Author of "No Greater Love: Life Lessons from the Men Who Saved Baseball" (Rounder Books)

MOE BERG

A native of Northern Virginia, I grew up following the adventures of the fabled Washington Senators. Nothing was sweeter on a sultry Potomac afternoon than climbing into the nosebleeds at RFK Stadium for a doubleheader between the Original Nats and the Bad Boys of Bean Town or those Yankee invaders from the House that Ruth Built.

Diehard Senators fans learned to forgive the club's oftentimes dismal place in the standings. It was enough to know that Frank Howard, the other Washington Monument, and the rest of gang would take the field, affording us hope, at least for few innings, of an elusive hometown victory.

No matter the score, we faithfully bought those souvenirs of a wonderful ballpark getaway, spent with Our Team. I still have the official Senators' warm-up jacket I wore as an outward manifestation of my allegiance and – depending on game day fortunes – at my own peril. A fading Senators pennant hangs in my basement. Only recently have I ceased scanning the Washington Post for the team's box scores. The Senators, their inglorious exit from the nation's capital a decided low-light of the Cold War, are no more.

For all my forays to RFK, with omnipresent thoughts of finally snagging that errant foul ball, I never saw my favorite Senator in action. Morris "Moe" Berg played long before my Dad lobbed pop flies to my siblings and me on our grandparents' Chantilly dairy farm, sending us scrambling across land that eventually became part of Dulles International Airport.

As it was, I didn't learn of Moe until several years later, during the long drought that came to characterize life in the national capital without the national pastime. In the summer, concerts and soccer came to RFK. Mercifully, we had the Redskins and those stupendous Super Bowl victories from autumn into winter, when news of the Bullets – now the Wizards – and the Caps headlined the sports section. But Washington didn't have a baseball team.

So I started reading about past Washington baseball clubs. Poring over library books and periodicals, I discovered that three Senators teams had actually won the American League pennant and – wait for it – went to the World Series.

Even now, sports historians marvel at the mythical 1924 Senators team that snatched the prize from those mighty New York Giants in one of the grandest Series ever. Cheering the underdog Original Nats from the presidential box was First Fan "Silent Cal" Coolidge. The Twenties really did roar in the nation's capital: Washington finally had a certified championship baseball team.

But, alas, there was to be no D.C. dynasty. Despite repeating as AL champs in 1925, succeeding clubs usually tanked more than they triumphed, perpetuating the painful if perennially prophetic tag: "Washington: First in war, first in peace, and last in the American League." Venerated locals George Washington and "Light Horse Harry" Lee would not have been amused.

In 1933, Franklin Roosevelt reminded a greatly depressed nation in his first inaugural address that we had "nothing to fear but fear itself." That fall, no doubt reacting to the new First Fan's inspiring oratory, the Senators landed their third World Series appearance. The magic was short-lived: in what proved to be the club's final trip to the Big Show, the Original Nats lost to the revenging Giants, four games to one. Sad to say, I had missed The Happening by over 40 years.

Newspapers across the country carried stories about the '33

Senators, in part because of a utility catcher who played for the World Series contenders. After nearly a decade in the majors, Moe Berg's notoriety routinely reached beyond the sports pages and into the society columns.

For much of his stay in Washington, Moe was a fixture at dinners and receptions hosted by the numerous embassies located in the nation's capital. Alongside the baseball equipment in his locker, he kept an assortment of formal evening attire. Whatever the featured diplomatic fête, Moe would be impeccably appointed, having traded his gamey Number 10 jersey for a tailored silk jacket or white tie and tails.

Happy was the host who heard Moe Berg of Princeton, Columbia Law and the league-leading Washington Senators had arrived. A polished and engaging raconteur who spoke several languages, Moe charmed partygoers and journalists alike with his intellect, grace, and wit.

Beyond baseball, the party banter took on a decidedly scholarly and eclectic flare. Astronomy, math, linguistics, philosophy, religion, world history, and current events became fodder for captivating conversation as Moe happily traded words and wisdom with some of the most learned and influential men and women of the time. And the wine was good, too.

Ten years and a Day of Infamy later, Moe's mastery of the Washington social scene would aid his overseas assignments during World War II with the Office of Strategic Services, America's first formal intelligence organization. As every James Bond devotee knows, in the shadow wars of espionage, the diplomatic world often masquerades for the operational.

So it was that Moe Berg, onetime backup catcher for the AL champion Washington Senators and embassy row regular, went on to become a trusted and productive Allied spy. Focusing on high-value scientific and atomic targets, the retired ballplayer earned praise for one particularly dicey mission from First Fan FDR.

The more I read about Moe, the more I wanted to read about Moe. I also began trying to locate Moe Berg artifacts. Baseball's first big-league Jewish player had become an obsession with this blue-eyed Irish girl.

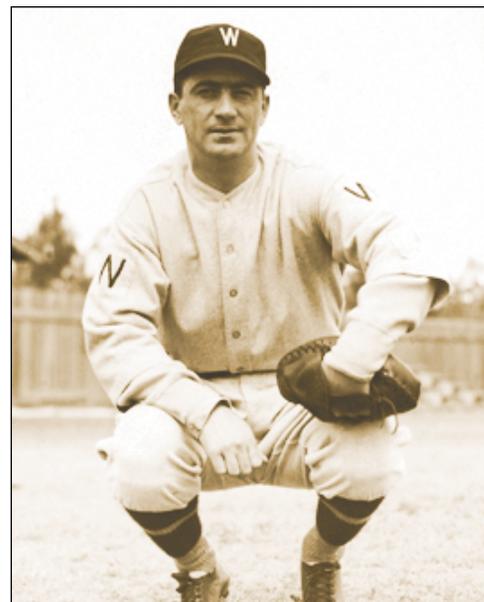
Sometime later, I switched career paths at my place of employ, the CIA, leaving the analytical ranks to become Founding Curator of the CIA Museum. Always looking for compelling and inspirational stories to depict in permanent and thematic displays, I thought Moe would be a good fit.*

Why, my friends inquired, did I plan to include a baseball player in a museum dedicated to espionage history? The very fact intelligence professionals had to ask the question is the reason why a display featuring Moe Berg was created.

Moe's exhibit consisted of a Washington Senators baseball card (of course), and, as a bow to his fifth and final team, a Boston Red Sox card. Both were on loan from my private collection.

Escorting visitors through the display, regaling them with my favorite Moe stories, it became increasingly evident that most seasoned Agency employees knew little of his baseball career and nothing of his exemplary wartime contributions. Fresh, young hires, with no grounding in classic baseball and lacking prior military or government service, were especially clueless.

Yet there were signs from the very beginning that Moe's display was generating a sizable following: we spent more



time removing the accumulated finger, hand, and nose prints deposited on his exhibit case by visitors angling for a closer look than we did for any other.

News of the display eventually leached out to the larger world. Before long, representatives from every conceivable media outlet were calling, seeking permission to film or photograph the cards. There was even an inquiry from a fledgling playwright who thought Moe's life and times worthy of a Broadway production. I'm still waiting for "Moe – The Musical." As testimony to the enigmatic ballplayer's continuing appeal, a documentary film highlighting his varied achievements is due for release within the next few months.

The cards remained on loan in the Museum throughout my tenure as curator. Later I was able to purchase the bat Moe used in 1939, his final year as an active player. Framed by the two cards, the Louisville Slugger added another dimension to the popular display.

When I left the Agency in 1997, Moe's cards and bat followed me home. Over time, they were joined by other Moe artifacts, acquired chiefly at public auctions: a photograph of the AL champion Senators which several players, including Moe, had autographed; a yearbook from his student days at Princeton; the signed pass permitting him admission to the Nuremberg trials; and the flagship collectable – the handsome steamer trunk he shared on road trips with future Hall of Famer and Eastern Shore of Maryland native Jimmie Foxx, resplendent in Red Sox red.

People ask what I plan to do with my "Moementous" memorabilia, now safely housed in a variety of secured, underground vaults throughout the Washington area. Photos of most have been incorporated into presentations I make around the country, focusing on espionage history and some of its more intriguing personalities, with Moe leading the field, pun intended. I hope some day to exhibit the hardier items, especially the steamer trunk, in a suitable venue, allowing the public a glimpse into the career of a major league spy and bone fide war hero who also played for the last championship Washington Senators baseball team.

BY LINDA MCCARTHY

**Please note: Because the CIA Museum is housed within the secured Agency compound, it is NOT open to the public. A recognized expert on Moe Berg, Linda McCarthy features the ballplayer turned spy in her VIP™ Leadership PowerPoint presentation. She can be reached via her company Web page at: www.historyisahoot.com.*

Q & A WITH GEORGE H. W. BUSH

What are your earliest recollections of playing baseball when you were growing up?

I started playing ball by playing catch with my older brother Pres and my Dad early on. As soon as I could catch I'd be out there with a mitt.

Who were some of your early favorite baseball players and teams?

My favorites were Red Sox, Giants and Yankees in the '30s

You are well aware of President Roosevelt's "green light letter" in which he urged Commissioner Landis that Major League Baseball should continue even after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. As a young man during your service in the military in World War II, did you still follow the game back home?

Was baseball ever played by the troops during the war?

I tried to "follow the game back home" but without faxes and e-mails, and given sporadic mail deliveries, it was real hard to keep totally up to speed. Baseball may have been played, but not by me or my squadron mates.

After the war, when you entered Yale University, you captained your varsity baseball team and played first base. What are your recollections of playing during the first two College World Series games in 1947 and 1948?

Tell us about your teammates and did your friendships continue after you left Yale?

During that time, you met Babe Ruth when he was fighting cancer and presented his memoirs to Yale University. What do you remember about meeting the Babe and what did he say to you?

In those days there were not a lot of playoffs. We won the East in '47 and '48, but the East included Illinois, Southern teams and

Eastern. It was different then. The first World Series (and the Second) was played in Kalamazoo, Mich. My teammates remain friends to this day though I see less of them than I'd like. These were glory days for Yale baseball.

Meeting the Babe on Yale Field was a thrill that stays with me 'til this day. He was cancer-riddled. His voice was more of a croak than a normal voice, but he radiated greatness and I was privileged to have been asked to go out to home plate with him to receive his papers that he donated to Yale.

During your political career, you were close friends with many Major League Baseball players including Ted Williams, called by many as being "the greatest hitter who ever lived." Ted fought in World War II and in Korea. Tell us about your friendship with Ted Williams.

How about Bob Feller who also served in the military? Tell us about your friendship with Bob Feller.

My closest friend amongst the greats was Ted Williams. That friendship developed after I got into national politics. I saw quite a bit of Ted and talked to him often in his later years. I admired him as the greatest hitter ever. My one regret is that I never got to fly-fish with him. We had one trip planned but at the last minute he had to cancel.

I knew Bob Feller but not at all well.

Other friends- and I do mean friends, are Tommy Lassorda, Joe Morgan, the Aspermonte brothers, both Bob and Ken. Roger Clemens, Craig Biggio, and the great Nolan Ryan – on and on it goes.

When you were President, it always seemed that you had a smile on your face whether throwing out the traditional first pitch, meeting players, or just talking about baseball. Why do you love the National Pastime so much?

Smile? Because I love the game and I love

being around others who do, too.

If there is one player (current or former) that you would have liked to have met and talked baseball with, whom would that player be and why?

The one player I would love to have met is Lou Gehrig, as he was a true hero to me. I dreamed of having his glove – no way!! He epitomized the best in the game. His courage is of course legendary, but his statistics back up the great reputation Lou Gehrig has.

Tell us about "Born to Play Ball," the baseball exhibit that just opened at your Presidential Library.

The exhibit features some terrific artifacts representing the greats of the game. What are some of your favorites?

The exhibit at my Library is wonderful. Cooperstown's Hall of Fame, (thanks Dale Petoskey) really helped us with some great memorabilia. The exhibit has been a huge success.



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