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Gary Bedingfield's

Baseball in Wartime

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Hall of Famers in World War II

Welcome to the thirteenth edition of the Baseball in Wartime newsletter - a free, monthly publication dedicated to the military service of baseball players during World War II with a circulation in excess of 2,000.

This issue focuses on the WWII military service of players who have been elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame. Of the 286 Hall of Fame inductees, 64 saw military service, starting with Morgan Bulkeley who served during the Civil War and concluding with Ernie Banks, Whitey Ford, Eddie Mathews, Willie Mays and Ted Williams, who all served their nation during the Korean War.

This newsletter focuses primarily on the 36 Hall of Famers who served in the military during World War II. The list includes two umpires, three executives and representatives from all branches of the service - Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard and Army Air Force. Hall of Famers served at home in the United States, at sea in the Atlantic Ocean, and in Europe, China, and the Pacific. Some played baseball to entertain the troops, others ran athletic programs while some were frontline troops in far-off battle zones.

Of the 36, only Yogi Berra, Bobby Doerr, Bob Feller, Monte Irvin, Ralph Kiner, Stan Musial, Robin Roberts, Red Schoendienst and Duke Snider are still with us.

Baseball in Wartime would like to take this opportunity to salute these Hall of Fame heroes.

Gary Bedingfield

(founder and editor)

Baseball in Wartime



Visit the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum website at

www.baseballhalloffame.org

Name	Position	Branch of Service	Location	Years Served
Luke Appling	Shortstop	US Army	USA	1944-1945
Al Barlick	Umpire	US Coast Guard	USA	1943-1945
Yogi Berra	Catcher	US Navy	Europe	1944-1945
Willard Brown	Outfield	US Army	Europe	1944-1945
Nestor Chylak	Umpire	US Army	Europe	1942-1945
Mickey Cochrane	Catcher	US Navy	Pacific	1942-1945
Leon Day	Pitcher	US Army	Europe	1944-1945
Bill Dickey	Catcher	US Navy	Pacific	1944-1945
Joe DiMaggio	Outfield	US Army Air Force	Pacific	1943-1945
Larry Doby	Outfield	US Navy	Pacific	1943-1945
Bobby Doerr	Second Base	US Army	USA	1944-1945
Bob Feller	Pitcher	US Navy	Atlantic/Pacific	1941-1945
Charlie Gehringer	Second Base	US Navy	USA	1942-1945
Hank Greenberg	First Base	US Army Air Force	China-Burma	1941-1945
Billy Herman	Second Base	US Navy	Pacific	1944-1945
Monte Irvin	Second Base	US Army	Europe	1942-1945
Ralph Kiner	Outfield	US Navy	Pacific	1943-1945
Bob Lemon	Pitcher	US Navy	Pacific	1943-1945
Ted Lyons	Pitcher	US Marine Corps	Pacific	1942-1945
Larry MacPhail	Executive	US Army	USA	1942-1945
Lee MacPhail	Executive	US Navy	USA	1945
Johnny Mize	First Base	US Navy	Pacific	1943-1945
Stan Musial	Outfield	US Navy	Pacific	1945-1946
Pee Wee Reese	Shortstop	US Navy	Pacific	1943-1945
Phil Rizzuto	Shortstop	US Navy	Pacific	1942-1945
Robin Roberts	Pitcher	US Army Air Force	USA	1945
Jackie Robinson	Infield	US Army	USA	1942-1944
Red Ruffing	Pitcher	US Army Air Force	USA	1942-1945
Red Schoendienst	Second Base	US Army	USA	1944-1945
Enos Slaughter	Outfield	US Army Air Force	Pacific	1942-1946
Duke Snider	Outfield	US Navy	Pacific	1942-1946
Warren Spahn	Pitcher	US Army	Europe	1942-1946
Bill Veeck	Executive	US Marine Corps	Pacific	1943-1945
Hoyt Wilhelm	Pitcher	US Army	Europe	1942-1945
Ted Williams	Outfield	Navy/Marines	USA	1942-1945
Early Wynn	Pitcher	US Army	Europe	1944-1946



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Hall of Famers in World War II

Luke Appling

Elected to the Hall of Fame in 1964

When Appling entered military service with the Army in January 1944, his wife, Fay, felt optimism for all. "The war will soon be over," she told reporters, "because outside of baseball, Luke never held a job for over two weeks." Appling himself commented that "ducking bullets can't be much worse than ducking some of those bad hops in the infield."

Appling reported to Camp Lee, Virginia for basic training. At the time, most people believed it hailed the end of the 36 year-old's baseball career. In mid-March 1944, it was announced by Lieutenant Arthur P Hand, camp athletics officer that Appling would manage and play shortstop for the Camp Lee Travelers baseball team. However, on March 31, he was reassigned to the reconditioning service at Lawson General Hospital near Atlanta, Georgia. Appling reported for practice with Lawson's baseball team shortly after arriving and was the team's mainstay for two seasons. On August 30, 1945, Appling was discharged under the rule releasing men over 38.

Al Barlick

Elected to the Hall of Fame in 1989

On November 5, 1943, Barlick entered service with the Coast Guard. He served aboard a Coast Guard cutter in the Atlantic and returned to umpiring in 1946.

Yogi Berra

Elected to the Hall of Fame in 1972



Berra joined the Navy when he turned 18 and served at Norfolk, Virginia before volunteering for the amphibious forces. In February 1944, he sailed for the British Isles on the *USS Bayfield*, where he was as a gunner's mate on board an LCS(S) rocket-launching landing craft in the D-Day invasion at Omaha Beach, "It was just like a Fourth of July celebration," he later recalled.

Berra was transferred on June 27 to the *USS Barnett* and served during Operation Dragoon, the Allied invasion of southern France on August 15, 1944. He was sent home to the United States after suffering a hand wound and was stationed at the New London Sub Base until his discharge.

Willard Brown

Elected to the Hall of Fame in 2006

Brown entered military service with the Army in 1944 and served in Europe.

While in France, he was recruited by Phillies' pitcher, Sam Nahem, to play for the OISE All-Stars and helped them to the 1945 ETO World Series championship.

Nestor Chylak

Elected to the Hall of Fame in 1999

Chylak entered military service with the Army on December 3, 1942. He served as a technical sergeant in the European Theater and almost lost his sight on January 3, 1945, during the Battle of the Bulge, when he was struck by shrapnel from an exploding German shell.

Chylak was in hospital for eight weeks and doctors didn't know whether he would be able to see until they removed his bandages ten days after the operation.

Following a full recovery, Chylak returned to the front line and received the Silver Star and another wound before the war ended in Europe.

Mickey Cochrane

Elected to the Hall of Fame in 1947



Cochrane joined the Navy in 1942. He was stationed at Great Lakes Naval Training Station where he coached their formidable baseball team until 1944.

On July 7, 1942, Cochrane managed an All-Service team that played against an American League

all-star squad at Cleveland's Municipal Stadium. Before 62,059 fans, the American League beat the servicemen, 5-0.

In 1945, Cochrane went to Gab Gab Beach, Guam to head the Navy's fleet recreational center.

Tragedy struck Cochrane in 1944, his only son, Gordon Jr, was killed at Normandy on D-Day, June 6. Former major league pitcher, Elden Auker, wrote in his autobiography, *Sleeper Cars and Flannel Uniforms*: "The bullet that killed him [Gordon, Jr] had some kind of range. It traveled all the way across the Atlantic, lodged itself into the spirit of Gordon's father, the great Mickey Cochrane, and slowly killed him. Mickey's gravestone shows he died June 28, 1962, but he started dying June 6, 1944. Consider his another life claimed by World War II."

Leon Day

Elected to the Hall of Fame in 1995



The Army drafted 26-year-old Day on September 1, 1943. He served with the 818th Amphibian Battalion in Europe and was at Utah Beach on D-Day.

When the war in Europe ended, Day was in France along with fellow Negro Leaguers Johnny Hayes, Max Manning, Charlie Parks and Willard Brown. Day and Brown were both selected to play with the integrated OISE All-Stars baseball team run by Phillies' pitcher Sam Nahem. The All-Stars went on to win the ETO World Series.

Bill Dickey

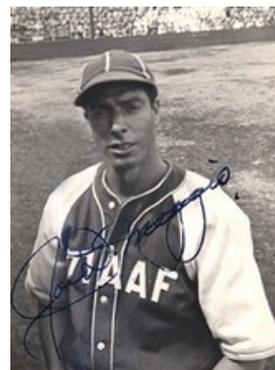
Elected to the Hall of Fame in 1954

Dickey was drafted on June 3, 1944, even though he was 37 and suffered from a bad sinus condition. He was sworn in at Memphis, Tennessee, as a deck volunteer specialist with the US Naval Reserve.

Dickey served as an athletic officer in the Pacific and managed the US Navy team that won the 1944 Service World Series in Hawaii.

Joe DiMaggio

Elected to the Hall of Fame in 1955



On February 17th, 1943, DiMaggio traded his \$43,750 salary from the Yankees, for \$50 a month as an army enlisted man. "He is built for the soldier," wrote Dan Daniel in *Baseball* magazine. "He has the temperament for

the soldier. He has gone into the Army looking for no favors, searching for no job as a coach. He wants to fight, and when he gets his chance, he will prove a credit to himself and his game and the Yanks and his family. This DiMaggio guy really has it."

DiMaggio was assigned to Special Services with the Army Air Force and reported for duty on February 24, 1943 to Santa Ana Army Air Base in California - the Army Air Forces' west coast training center headquarters.

DiMaggio was a big boost to the Santa Ana baseball team which compiled an impressive record including a winning streak of 20 straight games, and DiMaggio put together a

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27 consecutive game hitting streak. In addition to the Santa Ana games, DiMaggio played for a team of Armed Forces all-stars managed by Babe Ruth on July 12, 1943, against the Boston Braves.

Sergeant DiMaggio was transferred to Honolulu, Hawaii in June 1944. He served with the Seventh Air Force and played for their baseball team with Red Ruffing, Johnny Beazley, and Joe Gordon. The Navy was also bringing many of their top players to the island including Phil Rizzuto, Pee Wee Reese, Johnny Mize, and Joe's brother Dom. On June 4, 1944, DiMaggio hit a 435-foot home run in a Seventh Army Force, 6-2, loss to the Navy. However, a stomach ailment sidelined DiMaggio for much of the season and he was hospitalized in August. He was then transferred to a West Coast hospital and then to Special Services at the Army Air Force Redistribution Station 1 in Atlantic City, New Jersey. In September, he was transferred to the Army Air Forces' Don Ce Sar Convalescent Hospital in St Petersburg, Florida—again suffering from stomach ulcers. DiMaggio was released from service on September 14, 1945.

Larry Doby

Elected to the Hall of Fame in 1998

Doby entered military service with the Navy at the end of the 1943 season. He served at Great Lakes Naval Training Station in Illinois, where he played with the Negro baseball team. He was later stationed at Ulithi Atoll in the Pacific.

Bobby Doerr

Elected to the Hall of Fame in 1986

Doerr's major league career was put on hold on September 20, 1944 when he entered military service with the Army. A punctured eardrum, suffered when he was six years old, might have kept him out of service but he passed his physical examination and reported to Camp Roberts, California where he served for the duration.

Sergeant Doerr regularly played baseball at Camp Roberts, a replacement training center with a population that peaked at 45,000 in 1945. He received his discharge from service on December 15, 1945.

Bob Feller

Elected to the Hall of Fame in 1962



On December 8, 1941 – the day after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor - Feller enlisted in the Navy. He was sworn in by former heavyweight boxing

champion, Gene Tunney, at the Chicago courthouse. He was assigned to the Norfolk Naval Training Station in Virginia, as part of Tunney's physical fitness program, and pitched for the baseball team. The line-up included Freddie Hutchinson and Vince Smith, and Feller hurled his first game for Norfolk on April 3, 1942, against Richmond University. In three innings he struck out three and allowed one hit. Norfolk won the game, 13-1.

On June 15, 1942, Feller participated in a five-inning baseball game at the Polo Grounds, New York, as part of an all-sports carnival to raise funds for Army-Navy Relief. Feller pitched the Navy team to victory against the Army's Hugh Mulcahy - allowing three hits and striking out five.

But Feller was not happy. "I wanted to get out of the Tunney program and in to combat," he told author William B Mead. "So I went to the gunnery school there. And I went on the *USS Alabama* that fall."

Feller then spent 26 months as chief of an anti-aircraft gun crew on the *USS Alabama* (BB-60), a South Dakota-class battleship. "We spent the first six or eight months in the North Atlantic. I was playing softball in Iceland in the spring. We came back in the later part of the summer, and went right through the Panama Canal and over to the South Pacific. We hung around the Fiji islands for a while, and then when we got the fleet assembled, and enough men and equipment to start a successful attack, we hit Kwajalein and the Gilberts and the Marshalls and then across to Truk."

Feller worked hard to stay in top physical shape while on the *Alabama*. He had a rowing machine and a punching bag, and did regular chin-ups and push-ups. He would run on beaches whenever the ship was in port and run around the ship when at sea.

Early in 1944, Feller was contacted by Seabee Albert P Pellicore of Chicago, who asked him to play a game against a team composed of the best players on an island in the Pacific. "Bob was in rare form that day." Pellicore explained in a letter to John P Carmichael, sports editor of the *Chicago Daily News*, "and pitched exceedingly fine to the delight of the largest crowd ever assembled in these parts." The "All-Stars." playing against Bob, lost the game 9-0, with Feller striking out 15. "I write this because I feel the people back home should know about a man who besides his regular line of duty is contributing so much toward the entertainment of all concerned," the letter concluded.

The *USS Alabama* returned to the United States in the spring of 1945, and Feller was assigned to the Great Lakes Naval Training Center in Illinois, where he coached the

baseball team and posted a 13-2 won-loss record with 130 strike outs in 95 innings.

Charlie Gehringer

Elected to the Hall of Fame in 1949

Gehringer entered military service with the Navy in September 1942 and was appointed head baseball coach of the St Mary's Naval Pre-Flight School team in California for the 1943 season.

The following year he was sent to Jacksonville NAS where he told his Commanding Officer that he wanted to just coach the baseball team and not play. He was promptly told that he would play, and if he didn't, he would be sent so far they wouldn't know where to find him. Consequently, Gehringer played and managed the highly successful Jacksonville NAS Fliers.

In Donald Honig's *Baseball When the Grass was Real*, Gehringer recalled how seriously the commanding officers took baseball.

"Once we had a game scheduled at Montgomery Air Base, in Alabama, and they came and picked us up and flew us to Montgomery for the game and then flew us back again."

When Gehringer had entered military service in 1942, he was seemingly finished as a player. He was 39 years old and finding it difficult to keep in shape. However, when he came out of the service in November 1945, having attained the rank of lieutenant commander, he was in great shape and, in hindsight, wished he played a couple more years.

Hank Greenberg

Elected to the Hall of Fame in 1956



On May 7, 1941, the day after hitting two home runs in his farewell appearance, Greenberg was inducted in the Army and reported

to Fort Custer at Battle Creek, Michigan, where many troops of the Fifth Division turned out at the train station to welcome the slugging star. "If there's any last message to be given to the public," he told *The Sporting News*. "Let it be that I'm going to be a good soldier."

On December 5, 1941—two days before the attack on Pearl Harbor—Greenberg was honorably discharged after Congress released men aged 28 years and older from service. On February 1, 1942, he re-enlisted, was inducted at Fort Dix, New Jersey, and volunteered for service in the United States Army Air Corps. "We are in trouble," he told *The Sporting News*, "and there is only one

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thing for me to do – return to the service. This doubtless means I am finished with baseball and it would be silly for me to say I do not leave it without a pang. But all of us are confronted with a terrible task – the defense of our country and the fight for our lives.”

On August 26, 1943, he was involved in a war bonds game that raised \$800 million dollars in war bond pledges. Held at the Polo Grounds in front of 38,000 fans, the three New York teams combined as the War Bond All-Stars against an Army all-star line-up that



featured Slaughter, Hank Greenberg and Sid Hudson. The War Bond All-Stars won 5 to 2.

Greenberg later graduated from Officer Candidate School at Miami Beach, Florida, and was commissioned as a first lieutenant and was assigned to the Army Air Force physical education program. By February 1944, Captain Greenberg was a student at the Army's school for special services at Washington and Lee University. He requested an overseas transfer later in the year and was assigned to the first group of Boeing B-29 Superfortresses to go overseas. He spent six months in India before being ferried over Burma to China where he served in an administrative capacity.

"I'll never forget the first mission our B-29s made from our base to Japan," Greenberg told Arthur Daley, writing in the *New York Times* on February 14, 1945. "I drove out to the field in a jeep with General Blondie Saunders who led the strike, and took my place in the control tower. Those monsters went off, one after the other, with clock-work precision.

"Then we spotted one fellow in trouble. The pilot saw he wasn't going to clear the runway, tried to throttle down, but the plane went over on its nose at the end of the field. Father Stack, our padre, and myself raced over to the burning plane to see if we could help rescue anyone. As we were running,

there was a blast when the gas tanks blew and we were only about 30 yards away when a bomb went off. It knocked us right into a drainage ditch alongside the rice paddies while pieces of metal floated down out of the air."

Greenberg was stunned and couldn't talk or hear for a couple of days, but otherwise he wasn't hurt. "The miraculous part of it all was that the entire crew escaped," Greenberg continued. "Some of them were pretty well banged up but no one was killed. That was an occasion, I can assure you, when I didn't wonder whether or not I'd be able to return to baseball. I was quite satisfied just to be alive."

In the middle of 1944, Greenberg was recalled from China to New York, where his job was to take small groups of returning combat officers to war plants in New England and give morale-boosting talks to the workers. In late 1944, he was based at Richmond, Virginia, and in June 1945, he was placed on the military's inactive list and returned to the Tigers.

Billy Herman

Elected to the Hall of Fame in 1975

Herman entered military service with the Navy on March 11, 1944. He was at Great Lakes Naval Training Center during 1944 and in March 1945 he was with Navy teams that traveled to Pacific islands and played games at Eniwetok, Kwajalein, Saipan, Gum and the Philippines.

During the summer of 1945, Herman served as player-manager of the Aiea Barracks team in Hawaii. Aiea lost to Pearl Harbor Submarine Base in the 14th Naval District League championship game in September 1945 before 21,000 at Furlong Field, but he was selected to the 14th Naval District All-Star team and voted league MVP.

In late September 1945, Herman played for National League team that won the Navy World Series in Hawaii. He was discharged from service on December 15, 1945.

Monte Irvin

Elected to the Hall of Fame in 1973

Irvin was drafted by the Army in 1942. He spent three years with the GS Engineers, 1313th Battalion. The battalion was first sent to England, then after D-Day to France and Belgium, where they built bridges and repaired roads. In late 1944, his unit was deployed in Reims, France, as a secondary line in case the Germans broke through at Bastogne during the Battle of the Bulge.

Irvin suffered psychological trauma from his combat experience and developed tinnitus, a ringing in the ears, that affected his dexterity. That and three years away from baseball made his return to the game difficult.

He later described how black soldiers had a rough time in the Army because white soldiers treated them badly. "The black troops were treated better in Europe than they were in the US," Irvin said. "They got a taste of freedom over there."

He agrees, however, that many white American soldiers realized the incongruity of fighting in Europe to free oppressed people while blacks were oppressed at home, and that may have made things a little easier for the black soldiers when they returned.

Ralph Kiner

Elected to the Hall of Fame in 1975

Kiner was inducted in the Navy in 1943. As a cadet he attended St Mary's Pre-Flight School in California and earned his pilot's wings and commission at Corpus Christi in December 1944. He flew Martin PBM Mariners on submarine patrols from Kaneohe Bay Naval Air Station in Hawaii, accumulating 1,200 flying hours and playing hardly any baseball during that time.

Bob Lemon

Elected to the Hall of Fame in 1976

Lemon joined the Navy in 1943. He served at Los Alamitos Naval Air Station in California for the first two years of his service. In 1945, he was sent to Aiea Barracks in Hawaii, and it was there that he made the conversion from infielder to pitcher.

Ted Lyons

Elected to the Hall of Fame in 1955



Lyons enlisted in the Marine Corps at the beginning of 1943, and went to boot camp at Quantico, Virginia. "What a change from baseball this is," he told reporters. "I

get up at 6am instead of 9, the way I used to. Why, do you know, that's 21 hours of sleep a week I'll never catch up on."

Lyons graduated from reserve officer's class at Quantico on April 7, 1943 and reported to Navy Pier in Chicago the following day. Navy Pier extended nearly a mile into Lake Michigan off downtown Chicago, and was used to train pilots. When asked by reporters if his pitching arm was in shape, Lyons said "I would be ready to go a full game if I could throw a few to Mike Tresh [White Sox catcher]."

On June 30, 1943, Lyons led a Marines detachment drill at Comiskey Park before the White Sox played Washington. "I suppose if the war lasts three or four more years I'll

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have to give up the idea of pitching again," Lyons told reporters who asked about his chances of pitching in the majors again. "But if I can get back before then, I may have a few years of active play in me, unless I'd get knocked out right away by a line drive from one of these new rabbit balls they're bringing in."

Lyons left Navy Pier in August 1943, and was assigned to Camp Pendleton in San Diego, California. Pitching for the Camp Pendleton Marines, Lyons was beaten, 4-1, by Red Ruffing of the Sixth Ferrying Group, for West Coast Service team championship on October 10, 1943.

He was promoted to captain and sent to the Pacific Theater in April 1944. In response to a request from Lyons, Chicago manager, Jim Dykes, shipped two dozen White Sox caps to the fighter pilots in his sector. Dykes also included Lyons' shirt, with the familiar "16," on the back.

By June 1945, Lyons was manager of a Marine flyers team in Hawaii and was discharged in December 1945.

Larry MacPhail

Elected to the Hall of Fame in 1978

Larry MacPhail served with the Army during WWII doing public relations work. He was discharged from service on February 10, 1945.

Lee MacPhail

Elected to the Hall of Fame in 1998

Lee MacPhail served as a supply officer with the US Navy aboard the *USS Turner* during the war.

Johnny Mize

Elected to the Hall of Fame in 1981



On March 25, 1943, Mize passed his physical at Jefferson Barracks, Missouri and entered the Navy. Based at Great Lakes he played for the Bluejackets baseball team with Frankie Baumholtz, Joe Grace, Johnny Lucadello, George Dickey and Tom Ferrick.

In 1944, Specialist First Class Mize was sent to Hawaii with the Navy's major league baseball all-stars. Based at the Naval Air Station Kaneohe, he blasted a 425-foot home run against the 7th Army Air Force team before embarking on a tour of the Pacific with the Navy's Fifth Fleet team including stops at the Marshall Islands, Guam, Saipan, Palau and Leyte. "Mize hit several right over the palm trees into the ocean," recalled Virgil Trucks to author Richard Goldstein.

Mize was discharged from the Navy in October 1945.

Stan Musial

Elected to the Hall of Fame in 1969



When it became obvious that Musial would be inducted in 1944, Pete Reiser tried to convince him to sign up with the Army. That way, Musial could play ball for Reiser's Fort Riley team. "I told Pete, 'Naw, I'm going into the Navy,'" he explained to author Frederick Turner. "I just liked the Navy for some reason - the water and all. You know where a lot of those guys wound up who were at Fort Riley? At the Battle of the Bulge."

Musial passed his Naval physical examination in June 1944 and reported for induction on January 23, 1945. He was assigned to Bainbridge Naval Training Center in Maryland on March 17, and played for the Bainbridge NTC Commodores team. Musial credits his time at Bainbridge with helping him develop as a power hitter, stating that he altered his stance to pull the ball so he could hit more home runs to entertain the servicemen.

In June 1945, he was assigned to Special Services and sent to Hawaii. Attached to a ship launch unit at Pearl Harbor, he ran a launch out to battle-damaged ships that came in, ferrying personnel back to port. Three or four afternoons a week he played baseball for the Ship Repair Unit in the 14th Naval District League. "Ten thousand every game," he recalled. "You know, there were so many men around Hawaii, goddamn thousands and thousands of guys, so this was good diversion for them." In August 1945, he even resurrected his pitching career, blanking an Army all-star team with a four-hitter in a game at Maui.

In the fall of 1945, Musial's father fell seriously ill at home in Donora. Stan was granted emergency leave orders to visit home. After his father recovered he was assigned duty in Philadelphia and back at Bainbridge. Musial was discharged from the Navy on March 15, 1946

Pee Wee Reese

Elected to the Hall of Fame in 1984

Reese was stationed at Norfolk Naval Air Station in 1943, where he regularly played baseball. In 1944, he was sent to Hawaii and played for the Aiea Hospital team.

He joined the Third Fleet team for the US Navy's Pacific tour in 1945 and was then assigned to Guam where he was shortstop and assistant coach for the Third Marine Division baseball team.

Phil Rizzuto

Elected to the Hall of Fame in 1994

Rizzuto served with the Navy at Norfolk Naval Training Station in 1943 where he played ball on a regular basis. He was later in charge of 20mm gun crew on a ship in the Pacific, but contracted malaria while in New Guinea. Rizzuto was sent to Australia to recover and coached the US Navy team while there.

Robin Roberts

Elected to the Hall of Fame in 1976

"The war was still on when I graduated [from Lanphier High School in Illinois] in 1944, and I had thoughts of becoming a fighter pilot," Roberts wrote in *The Whiz Kids* in 1996. "I qualified for the Air Force Cadet reserve program and was sent to Michigan State University in East Lansing."

In the late fall of 1944, he was accepted into the regular Army Air Force beginning in March. In the spring of 1945 he was ordered to report for basic training at Shepherd Air Force Base in Wichita Falls, Texas. But with the end of the war nearing the Army Air Force's preflight training was suspended and he was assigned to Chanute Field, Illinois for the remainder of the war.

Jackie Robinson

Elected to the Hall of Fame in 1962



On April 3, 1942, Robinson entered the Army, attended officer candidate school, and was commissioned a second lieutenant in 1943. He served at Fort Riley, Kansas and then Fort Hood, Texas. Robinson was one of the few African-American officers at Fort Hood and when

he refused to sit in the back of a military bus in 1944, he was subsequently court martialled but acquitted because the order was a violation of War Department policy prohibiting racial discrimination in recreational and transportation facilities on all US Army posts.

In the summer of 1944, when Robinson was a lieutenant in the 761st Tank Battalion at

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Fort Hood, a broken ankle he had suffered playing football back in 1932 kept him from going overseas with his outfit. "My CO sent me to the hospital for a physical checkup," he told *Yank* magazine on November 23, 1945, "and they changed my status to permanent limited service. After that I kicked around the tank destroyers doing a little bit of everything. Then I wound up as a lieutenant in an infantry battalion at Camp Breckinridge. In October 1944 I was given a 30-day leave and put on inactive duty."

Robinson received a medical discharge on November 28, 1944.

Red Ruffing

Elected to the Hall of Fame in 1967

In January 1943, Ruffing was drafted despite having only one toe on his left foot and being 39 years old. "When Uncle Sam reached out and tapped Red Ruffing for service," wrote Joe Williams in the *New York World-Telegram*, "he put a period at the end of a famous battery, Ruffing and Dickey."

Based at Long Beach Army Air Base in California with the 6th Ferrying Group of the Air Transport Command, Ruffing managed the baseball team with a lineup that included Max West, Harry Danning and Nanny Fernandez. The 6th Ferrying Group proved to be a formidable baseball team and Ruffing pitched them to a 4-1 victory over Camp Pendleton for the Southern California service championship in 1943.

In April 1943, Ruffing pitched for a service all-stars team against the Hollywood Stars. With service teammate Joe DiMaggio in fine form Ruffing helped the military squad overcome the Stars 5-2.

In June 1944, Ruffing's 6th Ferrying Group team took on the Hollywood Stars and won 7-1. In November 1944, it was rumored that Ruffing would be returning to the Yankees. "Word has reached here from California," wrote Dan Daniel in *The Sporting News* on November 9, 1944, "that Ruffing, now in the Army, will be back with the Yankees when they start training ... The report is that Ruffing, who was drafted two years ago, even though he lacked a couple of toes and was close to the age limit, is to be discharged honorably because of his years."

However, Ruffing was to remain in service and eventually received his discharge at Fort Dix on June 5, 1945.

Red Schoendienst

Elected to the Hall of Fame in 1989

Schoendienst reported to Camp Blanding in Florida in May 1944. "Joining the Army was not something I was real excited about," he explained in his autobiography *Red: A Baseball Life*, "but I knew I didn't have any choice. Training for the infantry, we were

exposed to just about every situation you can imagine – how to wire for mines, how to blow up bridges, how to set booby traps and dig up mines."

He was later transferred to Pine Camp, New York – a prisoner of war camp for Italian prisoners. "One of our jobs was to build ballfields so we could keep the prisoners entertained and give them something to do. We also put together a camp team. We played on weekends, traveling to some of the nearby Army bases."

During one of the Pine Camp games, Schoendienst suffered a shoulder injury. It was diagnosed as a shallow shoulder socket and would continue to pop out on occasions. A combination of the shoulder injury and an eye injury he suffered earlier led to his medical discharge in January 1945.

Enos Slaughter

Elected to the Hall of Fame in 1985

Following the 1942 World Series Slaughter was assigned to the San Antonio Aviation Cadet Center (SAACC) for what he hoped would be flight school. "I wanted to be a pilot," he told author Frederick Turner, "but they said I was color blind. They wanted me to be a bombardier, but I said if I couldn't be the one flying the plane, I'd just as soon not be flying. So, I became a physical education instructor in charge of about 200 troops."

Slaughter was assigned to the 509th Base Headquarters Squadron at SAACC, where he led the base team in hitting with a .498 average in 75 games during 1943. On August 26, 1943, he was involved in a war bonds game that raised \$800 million dollars in war bond pledges. Held at the Polo

Grounds in front of 38,000 fans, the three New York teams combined as the War Bond All-Stars against an Army all-star line-up that featured Slaughter, Hank Greenberg and Sid Hudson. The War Bond All-Stars won 5 to 2.

Slaughter was based at Camp Kearns, near Salt Lake City, Utah in March 1945, and was told that if he would go with other players to the South Pacific he would be guaranteed a quick discharge when the war ended. He accepted the deal and was part of a contingent of 94 ballplayers that arrived in Hawaii in June 1945.

Representing the 58th Wing (one of three teams), along with teammates Bobby Adams, Joe Gordon, Birdie Tebbetts and Howie Pollet, the ballplayers island-hopped towards Japan following American forces. On Tinian, the Seabees bulldozed out a ballfield on top of a coral reef and made bleacher seats out of bomb crates. Exhibition games were also staged at Saipan, Guam and Iwo Jima with an estimated 180,000 soldiers getting the chance to witness major league baseball players in action.

Twenty-seven games were played on the tour and Slaughter batted .342 with five home runs and 15 RBIs. The tour concluded in October and the players returned to the United States in early November. Slaughter received his military discharge on March 1, 1946.

Duke Snider

Elected to the Hall of Fame in 1980

Snider reported to the pre-induction center in the Watts section of Los Angeles for his military physical on October 19, 1944.

"They checked us just enough to make sure we were warm and upright," he explained in his autobiography *The Duke of Flatbush*, "and a guy handed me some papers I didn't want to know about and screamed 'NAVY!' in my face at the top of his lungs. I was headed



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for the high seas. I wondered why they took me if they thought I was deaf."

Snider served as a fireman, third class on the submarine tender *USS Sperry at Guam*. During that time he won many bets against other sailors and servicemen by throwing a baseball the length of submarines that arrived at Guam—a distance of about 300 feet. "I'd throw the ball the length of their sub, my crewmates would win \$300 or so, and I'd pick up my guarantee - \$50," he recalls.

Snider also moonlighted for the 2nd Marine Division ball team while on Guam as well as playing for the *Sperry* team. In between playing baseball, Snider's main duty on the *Sperry* was dishwashing detail. "There was a porthole behind the sink and any time we came across a chipped glass or dish that wouldn't come clean in less than a second we fired the sucker into the Pacific Ocean."

Snider felt he had a very comfortable and safe war while his father - also serving with the Navy - was involved in many of the island invasions in the Pacific. "There was one close call when it looked as if I was going to find myself in combat after all," he explains in *The Duke of Flatbush*. "I was on watch duty on the number one 5-inch gun when we sighted an unidentified ship ahead. The command came down from the bridge to load the gun with a star shell that would be fired if the ship did not respond to our signal requesting identification.

"No World Series moment ever scared me as much. I was no authority on loading or firing shells. All I had been told in our drills was that you press this lever, a shell comes up, you put it in and press another lever, and the shell goes 'Boom!' I pressed the first lever, the shell came up, and I put it into the loading chamber. I was actually shaking while waiting for the command to fire. Two ships might start firing at each other in the middle of the Pacific Ocean as a small part of World War II, and I was going to be the one to start the firing.

"Seconds before the command to fire would have come, the other ship identified itself as friendly. I needed an immediate change of underwear."

Snider was later stationed at Long Beach Army Air Base in California, and after 19 months of military service he returned to the Dodgers' organization in June 1946.

Warren Spahn

Elected to the Hall of Fame in 1973

Spahn entered military service on December 3, 1942. He served with the Army at Camp Chaffee, Arkansas, and pitched for the 1850th Service Unit baseball team. On August 5, 1943, he pitched a 15-0 no-hitter against the KFPW Broadcasters, striking out 17. Only two men reached base - both on errors.

Spahn was sent to Europe in December 1944 with the 1159th Engineer Combat Group's 276th Engineer Combat Battalion. "Let me tell you," Spahn said, "that was a tough bunch of guys. We had people that were let out of prison to go into the service. So those were the people I went overseas with, and they were tough and rough and I had to fit that mold."

Spahn soon found himself in the Battle of the Bulge. "We were surrounded in the Hertgen Forrest and had to fight our way out of there. Our feet were frozen when we went to sleep and they were frozen when we woke up. We didn't have a bath or change of clothes for weeks."

In March 1945, the 276th were responsible for maintaining the traffic flow across the Ludendorf Bridge at Remagen, the only remaining bridge to span the Rhine. The bridge was under almost constant attack from the Germans who were desperate to stop the flow of Allied forces into Germany. At the same time they were to build a 140-foot Double Bailey bridge nearby. On March 16, Spahn was wounded in the foot by shrapnel while working on the Ludendorf. The following day he had just left the Ludendorf when the entire structure collapsed into the river with the loss of more than 30 US Army engineers. For his efforts to keep the bridge operating while under constant enemy fire, Staff Sergeant Spahn received a Bronze Star, Purple Heart and a battlefield commission as a second-lieutenant.

After Germany's surrender in May 1945, First Lieutenant Spahn pitched for the 115th Engineers Group at their base at the University of Heidelberg. In a four-game stretch, he allowed only one run and nine hits while striking out 73 batters.

Bill Veeck

Elected to the Hall of Fame in 1991

Veeck, owner of the Milwaukee Brewers at the time, entered military service with the Marines at the end of the 1943 season. He injured his right leg at Bougainville and due to infection had it amputated in 1946. Of his

18 months in service, 22 of them were spent in hospitals.

Hoyt Wilhelm

Elected to the Hall of Fame in 1985

Wilhelm's baseball career was put on hold when he entered military service with the Army at Camp Croft, South Carolina on November 23, 1942.

Wilhelm served as an infantry soldier in Europe and was wounded during the Battle of the Bulge.

Ted Williams

Elected to the Hall of Fame in 1966



Williams had been classified 3-A in the military draft due to the fact that his mother was totally dependent on him. When his classification was changed to 1-A following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, he made an appeal to his

draft board which was upheld. "I am going to play ball this season," he announced. "My conscience is clear. I have as much right to be exempted as anyone else. I have my mother to support. Before my status was changed to 1-A, I made commitments which I must go through with. I can do this by playing ball this year. When the season is over, I'll get into the Navy as fast as I can."

Following the 1942 season, which produced his first Triple Crown (.356, 36 HR, 137 RBIs), he joined the V-5 program with a view to becoming a Naval Aviator. "I'm tickled to death and I'm hoping I'll get into the air quick to start some slugging against the Axis," he told reporters.

Williams was first sent, with teammate John Pesky, to the Navy's Preliminary Ground School at Amherst College in Massachusetts, for six months. The next four months were spent in the Preflight School at Chapel Hill, North Carolina where he turned out in the spring for the Chapel Hill Cloudbusters baseball team, featuring Pesky, Harry Craft, Buddy Hassett and Johnny Sain. "Since the arrival of Cadet Williams, Pesky and the other ex-major leaguers," head coach, Lieutenant George D Kepler, told the *Burlington Daily Times-News* on July 14, 1943, "most of our

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games have been won by one-sided scores. We have been getting good hitting and pitching, and both the cadets and officers on the team love to play baseball."

On July 12, 1943, a team of Armed Forces all-stars managed by Babe Ruth and featuring Joe DiMaggio and Ted Williams played the Boston Braves in a fund-raising effort. Babe Ruth, 48 years old, pinch-hit in the 7th inning and flied out to right, but the all-stars won 9-8 on a Ted Williams home run.

From September to December 1943, Cadet Williams took primary training at NAS Bunker Hill, Indiana. He then went to NAS Pensacola in Florida for intermediate training where he set records in aerial gunnery. Williams received his pilot's wings and commission as a second lieutenant in the Marine Corps on May 2, 1944.

Williams then attended gunnery training at Jacksonville where he once again set gunnery records. He then returned to Pensacola where he served as an instructor with the United States Marine Corps Reserve at Bronson Field. He played baseball for the base team, the Bronson Bombers, which won the Training Command championship that year.

From June to August 1945, Williams went through the Corsair Operational Training Unit at Jacksonville. He was in Hawaii awaiting orders as a replacement pilot and playing ball with a Marine flight-wing team when the war ended. Williams returned to the United States in December and was discharged from the Marines on January 28, 1946.

Early Wynn Elected to the Hall of Fame in 1972

On August 21, 1944, Wynn was inducted into military service with the Army at Fort Myer, Virginia. Private Wynn initially took 17 weeks training at the Armored Replacement Training Center at Fort Knox, Kentucky.

He was later posted the Philippines where he played baseball with Kirby Higbe's Base 30 Manila Dodgers. The Manila Dodgers had such a vast pitching staff that Wynn - who was pretty good at wielding a bat - often played shortstop.

After 23 months, Wynn was discharged at Camp Meade, Maryland on July 5, 1946.

Athletes Away
A selective look at professional baseball players in the Navy during World War II
 by Harrington E "Kit" Crissey
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Harrington E. Crissey, Jr.

This hard-to-obtain, self-published book is a wonderful resource for anyone wanting to learn more about major league ballplayers who served with the Navy during World War II.

It contains countless little known facts gathered by Crissey who is not only a baseball historian but a former Navy man himself.

This book has been extremely difficult to find in recent years but the author still has a number of copies available for sale. If you are interested in obtaining a copy please send Baseball in Wartime an email at the address below and we will pass on your interest to Mr Crissey.

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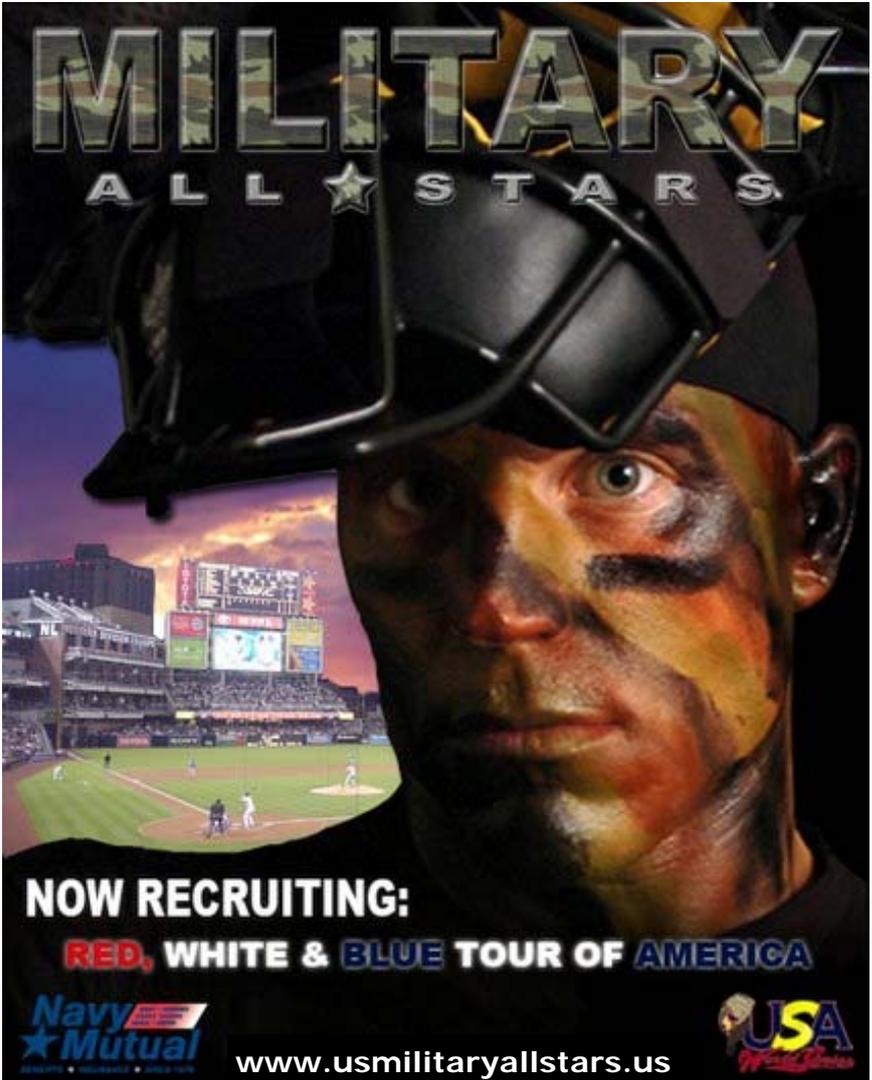
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