



**Baseball  
in Wartime**  
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*Gary Bedingfield's*

**Baseball  
in Wartime**

**Issue 40  
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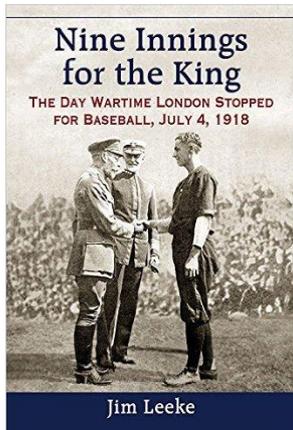
# Season's Greetings!



In this issue:  
Festive reading  
Remembering 20 ballplayers who  
lost their lives at this time of year  
312th Labor Battalion team 1919

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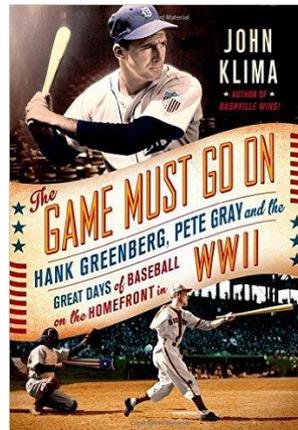
## Festive Reading!



### **Nine Innings for the King: The Day Wartime London Stopped for Baseball, July 4, 1918**

Jim Leeke—McFarland (2015)  
ISBN: 0786478705—\$29.95

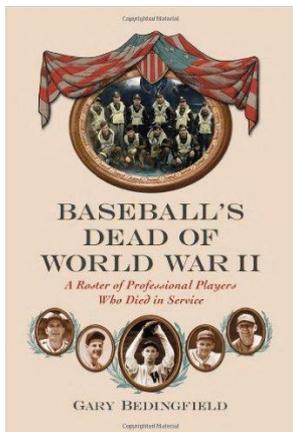
On a sunny Fourth of July during World War I, King George V went out to a ball game. Along with Queen Mary and other royalty, Winston Churchill, dozens of VIPs, thousands of troops and ordinary Londoners, the monarch cheered an extraordinary "baseball match" between American soldiers and sailors. This historic event helped solidify the transatlantic alliance that was vital to winning the war.



### **The Game Must Go On: Hank Greenberg, Pete Gray, and the Great Days of Baseball on the Home Front in WWII**

John Klima—Thomas Dunne Books (2015)  
ISBN: 1250064791 \$27.99

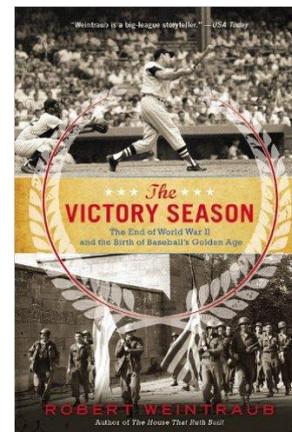
On December 7, 1941, as the battleships in Pearl Harbor smoldered, one of the most powerful athletes in America, Detroit Tigers MVP Hank Greenberg, made a tumultuous decision - to leave the baseball field for the field of war. His decision left baseball's place during the war uncertain as more and more ballplayers, famous and unknown alike, put off their careers to go into the fight.



### **Baseball's Dead of World War II: A Roster of Professional Players Who Died in Service**

Gary Bedingfield—McFarland (2009)  
ISBN: 0786444541 \$39.95

Yes, a shameless plug for my own book! While most fans know that baseball stars Ted Williams, Hank Greenberg, and Bob Feller served in the military during World War II, few can name the two major leaguers who died in action. (They were catcher Harry O'Neill and outfielder Elmer Gedeon.) Far fewer still are aware that another 125 minor league players also lost their lives during the war. This book draws on extensive research and interviews to bring their personal lives, baseball careers, and wartime service to light.



### **The Victory Season: The End of World War II and the Birth of Baseball's Golden Age**

Robert Weintraub—Back Bay Books (2014)  
ISBN-10: 0316205893 \$17.00

In the spring of 1946, Americans were ready to heal. The war was finally over, and as America's fathers and brothers were coming home so too were baseball's greats. Ted Williams, Stan Musial, and Joe DiMaggio returned with bats blazing, making the season a true classic that ended in a thrilling seven-game World Series. America also witnessed the beginning of a new era in baseball- it was a year of attendance records, the first year Yankee Stadium held night games, the last year the Green Monster wasn't green, and Jackie Robinson's first year playing in the Brooklyn Dodgers' system.

## Remembering 20 Ballplayers Who Lost Their Lives at this Time of the Year

### 1. Leonard E. "Link" Berry

Leonard E. "Link" Berry, son of Clarence and Metta Berry, was born in Bowman, South Carolina on August 1, 1916. Link and his brothers Wilbur "Wib" and Harold "Huck", were local semi-pro ballplayers and Link signed with the Macon Peaches of the Class B South Atlantic League in 1937. The Peaches sent him to the New Bern Bears of the Class D Coastal Plain League and he had three wins and three losses in 18 appearances. In 1938, the Bears were league champions, and Berry led the pitching staff with 31 appearances for a 12-4 record. The following year, the Bears slipped to fifth place despite Berry's 18-8 record and 3.06 ERA.

During the winter of 1939-1940, Berry played winter ball in Panama with Balboa Heights in the Canal Zone League, before starting his fourth season at New Bern. Yet again, he was the mainstay of the pitching staff and posted a 17-8 record and 3.08 ERA, despite the club's sixth-place finish. Berry had won 50 games against just 23 losses over four seasons and was sold to the Charleston Rebels of the South Atlantic League at the end of the season. Moving up to Class B, Berry had a 12-14 record with the Rebels in 1941. Only Irv Stein (who pitched for the Athletics in 1932) and Mack Stewart (who would pitch for the Cubs in 1944) won more games for the Rebels.

A promising career was interrupted when military service called on April 8, 1942. Berry was inducted into the Army at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, and joined Company B, 264th Infantry Regiment of the 66th "Black Panther" Infantry Division at Camp Blanding, Florida. The division moved to Camp Joseph T. Robinson in Arkansas, then took specialized training, including small-unit infantry-tank tactics at Camp Rucker, Alabama.

He married Emma Mae Thompson on October 4, 1943, but the young couple did not have much time together. The division was soon headed for New York to prepare for overseas deployment.

The three regiments of the 66th Infantry Division sailed from New York Harbor on November 15, 1944, aboard the Army transport George Washington and the Navy transport George O. Squier. They disembarked in England on November 26, and were billeted in barracks and towns in the vicinity of Dorchester in the southwest part of the country. The time in England was spent further preparing for combat with vigorous last-minute training.

On Christmas Eve 1944, Sergeant Berry was among 2,235 troops of the 262nd and 264th Regiments of the division who boarded the SS Leopoldville - a Belgian passenger ship converted into a transport - that left England bound for the port of Cherbourg in France. In the overcrowded and uncomfortable conditions, men were doing their best to relax after an evening meal. Many were curled up in hammocks or using tables as improvised beds. Just five miles from France, the Leopoldville was spotted in the darkness by German U-boat U-486. At 5:55 P.M., undetected by the escorting destroyers, Oberleutnant Gerhard Meyer, commander of U-486, launched torpedoes from his submarine at the Leopoldville. One of the torpedoes hit the ship on the starboard side and ripped a gaping hole below the water line. Bitter cold seawater poured into the troop compartments causing chaos and panic, but it was soon announced that the ship was not sinking and no effort was made to abandon ship. Then, at some time after 8:00 P.M., two large explosions were heard from the bowels of the vessel and she immediately began to descend into the water.

Confused and distressed, men jumped into the rough sea and struggled to stay afloat against the weight of their equipment. Approximately 515 troops went down with the ship. Another 248 died from injuries, drowning or hypothermia (Staff-Sergeant Howard DeMartini, a minor league pitcher, was also aboard the Leopoldville and lost his life, as did Gilbert Carrell, a semi-pro player from Wichita, Kansas. Harvey Riebe, who had caught 11 games for the Detroit Tigers in 1942, spent 45 minutes in the icy water before being fished out by an English rescue boat).

Berry was among those lost that evening. After the torpedo struck, he remained in his compartment and assisted in evacuating the wounded. He then descended into the hold of the ship to aid other men who were trapped. It was the last time he was seen alive.

The sinking of the Leopoldville resulted in the worst loss an American infantry division suffered from a U-boat attack during the war. Allied authorities, afraid of what the news would do for morale, buried the case. News that Berry was missing was received by his family in January 1945, but the circumstances remained a secret for many years. His mother, Metta Berry, who passed away in 1976, never learned how

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her son died, and documents about the incident remained classified until 1996.

Leonard "Link" Berry is buried at Bowman Cemetery. On November 21, 2004, a memorial service in honor of the 15 South Carolina soldiers that died on the Leopoldville was held at the Bowman Southern Methodist Church. The service concluded with the placing of a wreath on Berry's grave.

Berry's name can be found engraved on the Leopoldville Disaster Monument that was dedicated on November 7, 1997, at Fort Benning in Columbus, Georgia.

"Uncle Link's baseball legacy lives on within the Berry family," says Rhonda Berry, the wife of his nephew who was born four years after his death and is named for him. "My husband was a good high school player (pitcher) and our own son, Rhett Berry, is now playing Junior College baseball with the desire to continue playing as far as his talent will take him. Uncle Link is Rhett's "touch stone" and when he learned of his playing and his sacrifice for his country, he has inscribed Uncle Link's initials in every baseball cap he has worn since he started playing high school ball."

## 2. Gilbert D. Carrell

Gilbert D. Carrell, the son of Albert and Myrtle Carrell, was born in Wichita, Kansas in 1924. He attended Wichita North High School where he was a standout basketball player. He went on to play semi-pro baseball in Wichita before entering military service.

Carrell was assigned to Company F, 262nd Infantry Regiment of the 66th "Black Panther" Infantry Division, and sailed for England on November 15, 1944. On Christmas Eve 1944, along with Link Berry, Staff Sergeant Carrell boarded the SS Leopoldville. Carrell and Company F were quartered exactly where the torpedo hit at around 5:55 P.M.

The body of Gilbert Carrell was never found. He is remembered at the Tablets of the Missing at Normandy American Cemetery in Colleville-sur-Mer, France. He is also remembered at White Chapel Memorial Gardens in Wichita.

## 3. Howard W. DeMartini

Howard DeMartini was the third player killed aboard the SS Leopoldville on December 24, 1944. He was a member of the championship baseball and basketball teams at Closter High School in Northvale, New Jersey, and played semi-pro baseball with the Tappan Community nine. The stocky right-hander signed



with the Beatrice Blues of the Class D Nebraska State League in 1937, and finished the year with an unimpressive 3–5 won-loss record and 5.46 ERA, prompting a return to New Jersey to play semipro ball with teams around Bergen and Rockland County.

In late 1939, approaching his 25th birthday, DeMartini had a tryout with the New York Giants at the Polo Grounds, and was assigned to the Milford Giants of the Class D Eastern Shore League for 1940. He finished the year with a superb 16–6 won-loss record and a 2.74 ERA. Milford finished third in the league standings with a 72–52 record, but overcame the pennant-winning Dover Orioles in the first round of the playoffs to face the Salisbury Cardinals in the finals, where they were finally stopped, four games to two.

The New York Giants assigned DeMartini to the Salisbury Giants of the Class D North Carolina State League in 1941, where he continued to pitch well. He finished the season with a 17–7 won-loss record and his 2.31 ERA was among the best in the league. Salisbury finished second in the league standings and went on to beat the Mooresville Moors in the playoffs to clinch the league crown.

After winning 33 games in two seasons, DeMartini began the 1942 campaign with the Jersey City Giants of the Class AA International League. He made two brief appearances before being sent to the Jacksonville Tars of the Class B South Atlantic League, where he won five of his first six decisions. On June 29, DeMartini received little hitting support from his teammates and dropped a 2–0 decision to Ray Yochim of the Columbus Red Birds. It was to be his last professional game as he left immediately afterwards to be inducted into the Army at Newark, New Jersey, on July 1, 1942.

DeMartini, who was carried on the New York Giants' National Defense Service List when he entered military service, received basic training at Camp Lee, Virginia, and was then assigned to Holabird Ordnance Base, three miles from downtown Baltimore. Holabird was a repair center and supply depot for automotive parts in addition to being used for the test-driving of new Army vehicles. DeMartini had the opportunity to play basketball and baseball at Holabird throughout 1943. On April 8, he pitched a close game against the International League's Syracuse Chiefs, losing, 3–1, but held the Chiefs to six hits and scored Holabird's only run. On May 2, he pitched a 5–0 shutout over the Hagerstown Owls of

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the Interstate League, allowing just two hits and striking out 10.

DeMartini was later assigned to Company F, 262nd Infantry Regiment of the 66th "Black Panther" Infantry Division, and sailed for England on November 15, 1944. Only 19 of 175 troops assigned to Company F survived the torpedo attack. The body of Howard DeMartini was never found.

In 1980, DeMartini was inducted into the Bergen County Baseball Hall of Fame. His sister, Mrs. Charlotte Nealy, proudly accepted the award on his behalf. His name can now be found engraved on the Leopoldville Disaster Monument that was dedicated on November 7, 1997, at Fort Benning, in Columbus, Georgia.

## 4. Charles "Chatty" Etherton, Jr.

Charles "Chatty" Etherton, Jr., was the son of the postmaster in Carbondale, Illinois, and a right-handed pitcher of local fame. He signed with the Mayfield Clothiers of the newly formed Class D Kitty League in 1936, and made one brief appearance before returning to Carbondale to play for the Bridge 4-H softball team that won the county championship.

Between 1938 and 1940, Etherton had brief trials with teams in the Arkansas-Missouri League, South Atlantic League, Kitty League, and Alabama State League, but it was following an outstanding season with the sandlot Red Wings of Murphysboro, Illinois, that he secured a regular place in organized baseball, joining the Zanesville Cubs of the Class C Middle-Atlantic League in 1941.

Etherton started in style for the Cubs with a 16-strikeout performance in a pre-season game against Muskingum College on April 24. "Etherton, who served a brief hitch with Troy in the Alabama State League last season, used a fast breaking curve and a fair fastball to bewilder all the Muskie batsmen," declared the local newspaper the following day. Etherton made 22 appearances with Zanesville for a 3-7 record and a 5.01 ERA. He finished out the year making seven appearances for the Lake Charles Skippers of the Class D Evangeline League. In 1942, Etherton joined the Winnipeg Maroons of the Class C Northern League, where he posted a 4-2 won-loss record, before entering military service on June 12.

Corporal Etherton served in the Pacific Theater with the 382nd AAA Auto-Weapons Battalion and returned home in late 1945. On December 23, he boarded a troop train at Camp Stoneman, California, bound for discharge at Jefferson Barracks, Missouri. Nobody knows what horrors the 26-year-old

faced on the battlefields of the Pacific, but other soldiers on the train said he was despondent. Four days after the train left California, Etherton locked himself in a wash room and cut his throat with a double-edged razor blade. His body was found when the train stopped at Jefferson City, Missouri, only a few hours from home.

Charles "Chatty" Etherton is buried at Oakland Cemetery in Carbondale, Illinois.

## 5. Troy L. Furr



Troy L. Furr, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Bill Furr, was born in Concord, North Carolina on July 11, 1923. An infielder, he was playing semi-pro baseball for the Carolina Weavers in the Carolina Victory League in 1943 and led the circuit in pitching and fielding. One of his teammates was 17-year-old Billy Goodman who went on to have a sixteen-year major

league career.

With ballplayers being called into military service at an alarming rate, Earl Mann, president of the Atlanta Crackers of the Class A1 Southern Association, signed Furr during the winter of 1943 in the hope he would be a useful infielder for the club's 1944 season.

Unfortunately, military service intervened before he could play a game as a professional, and Furr entered service with the Army at Fort Bragg, North Carolina on April 13, 1944. Following basic training he was sent to France where he served with Company M - a heavy weapons company - of the 275th Infantry Regiment, 70th "Trailblazers" Infantry Division. The division had landed at Marseille, France, in December 1944, and reached the front on December 28, near Bischweiler on the west bank of the Rhine River.

On January 3, 1945, while in combat as a machine gunner during the battle for the town of Philippsbourg in north-eastern France, Private First Class Furr was reported missing. It was later confirmed he had been killed in action that day.

Troy Furr is buried at Oakwood Cemetery in Concord, North Carolina.



## 6. Alan S. Grant



Alan S. Grant grew up just a couple of miles from Wrigley Field. He attended Lake View High School in Chicago where he excelled as a pitcher and enrolled at the University of Illinois in the fall of 1937. The stocky young hurler with the permanent smile on his face hurtled for the varsity team for three years, playing alongside future major leaguers Hoot

Evers and Boyd Bartley. In 1941, his senior year, Grant was team captain and opened Illinois' spring training tour by keeping Louisiana State University hitless for the first five innings of a 7-2 win on March 31. To open the Big Ten campaign on April 11, he was beaten by Indiana, 2-1, despite allowing only three hits, but defeated Wisconsin, 5-0, the following week, prompting Wisconsin coach Art Mansfield to say that Grant, "had as fine control as any college pitcher he had seen in some time."

Grant's 3-2 victory over Michigan on May 9 was the highlight of his season. He held the Wolverines to four singles in handing them their first defeat of the year. In his last outing of the campaign on May 16, Grant beat Ohio State, 8-3, allowing the Buckeyes six hits. His five wins for the year tied him for first place among Big Ten pitchers.

Grant graduated from Illinois' college of liberal arts in June 1941, and signed with the Chicago Cubs' organization, being assigned to their Class D South Atlantic League team at Macon. When the Macon Peaches set out on their new team bus for Greenville, South Carolina, on June 18, 1941, Grant was on board to begin his only summer of professional baseball. The Peaches were managed by Milt Stock, who had a 13-year National League career as an infielder; Grant's teammates included Frank Marino, a 5-foot-9 righthander who finished the year with a 19-1 record, and shortstop Eddie Stanky, who would join the Cubs in 1943 and remain in the major leagues until 1953. Grant made just nine appearances during the season for an 0-1 record but the Peaches were never out of contention for the Sally League title and finished in first place with a 90-50 record. They beat Columbus in four games to clinch the first round of the playoffs, then lost to the Columbia Reds in the final playoff round. On September 16, game three of the playoffs against Columbia, Grant appeared in his last professional game, making a relief appearance in the Peaches 8-2 loss.

On January 24, 1942, Grant married his college sweetheart, Mary Lois Daum, and three days later he entered military service with the Army Air Force, beginning training as an aviation cadet at Grider Field, Pine Bluff, Arkansas. At Kelly Field, near San Antonio, Texas, on November 5, 1942, he earned his bombardier's silver wings and a commission as a second lieutenant. He was then assigned to San Angelo Army Air Field, Texas, as an instructor. Being a bombardier was a complex job. He needed not only math skills that approached those of the navigator in addition to an understanding of complex laws of physics, but also motor skills more delicate than those required of the pilot. Grant needed to master complex principles of physics and mathematics, including the laws of falling bodies and of motion, and concepts of air resistance and air movement.

Grant was later assigned to the 19th Bomb Group at Pyote Army Air Field, Texas, where he was involved in training bombardiers to use the Norden bombsight fitted in the Boeing B-17 Flying Fortresses - the four-engine bomber being used by the Eighth Air Force in Europe. Perhaps his time with B-17s gave Grant a desire for combat because he put in a request for overseas duty and in October 1943 he was assigned to the 334th Bomb Squadron, 95th Bomb Group in England. Based at Horham Airfield in Suffolk, the 95th Bomb Group, attached to the Eighth Air Force, flew daytime bombing missions to hit targets in France and Germany. Flying in extreme conditions, crews had to endure excessive cold temperatures and constant use of oxygen, while suffering the ever-present danger of anti-aircraft fire and enemy fighter planes. Grant was lead bombardier for the 334th Bomb Squadron, and he had to be confident and resourceful, taking responsibility for the success of missions as all planes dropped their bombs on the word of the lead bombardier, not from each bombardier in each plane.

Three months after arriving in England, Grant had completed his 25-mission tour of duty and was ready to go home to his wife, who was employed in the University of Illinois Alumni Association office. On December 29, 1943, Grant was one of 20 airmen who boarded a B-17F nicknamed "Ruthless" (42-5791) for the first leg of their journey home. It was just after one o'clock in the afternoon and the skies were clear although it was bitter cold. First Lieutenant Alden R. Witt was at the controls that morning, warming up the four Wright Cyclone engines. He was a highly experienced pilot with almost 400 hours on the B-17. This ferrying flight would be a piece of cake and would take a little under two hours to cover the 300 miles to Woodvale, a Royal Air Force station near Southport. Witt would fly west from Horham

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to northern Wales, out over the Irish Sea then north to Woodvale.

Just before take-off, Corporal Andrew Mullavey came running over to the plane. He had just obtained permission to fly home and barely made it before Witt taxied the bomber to the runway.

The first part of the flight was uneventful but as they approached Wales the weather deteriorated. Heavy clouds, icy conditions and thick fog cut visibility down to 100 yards and Witt relied on his navigator to track their location. Estimating they had reached the coast, the navigator instructed Witt to begin his descent. In fact, they were still four miles from the coast, and as the plane emerged out of the fog at around 2:45 P.M., Cwm Dyserth Mountain appeared before them. The collision was violent. Two loud explosions were heard and the bomber crashed in a valley just 25 miles from its destination. All 21 aboard the plane perished in the burning wreck.

Evan Jones was walking along a nearby road at the time of the crash. Because of the dense fog he was unable to see the plane but heard the mighty roar of its engines and the deafening explosions. "[I] went across a field to the plane which was afire," he said at the time. "Here I was joined by another man and the two of us tried to render assistance but it was impossible to do anything."

It was seven days before Mary Lois, at the family home in Champaign, Illinois, received the devastating news of her husband's death. His loss sent shockwaves through the community and, in particular, among his friends and the faculty at the university.

"You get to know these fellows pretty well in four years of baseball," Walter Roettger, his coach at Illinois, told a reporter shortly after receiving news of the ballplayer's death.

"They don't come any better than Al. I don't know when anything has hit me so hard. News like that drives this whole war home to you."

Alan Grant was buried at Cambridge Military Cemetery in England. On January 30, 1944, memorial services were held at Lake View Presbyterian Church in Chicago - the same church where he and Mary Lois had married two years before.

## 7. William F. Hansen

William F. Hansen - son of Fred and Caroline Hansen, and a native of Chicago's West side - signed with the Greenville Lions of the Class D Alabama State League in 1941, and was batting .339 with seven



home runs in 55 games with the last place club, when he was assigned to the Fort Pierce Bombers of the Class D Florida East Coast League. The Bombers were vying for a position in the league playoffs and Hansen, an outfielder, batted .276 in 53 games to help them finish in third place. Unfortunately, the Bombers were defeated in the first round of the playoffs

by the Miami Beach Flamingos.

In 1942, Hansen batted an eye-catching .393 after 16 games with the Bombers, and joined the Statesville Owls of the Class D North Carolina State League. His stay there, however, was short-lived and he spent the majority of the season with the Green Bay Bluejays of the Class D Wisconsin State League. Hansen batted .310 in 88 games and led the team with 72 walks and 17 stolen bases. The Bluejays finished just one-half game behind the pennant-winning Sheboygan Indians, and beat the Appleton Papermakers, three games to two, in the first round of the playoffs, before being defeated by Sheboygan in the finals.

Hansen's contract was purchased by the Milwaukee Brewers of the Class AA American Association at the end of the season, and a bright future seemed to be ahead for the 22-year-old, but he was inducted into the Army on September 3, 1942. Sergeant Hansen served with HQ Company, 311th Infantry Regiment, 78th Infantry Division in Europe. On December 17, 1944, having been overseas for just one month, he died of wounds received in combat in Belgium during the Battle of the Hurtgen Forest.

In December 1947, Hansen's body was returned to Chicago. Following services at the Moeller and Halleman Chapel he was buried at the Waldheim Cemetery (now known as the Forest Home Cemetery).

## 8. Bernard T. Healey

Bernard T. Healey, the son of Damil and Mable Healey, was born in Omaha, Nebraska in 1921. He attended Creighton Prep and played centerfield for the Omaha McDevitts American Legion team that made it to the national semi-finals in 1937. The following year he won the Omaha American Legion batting title with a .431 average. The Omaha World-Herald called Healey a, "Babe Ruth type hitter, a game wrecker."

Healey went on to play baseball and football at Creighton University for two years before enlisting as

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as an aviation cadet with the Army Air Corps at Fort Crook, Nebraska in November 1941.

Healey trained as a bomber pilot and received his wings and commission as a second lieutenant in 1942. He was assigned to the 423rd Bomb Squadron of the 306th Bomb Group at Wendover Field, Utah. In August 1942, the 306th BG left Utah for Westover Field, Massachusetts and then on to Thurleigh airfield in Norfolk, England.

On December 30, 1942, Second Lieutenant Healey was co-pilot to Captain John B. Brady aboard a Boeing B-17F Flying Fortress. The target that day was the Keroman Naval U-boat base at Lorient, France. A number of B-17s had to abort early due to a variety of problems and when those still in formation numbered less than the required amount, the group returned to Thurleigh before reaching the French coast. Captain Brady, however, who left later than the rest of the group and was catching up, joined formation with the B-17s of the 305th Bomb Group. On the way back, as the group approached the tip of the Brest Peninsula, German fighters attacked. Brady's B-17 was set on fire and all crew members safely bailed out but the German fighter planes then turned their attention to the descending parachutes. Bernard Healey, together with Captain Brady and six other crew members died that day.

Healey's body was never recovered. He is memorialized at the Cambridge American Cemetery in England and the Holy Sepulchre Cemetery in Omaha, Nebraska.

## 9. Ernest J. Holbrook



Ernest J. Holbrook was a star athlete in basketball and baseball at Long Beach Polytechnic High School. He enrolled at the University of Southern California in 1932, and was a high-scoring forward on the first undefeated USC freshman basketball team, before starring for the varsity

team for three years. In March 1935, Holbrook was the hero of the Pacific Coast Conference play-off series against Oregon State, looping his only field goal of the game in the last 30 seconds to give the Trojans a 32–31 win. As a rangy first baseman with the Trojans, he batted over .300 each season, and helped coach Sam Berry clinch the championship in 1935.

On May 6, 1935, amid much publicity, Holbrook travelled to Cleveland for a tryout with the visiting Boston Red Sox. He signed a professional contract the fol-

lowing week and joined the Charlotte Hornets of the Class B Piedmont League, where he batted .284 with 70 RBIs in 125 games. In 1936, the Charlotte Hornets left the Piedmont League and joined the independent Carolina League, so Boston began a working agreement with the replacement team, Rocky Mount, and great things were expected of Holbrook. However, his batting average nose-dived to .214 in 50 games, and on June 17, he was assigned to the Canton Terriers of the Class C Mid-Atlantic League, where he was used sparingly before the season was over.

Holbrook retired from baseball after the 1936 season and returned to California, where he coached basketball at George Washington High School. He took over coaching duties of the court team at USC in 1943–1944, and led the team to a 31–17 record to clinch the Pacific Coast Conference's Southern Division title.

On January 17, 1944, and after being rejected on three previous occasions, Holbrook relinquished his coaching position to enter military service with the Army. As a replacement infantryman, he left his wife Melva, and young son Ronnie, at home in Hermosa Beach, California, and served with the 109th Infantry Regiment of the 28th "Keystone" Infantry Division in Europe. On December 16, 1944, snow, ground fog and freezing weather engulfed the Ardennes in Luxembourg, where Private Holbrook was stationed.

An early morning enemy artillery and mortar barrage ripped into the division's line as the Fifth Panzer Army launched an attack in what later became known as the Battle of the Bulge. Holbrook was reported missing in action that first day. It was later confirmed he had died during the opening salvos of the Ardennes offensive. He is buried at the Henri-Chapelle American Cemetery in Belgium.

"Ernie was a fighter, but at all times a sportsman," reported the Los Angeles Times, after his death was announced. "He played to win—he hated to lose, no matter how small the stake—yet he never belittled the opposition. His spirit was contagious."

The University of Southern California annually presents the Ernie Holbrook Memorial Award to the school's most inspirational basketball player.

## 10. Felix A. Little

Felix A. Little, the son of Charles and Alice, was from Catawba, North Carolina, and attended Lenoir-Rhyne College in Hickory, where he played basketball and baseball for four years. Little was a pitcher and in his freshman year (1936), he was 1–1 in five

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appearances for the Mountain Bears with a 2.03 ERA. The following year he was 2-5 and struck out 50 in 50 innings. Little was the mainstay of the pitching staff in 1938, winning four games against three losses for a 1.80 ERA. In his senior year, Little served as varsity baseball captain. He hurled a 15-0 two-hitter against Elon College on April 19, 1939, and helped the Mountain Bears to the North State Conference title.

In April 1939, the Hickory Rebels, formerly of the independent Carolina League, and now an entry in the newly formed Class D Tar Heel League, were looking for players. Little, together with pitcher/outfielder Ed Tuttle and catcher Clyde McSwain, had successful tryouts, and the right-hander made a handful of appearances as a relief pitcher.

In 1940, he joined the Newton-Conover Twins of the same league and was 4-7 in 16 appearances with a 5.27 ERA. His career as a professional baseball player ended after the 1940 season, and Little accepted a position as a teacher and athletic coach at Balls Creek High School in Newton, North Carolina.

Little entered military service with the Navy in 1941, and graduated as a bomber pilot at Jacksonville Naval Air Station in Florida. Lieutenant Little served with Patrol Bombing Squadron VPB-134 flying Lockheed PV-1 Ventura twin-engine bombers, and in January 1944, the squadron relocated to Brazil, South America. The northern coast of Brazil provided ideal locations to cover the vital South Atlantic shipping routes and the squadron was initially stationed at Ibura Field in Recife, before moving to Pici Field at Fortaleza in April 1944.

On December 18, 1944, Little was among nine crew and passengers aboard a PV-1 being flown by Lieutenant Junior Grade Charles G. Wolfe. As the plane left the runway at Pici Field, the port engine exploded and the airplane crashed, killing all on board.

The crash resulted in a general squadron stand down while all planes were inspected. Several were found to have major deficiencies requiring several months to make them airworthy.

Little's brother Philip, a private with the 1st Armored Division in North Africa, had lost his life in action two years earlier. Felix Little's body was returned to the United States in April 1948, and now rests at the Catawba United Methodist Church Cemetery.

## 11. John E. Loehrke



John E. Loehrke was born at Mayville, Wisconsin on March 29, 1915. His father, John - who ran the Beaumont Hotel in Mayville - died the year after his son was born and Mrs Loehrke moved the family to Burnett. Seven years later they returned to Mayville.

Loehrke was an outstanding student and athlete at Mayville High School. He won the silver cup given by the Junior Association of Commerce for excellence in studies and outside activities. He graduated in 1932 and became a star end on the University of Wisconsin football team. Loehrke also pitched for the Mayville baseball team and played basketball on the city squad.

Loehrke joined the Army Air Corps in 1940. He completed his pilot training at Randolph Field and Kelly Field in Texas, and was commissioned as a lieutenant on December 20, 1940. On May 5, 1941, Second Lieutenant Loehrke began work as an instructor at Cochran Field near Macon, Georgia.

At the beginning of December 1941, Loehrke became squadron commander at Cochran Field, with 14 officer instructors and 50 cadets, mostly from the British Royal Air Force, under his command. His role was primarily administrative but still allowed him the opportunity to fly - something he loved to do.

On December 26, 1941, Second Lieutenant Loehrke was substituting for another instructor on a training flight with Royal Air Force cadet John K. Briers. Briers was from Derby, England and had 60 hours of flying in the primary course plus seven hours of instruction at Cochran. Loehrke had logged 900 hours of flying time.

They were practicing forced landings in a Vultee BT-13 Valiant when the engine gave out and the airplane crashed into a small field 13 miles from the airfield and burst into flames. John Loehrke and John Briers were both killed.

John Loehrke was Mayville's first casualty of WWII. His remains were returned to the town, and on December 31, 1941, funeral services were held at St. Paul's Lutheran church. The mayor of the city, Walter Schellpfeffer, issued a proclamation asking "that all business in this city be suspended between the hours of one and two o'clock ... and that each citizen of Mayville devote such hour towards honoring the de-

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ceased, Lieutenant John E. Loehrke." In attendance was his best friend from the service, Second Lieutenant Robert Martens of Clairmont, California. John Loehrke is buried in the Graceland Cemetery in Mayville.

John Briers is buried in the Annexe of Oakwood Cemetery in Montgomery, Alabama. "I have been told that the Loehrke family tended John's grave for many years and made regular trips to Oakwood," says Dave Briers, nephew of John Briers.

## 12. Grady G. Mabry

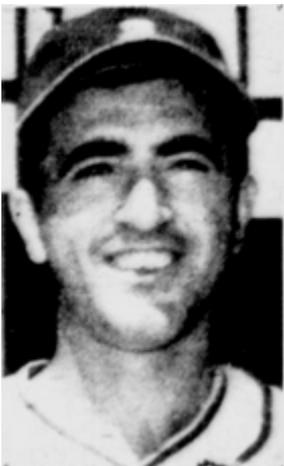
Grady G. Mabry was from Rome, Georgia. Probably employed at a local textile mill, Mabry played baseball with the Colored Lindale Dragons. While the Northwest Georgia Textile League thrived with all-white teams, black workers - with support from their employers - formed their own teams and a fierce rivalry existed between the mills.

Mabry was among the first men drafted in the area after Pearl Harbor in early 1942. A Private First-Class, Mabry died from wounds received when his unit ran into a German machine gun nest in Italy on December 26, 1944. He was the first African-American from Rome to be killed in World War II.

Mabry was originally buried at Callier Springs Cemetery until 1956, when his body was exhumed and placed at Shadyside Memorial Gardens, Rome, Georgia.

Grady Mabry American Legion Post 506 is named in his honor.

## 13. Henry "Marty" Martinez



Henry Martinez was born in Honolulu in the Hawaiian Islands, and his family moved to Mountain View, near San Jose, California, when he was 10 years old. Martinez was an athletic sensation in high school. A star on the baseball team, he was named All-Santa Clara Valley half back in football two successive years, he captained the basketball team for three years, and headed the track team for two years. In track, Martinez specialized in sprints and the broad jump, establishing a valley record of 21 feet 8 inches in the latter event.

In the spring of 1934, Martinez entered the University

of Southern California to play football, but two weeks later he quit because the football coach told him he would not be allowed to play baseball in the spring. Martinez returned to his Mountain View home and took a job in a San Jose department store. He played semi-pro baseball during 1934 and 1935 with the San Jose Bees and the San Mateo Blues in the State League and also played with the Mountain View Athletics. His aggressive, all-out nature on the playing field attracted much attention and during the winter of 1935, the young infielder signed a professional contract with the Oakland Oaks of the Class AA Pacific Coast League. He attended their spring training camp in Modesto and was assigned to the Vancouver Senior A League where he played for the Athletics and batted .309, leading the league in stolen bases and triples.<sup>3</sup> Martinez was back at spring training with the Oaks in 1937. This time he was assigned to the Des Moines Demons of the Class A Western League, where he hit 12 home runs and led the circuit with 119 games played, while finishing third in the league with 28 stolen bases despite batting only .216.

In the spring of 1938, Martinez gained a spot on the Oaks' roster as a utility infielder, but after eight games he was farmed out to the Spokane Hawks of the Class B Western International League. In 118 games with the Hawks, Martinez batted .262 and stole 29 bases, receiving honorable mention on the all-star team. He joined the Seattle Rainiers of the Pacific Coast League in 1939, appearing in 35 games and batting .282, before returning to Spokane for the remainder of the season and batting .270 in 78 games.

Martinez was All-Western International League after batting .315 for Spokane in 1940, scoring 130 runs, stealing a league-record 46 bases and collecting 15 triples in helping the team finish in first place. In 1941, he was All-Western International League again, hitting .339 (second best in the league), scoring 131 runs with 14 triples and 33 steals as the club again finished first. One of the most popular players ever to don a Spokane uniform, he was sold to the Portland Beavers of the Pacific Coast League by club owner Bill Ulrich for 1942. When the Beavers' regular third baseman, Marv Owen, was forced out of the opening game with a hand injury, Martinez filled in and saw regular action as a utility infielder. He played 85 games for the last-place club and batted .243 with 26 RBIs.

Martinez entered military service with the Navy at the end of the season and was stationed at Naval Air Station Pasco in Washington, where he also had the opportunity to play baseball. Serving in the Pacific as an Aviation Machinist's Mate Second Class, he

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lost his life on January 5, 1945, when he was swept off the deck of a Navy ship that was supporting the Philippines invasion. "Such news comes as a sad blow," said Owen, the Beavers' third baseman he had replaced in 1942. "Marty was a fine ball player, a real fellow and a splendid team man."

Martinez' body was never recovered and he is remembered at the Manila American Cemetery at Fort Bonifacio, in the Philippines.

## 14. Henry S. "Hank" Nowak



Henry S. "Hank" Nowak, like his older brother Edmund, was an outstanding baseball player who excelled as a pitcher at Emerson High School in Buffalo, New York. Following graduation in 1936, Hank went on to play in the local semi-pro Municipal League, while Edmund was pitching for the Albany Travelers of the Class D Georgia-Florida League. Hank signed with St. Louis Cardinals scout Charles "Pop" Kelchner in 1937, and joined his brother on

the pitching staff of the Travelers. Edmund was 5-7 for the year while 19-year-old Hank was the workhorse of the pitching staff with an 11-13 won-loss record, 4.19 earned run average and team-leading 134 strikeouts.

In 1938, Edmund joined the Kinston Eagles of the Coastal Plain League, while Hank remained on the Travelers' staff and had a career-year. He started impressively, handcuffing the St. Louis Cardinals batters for four innings in an exhibition game on April 6, and finished the regular season with a 20-11 record and 3.78 ERA. Nowak led the league in wins, innings pitched (243) and strikeouts (165). In 1939, he spent spring training along with Murry Dickson, Max Surkont and Ernie White, vying for a place on the Class A1 Texas League Houston Buffaloes roster, but was assigned to the Kilgore Boomers of the Class C East Texas League for the regular season. After posting a 7-2 record in 12 games along with a minuscule 1.17 ERA, he was recalled by Houston and celebrated his first start, June 13, with a four-hit, 3-2, victory over Dallas. He also proved he could turn his hand to relief work on August 8, by striking out eight batters over five innings in claiming another 3-2 win over Dallas. A week later, on August 16, he beat the Tulsa Oilers, 6-3, on four hits. Nowak finished the year with a 9-7 record and 3.93 ERA and was attracting attention from bigger clubs. In October 1939, the Los Angeles Angels of the Pacific Coast League attempted to claim him in

the Class AA draft but lost out because Houston had already given up a player in the major league draft.

Nowak remained with Houston for 1940 and got off to a flying start. He beat the Beaumont Exporters, 6-2, in an April 6 exhibition game, allowing just six hits, and claimed a regular season, 2-1, decision over Shreveport on May 11. He then pitched five innings of hitless ball against Fort Worth on May 20, only to lose the game, 2-0, but bounced back on May 24, with a four-hit, 4-0, shutout over Oklahoma City. On June 13, he held Beaumont to three hits with an 8-0 victory, and on July 21, he shutout Shreveport, 6-0, on three hits. On August 2, he hurled a 3-0 five-hitter over Dallas, and in his next start on August 8, he beat Fort Worth, 5-0, allowing three hits and striking out 11. Nowak finished the season with a 13-7 record and an excellent 2.72 ERA, and the Buffaloes went on to clinch the Texas League title in five games against Beaumont.

In January 1941, the Cardinals announced they had purchased four players from Houston. In addition to Nowak, they selected Howie Krist, Sam Nahem and Johnny Wyrostek. Nowak was among the most talked about rookies in camp during the spring of 1941, but the Cardinals pitching staff included Lon Warneke, Mort Cooper, Ernie White and Max Lanier. There simply was not a spot for the young rookie at the time and he was optioned to New Orleans of the Class A1 Southern Association in late March, which marked a reunion with his brother, Edmund, who was pitching for the Atlanta Crackers in the same league. Nowak made 46 appearances on the mound for the Pelicans which included 29 starts; he had a 13-16 won-loss record and 5.22 ERA. One of the most memorable games of the season was the much anticipated match-up between the Nowak brothers on May 18. The brothers wagered a new suit for the winner of the contest and it was Edmund who proved the victor, defeating his younger brother, 4-2.

Nowak was recalled by the Cardinals at the end of the season and was at spring training with the team at St. Petersburg, Florida, in the spring of 1942. But Nowak's climb towards a place on the Cardinals pitching staff came to an end on March 2, 1942 - the date he entered military service with the Army. Carried on the St. Louis Cardinals' National Defense Service List, Nowak entered service at Fort Niagara and was assigned to the special service section of the Quartermaster Replacement Training Center at Camp Lee, Petersburg, Virginia, where he was able to continue his pitching exploits with the Camp Lee Travelers. On August 2, 1942, Nowak faced Bob Feller's Norfolk Naval Training Station team. Feller beat the youngster, 4-2, but Nowak outdid the future Hall of Famer by striking out seven while Feller fanned

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five. The Travelers finished the season with 30 wins, 19 defeats and one tie.

Nowak remained at Camp Lee during 1943 and on April 2, 1944, he pitched for the Travelers against the Washington Senators at the University of Maryland's ballfield. Despite a great start, allowing just one hit over the first four innings, the Senators rallied in the fifth and when the game had to be halted due to rain after six innings, the Senators were on top, 8 to 4. The crowd of 2,700 was the largest seen at Maryland's field.

A month later, Sergeant Nowak transferred to the infantry training center at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, and began overseas duty in Europe in October 1944. On December 16, the Germans began their last major offensive of the war - an all-out push to split the Allied line in Belgium - the Battle of the Bulge. Allied forces lost more than 10,000 men during that freezing winter in the Ardennes. Hank Nowak was killed in action on New Year's Day 1945.

News of Nowak's death came as a terrible shock, and not least to the military personnel at Camp Lee, where he had been stationed for two years. In April 1945, Brigadier-General George A. Horkan, officially dedicated the camp's baseball field in honor of Nowak. Before a capacity crowd of 10,000- one of the largest crowds ever seen at a Camp Lee baseball game - the Camp Lee Travelers opened their 1945 season at Nowak Field with a 4-2 loss against the visiting Philadelphia Phillies.

"As commanding general of Camp Lee," said Horkan during the dedication, "I declare this field 'Nowak Field' in tribute to the life and death of Sergeant Henry Nowak. May it stand as an inspiration to all of us who serve here, and as a memorial to the soldier athletes of the Nation who on the athletic fields of America, in the corner lots and stadia, quietly molded the answer to the enemy's charge that America is a soft nation."

Attending the game in addition to many high-ranking army generals was Pop Kelchner, the scout who had signed Nowak back in 1937.

In November 1948, Nowak's body was returned to his mother, Victoria, in Buffalo, New York.

Recognizing the honor and selflessness of Hank Nowak, a group of veterans in Buffalo chartered an AMVETS post in his name on March 17, 1957 (Amvets Post #45), and more than 60 years after his death, Hank Nowak's name lives on as young Army pitchers continue to take to the mound in the shadow of their fallen comrade at Camp Lee's Nowak Field.

## 15. George C. Reeden (Von Reeden)

George C. Reeden (born George C. Von Reeden) was born on July 2, 1930 in Washington, DC. His father - Charles Von Reeden - was a professional boxer. George originally attended Eastern High School in Washington, DC, but transferred to Anacostia High School so he could play more baseball. The young third baseman signed with the Lexington A's of the Class D North Carolina State League in 1950, but made only a handful of appearances.

By September 1952, Reeden was a new cadet at Greenville Air Force Base, South Carolina. He later transferred to the 3626th Flying Training Group at Tyndall Air Force Base, near Panama City, Florida.

On December 11, 1953, Second Lieutenant Reeden was piloting a North American F-86D Sabre that had a faulty fire warning signal. He had been trained to turn the power off and did not eject but stayed with the jet as it crashed into Saint Andrew Bay, near the DuPont Bridge, about a mile northwest of Tyndall AFB. It was the third F-86D crash at Tyndall in as many months.

George Reeden was survived by his widow Valentina (Swierzynsky) Reeden, a daughter Kathleen Anne, and his parents, Charles and Ernestine, who were living in Wheaton, Maryland. Memorial services were held at Tyndall AFB on December 14, before burial took place at Arlington National Cemetery, Section 7, Site 10060.

## 16. George W. "Doc" Smith



Robert W. "Doc" Smith, son of Mr. and Mrs. Jesse Smith, was born in Thrall, Texas in 1918. A sport standout at Thrall High School, Smith was an all-district selection in basketball and entered the University of Texas in 1937. Playing third base and leading-off for the Longhorns, Smith was an offensive and defensive threat. "Doc Smith turned in two great plays at third base for the Longhorns to take defensive laurels in an otherwise loosely played game," reported the Galveston Daily News following a game against Rice in 1939. "He robbed Hiegel of an extra base wallop with a leaping catch of the little Rice pitcher's line drive in the fifth, and made a diving stop of Car-

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swell's hot grounder in the seventh to throw out Arthur at second while laying on the ground."

His Longhorn teammates included Mel Deutsch, who played for the Red Sox in 1946, and infielder Grady Hatton, who spent 12 years in the majors.

During the summers of 1938 to 1940, Smith also played with the Seven-Up Bottlers of Austin, one of Texas' strongest semi-pro clubs. They faced the best teams in the southwest and even played against the St. Louis Browns.

Smith graduated from Texas in 1941 and entered military service with the Army Air Force in November 1941. He trained as a bombardier and was commissioned a second lieutenant before being assigned to the 427th Bomb Squadron of the 303rd Bomb Group at Molesworth airfield in Cambridgeshire, England.

On January 3, 1943, 2/Lt. Smith was the bombardier aboard a Boeing B-17F Flying Fortress that was part of a mission to attack torpedo storage areas at St. Nazaire, France. Piloted by 1/Lt. William H. Goetz, the bomber was attacked by a German fighter plane as it approached the French coastline, causing it to explode in flight and crash into the Atlantic Ocean off the coast of St. Nazaire.

Smith, Goetz and the eight other crew members were all reported missing in action at the time. One year later their bodies had still not been recovered and all the crew were listed as killed in action.

A recipient of the Air Medal and Purple Heart, Doc Wilson is memorialized at the Brittany American Cemetery in St. James, France.

## 17. James A. "Aubrey" Stewart



James A. "Aubrey" Stewart was born in Piedmont, West Virginia in 1906, the son of James and Emma Stewart. His father was the first black employee at the local Westvaco Paper Mill and following high school Aubrey also went to work at the mill.

For more than two decades he also pitched semi-pro baseball

with the Piedmont Colored Giants, an all-black team that played against other local sides including the Moorefield Black Sox, Frostburg Colored Federals and Cumberland Hurricanes.

In 1942, despite being 36 years old, Stewart volunteered for military service. He was inducted by the U.S. Army in December and trained with the 333rd

Field Artillery Battalion - an all-black outfit - at Camp Gruber, Oklahoma. In January 1944, the Battalion left for Europe and landed at Utah Beach, Normandy on June 29.

By December, the Battalion was in the Ardennes area of Belgium and faced the full brunt of the German offensive that was launched on December 16 and was soon to be labelled the Battle of the Bulge.

Cut off from Allied forces on the second day of the battle, Stewart and ten other men from the Battalion walked 10 miles in deep snow and freezing conditions before reaching the apparent safety of a farmhouse in the tiny hamlet of Wereth. The farmhouse was owned by the mayor of Wereth, Mathias Langer, who gladly took them in and fed them. But someone in town - a Nazi sympathizer - tipped off the nearby German forces. An hour later a four-man SS patrol pulled up and the 11 black Americans were marched into a cow pasture where they were executed. For two months, the body of 37-year-old Aubrey Stewart and his comrades lay in the snow until villagers directed a unit of the U.S. 99th Infantry Division to the site. Army autopsies later showed signs of torture with broken bones and bayonet wounds inflicted upon the American soldiers. Years later, they became known as the Wereth 11.

In May 2004, a memorial was dedicated to the Wereth 11 on the site where the massacre took place and a sign now stands in Piedmont, West Virginia, honoring Aubrey Stewart.

James Aubrey Stewart is buried at the Henri-Chapelle American Cemetery in Belgium.

In 2011, the story of the Wereth 11 was made into a docudrama, directed by Robert Child and starring Ken Arnold.

## 18. Elmer J. Wachtler



Sandlot baseball in Omaha, Nebraska, during the 1930s was all about the Wachtler brothers. Elmer J. Wachtler was the third youngest of six children whose father died when they were young and it fell upon the eldest child, George, to help bring up the Wachtler clan with their mother Mary.

In 1937, Elmer and Eddie Wachtler were playing with the semi-pro West Point team. Elmer was a hard-hitting shortstop and pitcher, while Eddie played third base.

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By the early 1940s, the four Wachtler brothers were playing for the Storz Brewery-sponsored team in the Community League. In 1941, Storz was the league champions with George playing the outfield and leading the league in hitting with a .452 average. Eddie played third base, Elmer finished fifth in the league with a .339 batting average and an impressive 13-3 won-loss record from the mound, while Billy, the youngest and also an outfielder, finished second in the league with a .429 batting average.

Elmer also played with Tekamah in the Pioneer Night League, barnstorming all over Nebraska and Western Iowa and being closely watched by major league scouts. His greatest successes were wins over former Tigers pitcher Boots Poffenberger and Oad Swigart, who hurled for the Pirates in 1940. In October 1941, it was announced that Elmer had made a trip to St. Louis, at the request of Branch Rickey. Catcher Joe Garagiola rated the youngster's curveball as one of the best he had seen and Elmer returned home to Omaha with a contract from the Cardinals. "The 22-year-old fireballer refused to reveal terms," announced the Omaha World-Herald, "But it was believed he received about one thousand dollars." [1]

A month later, Elmer's younger brother Billy, 19, received a similar bonus to sign with St. Louis. At the end of spring training in 1942, Billy joined the Columbus Red Birds of the Class B South Atlantic League, while Elmer, at the insistence of Branch Rickey, returned home to Omaha to visit his wife Mary and their new born son, Jimmy, before joining the Houston Buffaloes of the Class A Texas League. "This pro baseball is swell so far," Wachtler declared in April 1942. "They have taught me a lot. I'm glad they are sending me to Houston, because I may be able to be a starter." [2]

Elmer and Billy found playing in the minors a little tougher than they had anticipated and they both spent the majority of the season playing with the Decatur Commodores of the Class B Three-I League. Billy batted .301 playing 90 games in centerfield, while Elmer finished with an 8-7 record in 21 appearances for a 3.25 ERA. It was a somewhat despondent Elmer who told Robert Phipps of the Omaha World-Herald in August 1942 that he was giving up professional baseball because he could not see himself climbing higher than Class AA. [3] But rejection by the military and a change of heart about the game saw Elmer with the Lynchburg Cardinals of the Class B Piedmont League in 1943. While Billy - who was on the National Defense List of the St. Louis Cardinals - was learning to be a soldier, Elmer was 6-12 with a 3.79 ERA for the fifth-place club. When Elmer Wachtler was finally accepted for military service in March 1944, he had been due to report to the Sacramento

Solons of the Pacific Coast League.

In the fall of 1944, Staff Sergeant Elmer Wachtler arrived in Europe as a replacement with the 134th Infantry Regiment of the 35th "Santa Fe" Infantry Division. Billy was also in Europe, a sergeant with the Army. During the Christmas holidays of 1944, the 35th Infantry Division slipped into Belgium and Luxembourg and, knee-deep in snow, attacked German divisions at Ardennes. On January 5, 1945, during the breakout at Bastogne, 26 year-old Staff Sergeant Elmer Wachtler was killed in action in the vicinity of Lutrebois in Luxembourg. Initially, his wife, Mary, was notified by the War Department that her husband was missing, but his death was confirmed in April 1945. Services were held at St. Cecilia's Church in Omaha that month. Elmer Wachtler was buried at the Henri Chapelle Cemetery in Belgium.

As for Billy Wachtler, he safely returned home to Omaha and was on the St. Louis Cardinals' spring training roster for 1946, but a shoulder injury he received in service ended his hopes of further pursuing a career in professional baseball. He retired after 13 games with the Columbus Red Birds of the Class AAA American Association.

## 19. Frederick J. Yeske



Frederick J. Yeske, the son of Carl and Madeline Yeske, first attracted attention as a pitcher at Canton High School in Connecticut, where he set a single-game strikeout record of 21. He was signed by the Hartford Bees of the Class A Eastern League in 1941, and optioned to the Goldsboro Goldbugs of the Class D Coastal Plain League. Yeske pitched 28 games for the Goldbugs for a 9-8 record and 3.58 ERA. In

1942, he was assigned to the Welch Miners of the Class C Mountain State League where he was 7-5 in 21 games. On September 5, 1942, Yeske entered military service with the Army and joined the 143rd Infantry Regiment of the 36th "Texas" Infantry Division.

The division landed in North Africa on April 13, 1943, and trained at Arzew and Rabat. It first saw action on September 9, 1943, participating in the first invasion of the European mainland, going ashore near Salerno, Italy. A fierce and bloody battle was fought in the face of German counterattacks, but the division advanced slowly. On December 1, 1943, Yeske found time to write a brief note of thanks to the Canton War Council. The council had sent gifts to all

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Canton servicemen. "Just a few lines to let you know that I received your Christmas gift and was very happy that the people back home take interest in the boys in the service," he wrote. Christmas was fast approaching and like the majority of troops on the front lines all over the world, he was thinking about getting home. "We all hope that peace will come soon and that everyone can enjoy a Christmas at home," he wrote.

On December 21, 1943, three weeks after writing home, Yeske was killed in action as the 143rd Infantry Regiment was attacking the Italian village of San Pietro. "[He] died single-handedly attacking an enemy position on a hill in Italy that was wreaking havoc with his unit," recalls his cousin Stephanie K. Moore.

Fred Yeske is buried at Calvary Cemetery in Collinsville, Connecticut.

## 20. John A.L. Zenor



John A.L. Zenor was born in Clay City, Indiana on July 20, 1887. As well as living in Indiana, he also lived in Illinois, and graduated from high school in Saguache, a small rural/agricultural community in the San Luis Valley in Colorado.

Zenor attended one year at Colorado University before enrolling at the US Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland. Zenor competed in baseball and football at Annapolis, as well as

being a member of the crew team.

He graduated in 1911, and later served as commander of the USS Monterey, a double-turreted monitor built in the 1880s. He then transferred to the USS Brooklyn (ACR-3), a cruiser that served as flagship for the Commander-in-Chief of the Asiatic Fleet.

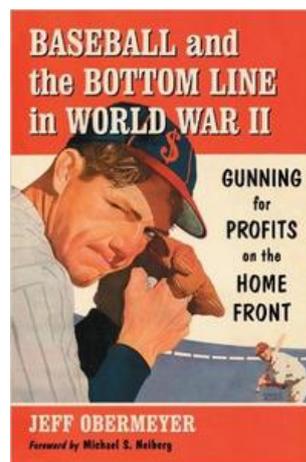
In October 1917, Zenor married the daughter of C.F. McWilliams, formerly the eastern representative of the Great Northern Steamship Company and later connected with the Osaka Shosen Kaisha (OSK) Line, based in Yokohama, Japan. The Zenors were a popular couple in and around Manila, where the Brooklyn was based.

On December 20, 1917, Lieutenant Zenor was supervising the loading of coal at Manila. A piece of hoisting apparatus gave way, and Lt. Zenor leapt for safety, falling through a hatch and fracturing his skull. He was rushed to Canacao Naval Hospital where he

died shortly after arrival.

# BIG LEAGUE CHEW SHREDED BUBBLEGUM

## More Festive Reading



### Baseball and the Bottom Line in World War II: Gunning for Profits on the Home Front

Jeff Obermeyer—McFarland (2013)

\$39.95

How did the business of professional baseball fare during World War II? The sport, like many nonessential industries, struggled to find its place in society during a time of war. The men who ran the game faced government interference and manpower shortages that threatened to shut down their businesses for the duration, and they had to balance the need to show a patriotic front to the public while at the same time protecting their investments. Archival and primary sources provide insight into the perceptions of the major league owners and an understanding of how most of them were able to keep their businesses profitable while the nation fought an enormous two-front war.

Remember to visit....

## Baseball's Greatest Sacrifice

A website dedicated to players who lost their lives in military service. Whether they were killed in action, died from wounds, illness or accident, detailed biographies of these men are included as part of the most comprehensive resource of its type on the Internet. There are currently 500 individual biographies available, dating from the Civil War era of the 1860s to the recent conflicts in Afghanistan.

[www.baseballsgreatestsacrifice.com](http://www.baseballsgreatestsacrifice.com)

(Part of Gary Bedingfield's Baseball in Wartime network)

# [www.baseballinwartime.com](http://www.baseballinwartime.com)

## 312th Labor Battalion "Clean-up Squad" Negro Baseball Team in France 1919

During the First World War, African-Americans were drafted on the same basis as whites and by the end of the war, over 350,000 had served in Allied Expeditionary Forces units on the Western Front. The units they served with were segregated and although some African-Americans saw combat, the vast majority worked in non-combatant roles as laborers, unloading ships, digging trenches, removing unexploded shells, clearing barbed wire and burying soldiers killed in action.

By 1919, with the war over and yet many Americans still in France, baseball became one of the main pastimes utilized to alleviate boredom. One unit of African-Americans, the 312th Labor Battalion, fielded a formidable team that earned the title of the "Clean-up Squad" for the way it dealt with all its diamond opponents. The 312th Labor Battalion was under the command of the Quartermaster Corps and based at Camp St. Sulpice in Gironde, France, where it helped load and unload ships docking at the port of Bordeaux.

Formed in January 1919, the 312th ball team challenged other teams throughout France—both black and white—playing their games on an independent basis as no league was organized for black teams. The 312th listed victories over the 9th Labor Company, Depot Labor Company, 516th Engineers, 333rd Labor Battalion, 346th Labor Battalion, 8th Depot Labor Company, 331st Labor Battalion, Pontenx Forestry and the 32nd Engineers. Although their actual won-loss record is unknown (one account claims they won their first 15 games), it can safely be said that they won far more than they lost.

Rank	Name	Position
Pvt.	Anderson, Charlie	P
Pvt.	Bassham, Babe	1B
Pvt.	Bynum, Calvin	C
Pvt.	Davis, Alpha L.	SS
Pvt.	Davis, Lawrence	3B
Cpl.	Freels, Sylvester J.	C
Cpl.	Glover, Edward	OF
Pvt.	Gurley, Earl C.	P/OF
Pvt.	Houston, Hubert	P
Pvt.	Jordon, Luther	LF
Pvt.	Morris, Harold	P
1st Sgt.	Scruggs, Otey M.	Mngr/P/OF
Pvt.	Watkins, John Jr.	2B
2/Lt.	Eastwood, W.F.	Athletic Officer

**ST. SULPICE HAS  
CRACK COLORED  
BASEBALL NINE**

**Team Composed of Former  
Professionals Wins  
Base Title**

### Charlie Anderson

Anderson, from Louisville, KY, was listed as the team's best pitcher. Before the war he'd played baseball in Kentucky, Texas, Georgia and Illinois.

### Babe Bassham

A first baseman from Nashville, TN, he played for the Nashville club in the negro Tennessee League and at Fisk University in the same city.

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## Calvin Bynum

A catcher from Madison, GA, he played in the negro Atlanta League and with the Madison White Sox of the Monroe League.

## Alpha L. Davis

Davis was a shortstop who played with Waco in the Texas Colored League before the war.

## Lawrence Davis

Lawrence Davis was a third baseman who played baseball at Indianapolis Technical Institute and with the Eastern Black Sox of the same city.

## Sylvester J. Freels

Catcher, Sylvester Freels, was born in St. Joseph, MO, in 1899, and played baseball at Bartlett High School and with the St. Joseph Giants. His son, Sylvester J. Freels, Jr., who served with the Engineers in WWII died in military service in 1945. Freels, Sr., passed away in 1970.

## Edward Glover

Glover was an outfielder who played in the Lelan (Colored) League of Rosedale, MS, and with the Tallahassee Giants.

## Earl C. Gurley

Gurley was a pitcher/outfielder with Howard High School in Chattanooga, TN, before the war. He later played professional baseball with the Negro National League St. Louis Stars (league champs in 1926 and 1927) and the Memphis Red Sox.

## Hubert Houston

Houston was a pitcher who played with the Houston White Sox before the war.

## Luther Jordon

A leftfielder from Kansas City, MO, Jordon played baseball at Chase High School in that city and also with Carlton and the Mitchell Sluggers in Kansas.

## Harold Morris

Morris was a pitcher and, like Luther Jordon, played with Carlton and the Mitchell Sluggers in Kansas. He possibly pitched for the Kansas City Monarchs in 1924.

## Otey M. Scruggs

Scruggs was the manager, coach, pitcher and outfielder with the 312th. Before the war he played baseball with the Piedmont Athletic Club in Roanoke, VA, with the 24th Infantry Regiment in Manila, Philippines, and the Oakland Club of the Vallejo Valley Association in California. He passed away in California in 1951. His son, Otey M. Scruggs, Jr., who graduated from the University of California at Santa Barba-

ra in 1951, and received his Ph.D. from Harvard University, was a well-known athlete who tried out for the Olympics in the decathlon in 1952. He taught history at Syracuse University until his retirement in 1995. Professor Scruggs passed away in February 2014.

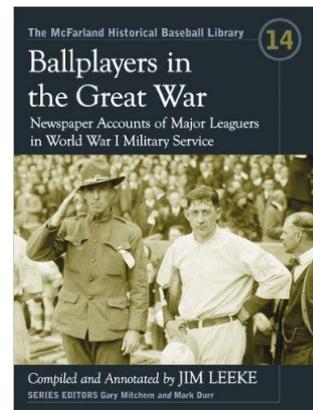
## John Watkins, Jr.

Watkins was a second baseman from Sumter, SC.

## W.F. Eastwood

Lieutenant Eastwood was the battalion's athletic officer and responsible for organizing the team's games.

## More Festive Reading

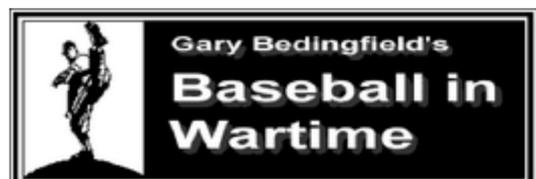


### Ballplayers in the Great War: Newspaper Accounts of Major Leaguers in World War I Military Service

Jim Leeke—McFarland (2013)

ISBN: 0786475463—\$33.00

This volume presents carefully selected, and annotated, articles about major-leaguers serving at home and overseas in the U.S. armed forces during World War I. Some continued to play ball in the military. Others fought the Germans in the trenches, in the air and at sea. Several lost their lives in combat or to disease. A few became heroes. From future Hall of Famers to journeymen and unknowns, each did his duty.



# Baseball in Wartime Newsletter



## BASEBALL GOES TO WAR JULY 2016

As you know, baseball was an integral part of the war effort both on the Home Front and on the battlefield. Over 400 Major Leaguers and nearly 4,500 Minor Leaguers served in the US military in WWII. While books have been written, panels conducted, and a few specials on TV mention this service, many baseball fans have yet to experience exactly where these actions of sacrifice took place. Now there is an opportunity to see first-hand where players fought, served, and died on the fields of Europe with both military historians and baseball historians. The famed Stephen Ambrose Tours is conducting a one time "Baseball at War" tour which combines both the military history and the "National Pastime" from London to Hitler's Eagle's Nest. As you know, Dr. Stephen E. Ambrose was the exceptional author who made WWII and the regular GIs come alive in his many books, and the shows he advised for such as "Saving Private Ryan" and "Band of Brothers."

If you wish to learn more about this July 2016 adventure visit:  
<http://stephenambrosetours.com/tour/wwii-baseball-tour/>  
Sincerely,  
Todd Anton, Bill Nowlin, and Gary Bedingfield

1-888-903-3329

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Hall of Fame pitcher,  
Warren Spahn,  
fought in The Battle  
of the Bulge.

## BASEBALL GOES TO WAR

**\$5,290 per person**  
based on double occupancy  
**\$900 single supplement**  
**\$300 deposit required for this tour**  
A minimum number of participants  
are required for tour to run.

### Tour Includes:

- Full-time historian and logistical escorts
- Educational road book full of maps and historical information
- Three- and four-star accommodations
- Rooms with private bath or shower, hotel taxes, portage and service charges
- Touring by private, first-class, air-conditioned motorcoach
- Breakfast daily, 14 dinners and a Welcome Reception
- Channel crossing to Normandy via ferry
- High-speed train from Paris to Brussels
- All entrance fees to museums and attractions

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