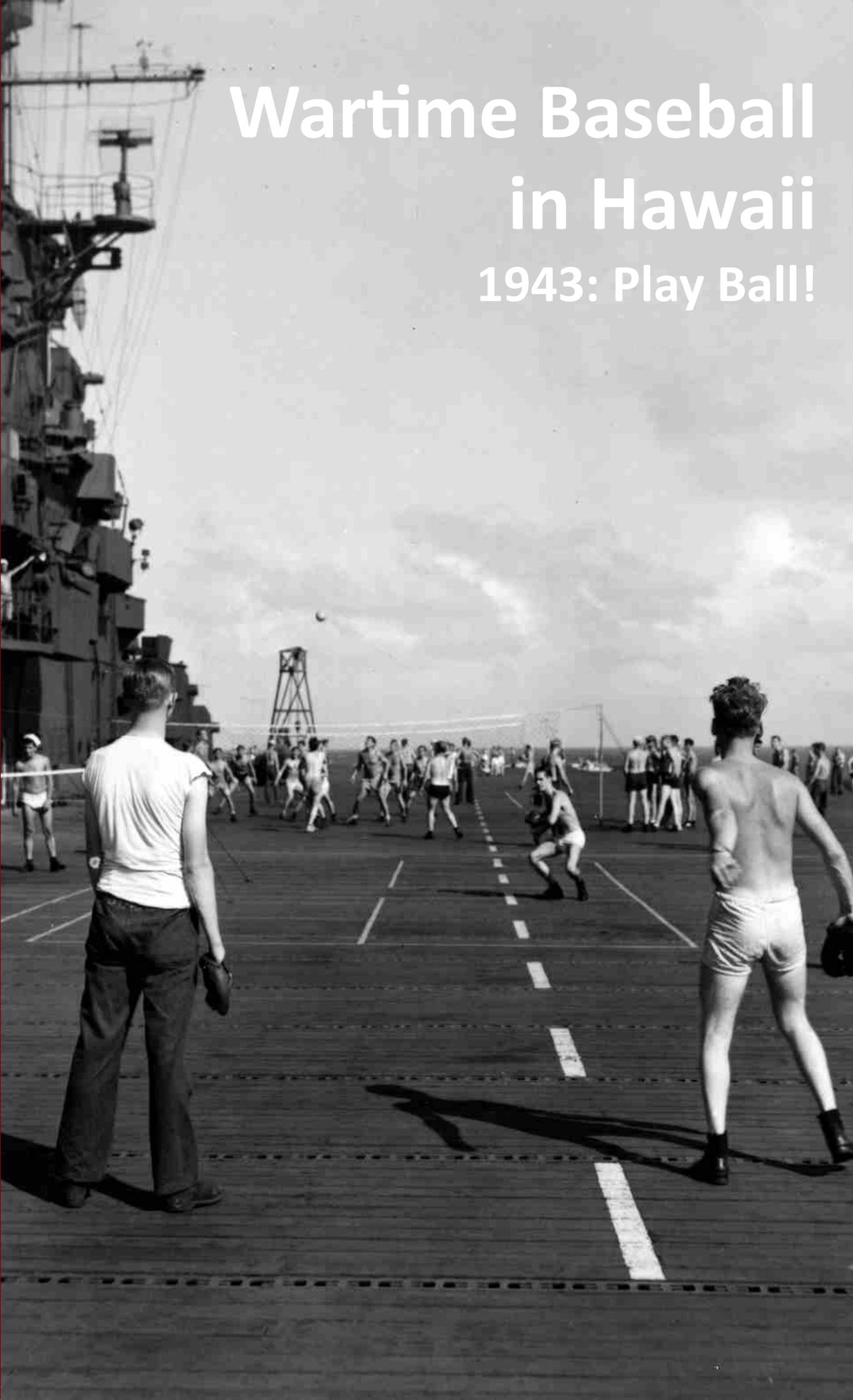


Wartime Baseball in Hawaii 1943: Play Ball!



Baseball in Wartime Newsletter Vol. 12 No. 52 August 2020

Wartime Baseball in Hawaii

“As a young officer in a combat unit, and as a human being who realizes and appreciates the great value of the word ‘morale,’ as applied to the men in our armed forces who are scattered throughout the remote sections of the world, I shall ‘stick my neck out’ and offer to my fellow Americans my opinions concerning the great value, as a morale builder, that our national pastime of baseball has on our fighting young men.

“Baseball is like a tonic to our boys. Many of them would rather play ball, or listen to a good baseball game, than eat. Last year, when the Yankees and Cardinals were playing in the World’s Series, we were in battle positions in the jungles. By short wave radio, we managed to hear the first game of the Series through a world of static. Just imagine the joy of all these fighting men everywhere – in the fox holes, dugouts, tanks, on ships, in planes and all the other techniques of war – gluing their ears to their radio to follow a play-by-play, first-hand description of a World’s Series game! What genuine interest we show in baseball – and why not, for the game is the ‘cleanest most scientific in existence.’

“I am speaking from experience in real life, the greatest teacher in existence, when I say that baseball is one of the greatest morale builders in existence in our armed forces today. By genuine morale, I mean exactly this: ‘A soldier is WILLING to fight and die, if necessary, for his country without hesitation!’ And if the soldier’s morale is sky-high, nothing will stop us!

“One only has to be in the enlisted man’s ranks for as long a time as I have to appreciate his trials and tribulations. In the combat outfits, many times when the situation permitted, the men would ‘toss the apple around,’ discuss baseball, and how they know their baseball!

“Such incidents are only a few that happen countlessly wherever our fighting men may be. It is great to be here in the United States, where we can go to the

baseball games in person. I was thinking of all the overseas fighters and how much they would give to be sitting with me recently, when I saw the Yanks beat the Senators, 1 to 0, and the Reds trounce the Cards at St. Louis, 7 to 3, behind Bucky Walters!

“We all know the effect that baseball has on the civilian population, so nothing else need be added. But, I am speaking for all my buddies, whom I expect to join again soon ‘over there,’ when I say: ‘Let us spread the principles of this great game now more than ever before in its history, for now, more than ever before, we need this incomparable method of satisfying the urge of the American fighting forces for clean, scientific, wholesome, interesting and morale-building form of recreation.

“Let us make more baseball recording of games and send them ‘over there’; let us make baseball pictures; let us send multitudes of baseball publications overseas; let us all, regardless of whether we are civilians or service men, support the game as never before!

“In conclusion, let me state that nothing is more important to us, at the present time, than to destroy the enemy completely and forever! In order to do so, our boys must be kept in the highest mental state of mind possible and our national pastime will prove, in years to come, that it had a vital part in the successful conclusion of the world’s greatest conflict – World War II.”

*Lieutenant Johann Stawinski
The Sporting News, 1943 [abridged]*

Gary Bedingfield

Don’t forget to visit my websites!

www.baseballinwartime.com

www.baseballsgreatestsacrifice.com

Wartime Baseball in Hawaii

1943: Play Ball!

The first real year of change for baseball in World War II was 1943. At the beginning of the year, 195 major league players were in military service, and the number of minor leagues in operation had dropped from 31 the previous year (of which 26 completed the season) to just 10. Spring training looked like nothing ever seen before as Judge Landis - at the request of the Office of Defense Transportation - ordered the 16 major league teams to conduct their spring training north of the Mason-Dixon Line. Major leaguers battled freezing temperatures, rain and snow as they limbered up in resorts like Bear Mountain, New York, and French Lick, Indiana. It was also the inaugural year of the All-American Girls Softball League. The brainchild of Philip K. Wrigley, the league was set up in order to maintain baseball in the public eye while the majority of able men were away. "Baseball" soon replaced "Softball" in the league's name and more than 176,000 fans came out to watch the four teams (Racine Belles, South Bend Blue Sox, Kenosha Comets and Rockford Peaches) during their first season.

On January 30, 1943, 53-year-old Hank Gowdy - the only person on a major league roster to serve in both world wars - reported for duty at Fort Benning, Georgia. The Reds bullpen coach, who had played 17 seasons as a catcher for the New York Giants and Boston Braves, had been the first of 247 major league players to enter service during World War I. He saw action on the Western Front in Europe with the 42nd Infantry Division and returned home a war hero. In 1943, Gowdy was commissioned a major in the Army and became chief athletic officer at Fort Benning, Georgia, where the ballfield was appropriately known as "Hank Gowdy Field."

On February 17, Joe DiMaggio traded his \$43,750 salary with the Yankees for \$50 a month as an Army enlisted man. "He is built for the soldier," wrote Dan Daniel. "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."

In the Pacific Theater during February 1943, American forces cleared the Japanese from Guadalcanal, and March brought a second victory in the form of the Battle of the Bismarck Sea - a crucial turning point in Japan's expansion plans. On February 28, a convoy of eight Japanese troop transports and eight escort destroyers had departed from Rabaul, New Britain, bound for Lae on the eastern coast of New Guinea (now Papua New Guinea). The convoy was transporting nearly 7,000 troops that would reinforce the island and almost certainly mean that New Guinea would be lost. The convoy was spotted by an Allied reconnaissance plane and attacked by bombers between March 2 and March 4. All eight transports were sunk, along with four of the destroyers. Only 800 Japanese troops made it to Lae, with around 3,000

killed. General Douglas MacArthur stated that "this magnificent victory cannot fail to go down in history as one of the most complete and annihilating combats of all time."

In Hawaii in 1943, unlike 1942, baseball was everywhere. The Honolulu League launched its season on January 31. The eighteen-team line-up – a blend of civilian and military teams - included Fort Armstrong, Fort Shafter, Fort Hase, the Signal Corps, Wheeler Field Hawks, the Hawaiian Air Depot (HAD) at Hickam Field and Aiea Naval Hospital. Opening day ceremonies at Honolulu Stadium, included Boston Red Sox manager, Joe Cronin, taking a few cuts at the pitching of acting Governor of Hawaii Ernest K. Kai, with Mayor of Honolulu Lester Petrie serving as umpire. Cronin was touring Hawaii-based military camps talking baseball to the troops before the Red Sox prepared for spring training, which, was being held at the unfamiliar and rather chilly surroundings of Tufts University in Medford, Massachusetts.

BASEBALL

**HONOLULU BASEBALL LEAGUE
DOUBLEHEADERS**

SAT. 1 p.m.—Aiea vs. Hawks
3 p.m.—Nalo vs. Volunteers

SUN. 1 p.m.—Contractors vs. H.A.D.
3 p.m.—Ft. Hase vs. Police

ADMISSION PRICES

Reserved	75c
Gen. Admission	55c
(Grandstand Unreserved)	
Bleachers	30c

(All prices include tax)

**SEATS ON SALE AT
HONOLULU STADIUM**

Attend all of the games of the Honolulu Baseball League—organized to give you real big-league baseball. Many of the players have played big-time baseball on the mainland.

DOUBLEHEADER EVERY SATURDAY AND SUNDAY

After six weeks of play in the Honolulu League, the 18 teams were reduced to just eight for the play-offs, which had been renamed the Cronin Championship Series in honor of the league's opening day guest. The military teams remaining in the play-offs were Fort Armstrong, Fort Shafter, HAD and Aiea Naval Hospital, joined by civilian teams Rainbows, Police, Volunteers and Kalihi. Fort Armstrong featured Max Molberg (who would play six years of minor league ball after the war) and former Brown Bombers Sonny Boy

Jeffries and Joe Sheppard. Fort Shafter's line-up included 12-year Army veteran Wally Cyr and Robert "Lefty" Haas (who had won over 50 games in the minors before the war). The Aiea Naval Hospital had Johnny Jeandron (whose minor league career had just started before military service and would last another eight years afterwards). On April 11, Fort Shafter beat Kalihi in a game that was dedicated to Shafter's Johnny Wilsman, the team's 23-year-old outstanding second baseman, who had lost a thumb in recent army maneuvers. Wilsman was from Philadelphia and the Phillies had shown interest in the young infielder in the late 1930s.

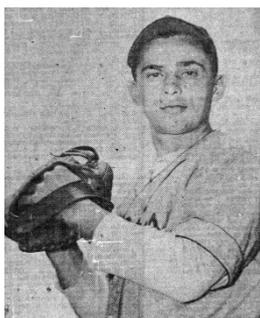
It all came down to the April 22nd contest – an all military affair - between Fort Shafter and the Aiea Naval Hospital Wildcats. Lefty Haas yielded four hits to the Navy team, even though three of them were triples, and held on to a 7-3 win at Honolulu Stadium to clinch the Cronin Series championship for the Fort Shafter team. "The Shafterites played great baseball throughout the tussle and were in the lead all the way after scoring two runs in the first inning," observed the Honolulu Advertiser.



The Fort Shafter team. Honolulu League champions in 1943. Back row, left to right: Captain Don Kimball (Coach), Bob "Lefty" Haas, Elmer Taylor, Robert Hanske, John Zeroth, Ardell McClellan, Wally Cyr and Sonny Peacock. Front row: Nick Krul, John Jurasits, Paul Morris (see page 11), Caesar Pesquesi, Cleo Perssey, Bob Bender and Al Jordan.

Top servicemen playing in the Honolulu League in 1943:

- 1B: Al Kisho (Ft. Shafter) – four-letter man at Mahanoy City, PA
- 2B: Johnny Wilsman (Ft Shafter) - lost a thumb in army maneuvers
- 3B: Max Molberg (Ft. Armstrong) - played six years of minor league ball after the war
- 3B: Johnny Jeandron (Aiea Naval Hospital) – played eight years in post-war minors
- SS: Cornel Kohlmyer (Ft. Hase) – three years in minors before the war
- RF: Andy Greecher (Ft. Armstrong)
- CF: Eddie Als (Ft. Hase) – minors in 1939
- LF: Wally Cyr (Ft. Shafter) – 12-year Army veteran
- C: John Jurasits (Ft. Shafter) – played semi-pro baseball with Bethlehem Steel
- P: Eddie Funk (Rainbows civilian team) – two years in minors before the war
- P: Sonny Jeffries (Ft. Armstrong) – with Negro League Homestead Grays
- P: Joe Shepherd (Ft. Armstrong) – Negro semi-pro
- P: Sil Skender (Ft. Hase) – minor leagues in late 1930s
- P: Tracy Hitchner (Signal Corps) – minors in mid-1930s
- P: Lefty Haas (Ft. Shafter) – won over 90 games in the minors before and after war
- P: Slim Markley (Aiea Naval Hospital)



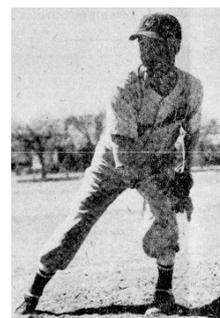
Eddie Funk



Wally Cyr



John Jurasits



Max Molberg

By the time the Honolulu League teams put away their uniforms, military baseball teams were in action on a scale never seen before in the Hawaiian Islands. "It begins to look like Schofield Barracks will launch a baseball season soon that for size will top anything ever undertaken at any Army post," the Honolulu Advertiser had announced in January. The Schofield Barracks League, consisting of three divisions (Ivy League, Trojan League and Columbia League) launched on March 14th with 23 teams playing 5pm games on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. But by that time the seven-team Col. F. F. Gallagher Coast Artillery Antiaircraft League season had already come to an end with the C Battery Algaroba Kings of Fort Weaver beating the H Battery AA Mongooses, 13-1, to clinch the championship. Sgt. Ed Bajek, team captain and pitcher, was voted Most Valuable Player. In October 1943, the Algaroba Kings also clinched Col. Albert G. Franklin's Antiaircraft Artillery Flak League title with a 7-1 win over the Mongoose nine.

Other military leagues in operation in 1943 included the American and National Leagues at Hickam Field (won by the Aces) and the Ewa Plain League (won by the Marine Wingers). The Kaneohe Service League was won by the Antiaircraft Wolverines. The Service Command League at Hilo included teams with colorful names like the Gooniebirds, Desert Rats and Shrapnels and featured back-to-back no-hitters from Ed Wagner of the Imperial Guard Pirates. Wagner had been in the Yankees farm system before the war and was transferred to Schofield Barracks later in the year where he pitched for the Schofield Imperials. The Hawaiian Defense League which had civilian and military teams included teams from the Pearl Harbor Submarine Base (league champs), Pearl Harbor Marines, Seabees, Army Ordnance, Hickam Field, Signal Corps, Fort Shafter and Fort Ruger.



The Aces, Hickam Field champions. Front row, left to right: Clement C. Antonetti, Rollo J. McConnell, Homer Allen, Rocco Fanelli, Thomas E. Smith, Dominic Timperio and Kenneth McCurry. Back row: Jimmi McHale (Coach), George Beach, John Boroskie, Lavern P. Belken, Chester Popella, Alfred Boulicault and Gerald Stoops (Business and Publicity Manager).

The Windward Leagues on the southeast side of Oahu were split into two sectors - Windward North Sector and Windward South Sector. The Army Gorillas won the first round North Sector trophy, while Bellows Field took the South Sector title. In July, the top three teams from each sector played in the Windward Oahu League along with two civilian teams. Thanks to the standout pitching of Bill Dodson – who had briefly played in the minors in 1940 – the Bellows Field Flyers clinched the title with 15 wins and no losses.

Since 1925, the prominent league in the Hawaiian Islands had been the Hawaii League which featured teams representing Hawaii's many ethnic groups: Hawaiians, Japanese, Filipinos, Chinese and Portuguese. During the war years, military teams joined the Hawaii League and in 1943 it was the United States Navy who joined the Athletics, Braves, Hawaais, Tigers, Wanderers – all essentially civilian teams but with the added support of servicemen players. The 1943 Navy team – representing the Pearl Harbor Submarine Base - was a far cry from the 1942 squad that dropped out of the league. The pitching staff was led by Walt Masterson, Red Anderson and Rankin Johnson, Jr. Masterson had spent four years with the Washington Senators as both a starter and reliever, while Anderson had pitched in three seasons also with the Senators and Johnson had pitched in the majors with the Philadelphia Athletics in 1941.

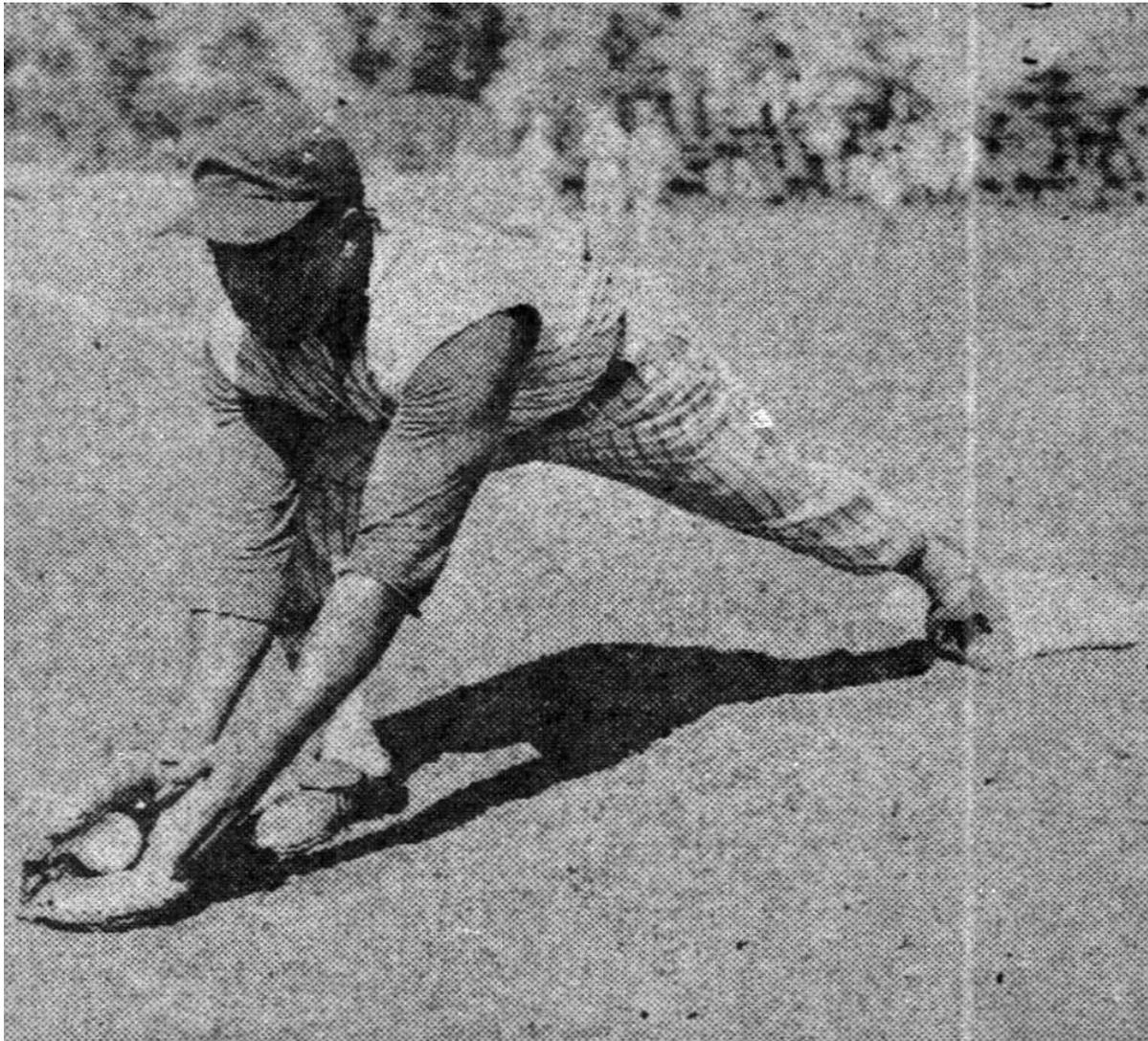
Leading the team's offense was Jimmy Gleeson who'd played for the Indians, Cubs and Reds before military service. In 1940 his .313 batting average with the Cubs was third best in the National League behind Stan Hack and Johnny Mize. With a powerful supporting cast of minor leaguers including Mo Mozzali, Clovis "Bob" White, and Frank Hecklinger, the Navy were easy winners of the Hawaii League and Cartwright Series titles. Masterson finished with a 0.71 ERA while Gleeson took the league batting title. "He is without a doubt the finest player to play in the Hawaii League in a long time," Joe Rose of the Honolulu Advertiser observed in relation to Gleeson. "He has set an example for the younger players now playing in the league, and the kids watching the games, which cannot be measured in silver or gold....Here is a man who is a credit to the uniform he is wearing as well as an excellent example for the young ball players to copy...He is never too busy to give a word of advice to some ragamuffin of a kid who bolts the barrier and makes a bee-line run to him to get in his question before the usher or groundkeeper chases him out."



Pearl Harbor Submarine Base players. Front row, left to right: Jim Gleeson (Indians, Cubs and Reds) and Walt Masterson (Senators). Back row: Charles Medlar (Beaumont, Buffalo, Elmira and Jamestown), Ray Volpi (Akron, Binghamton, Little Rock and Kansas City), Rankin Johnson, Jr. (Athletics) and Arnold "Red" Anderson (Senators).

Probably the biggest rivalry of the year was a series of games between the Hawaii League Navy team from Pearl Harbor Submarine Base and an Army all-star team from Schofield Barracks. The Schofield Red Landers featured players selected from the 31 teams in the three Schofield leagues, and were led by head coach Lieutenant Joe "Lucky" Losee. "It will be an All-American Post team," explained the Honolulu Advertiser, "with the several races and many nationalities which make up Schofield's cosmopolitan population all having representation." The integrated Red Landers featured former Brooklyn Dodgers catcher Sid Gautreaux, first baseman Frank "Wizard" Williams of the Negro League Homestead Grays and second baseman Reno Faoro who played in the Dodgers organization before the war.

On July 4, the Navy were at Schofield as part of an Independence Day celebration and the capacity crowd had hoped to see big leaguer Walt Masterson hurling for the Navy boys. Masterson, however, had pitched in a Hawaii League contest the day before and Rankin Johnson toed the rubber to start the game. Although the Red Landers got off to a strong start, scoring three runs in the first inning with singles by Faoro and Joe Ardanaz followed by a home run from Wizard Williams, they were shut out for the remainder of the game. The Navy scored three runs in the fifth to tie the game and three more in the sixth to secure a 6-3 win.



First baseman Frank "Wizard" Williams, from Newport, Kentucky, played with the integrated Schofield Red Landers throughout 1943. He had been with the Negro League Homestead Grays in 1942 and returned to the team in 1946 to play 66 games and bat .283. Williams passed away in Westminster, California in 1987. He was 68.

A second meeting between the two teams was scheduled for July 24, and billed as an Army-Navy benefit game to be staged at Honolulu Stadium and with proceeds going to the Polio Fund. Before 9,000 fans, the largest gathering of the season at the stadium that was affectionately known as the termite palace, Tracy Hitchner held the Navy hitters scoreless in the 7-0 win. Faoro had two singles and a bases-loaded triple as his share of the Redlanders' 11 hits off the combined efforts of big leaguers Masterson, Johnson and Anderson.

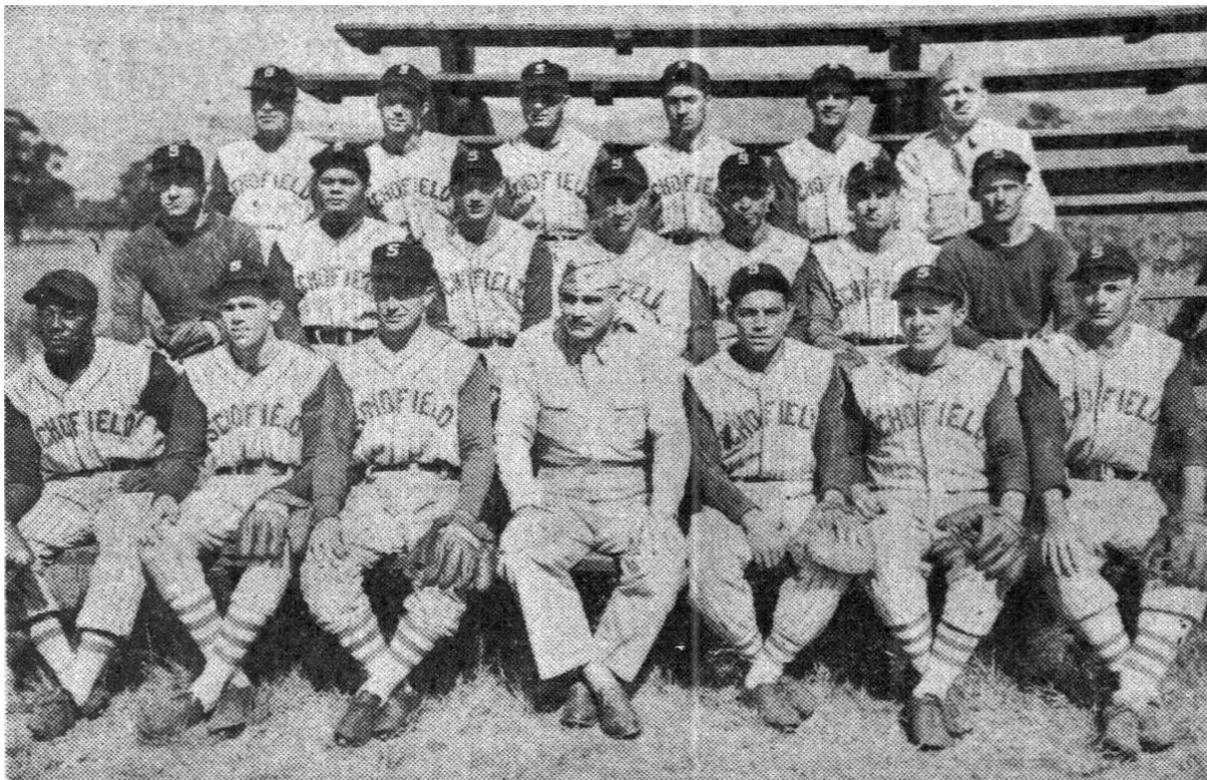


The Pearl Harbor Submarine Base infield. Left to right: John Jeandron (3B), Bill "Red" Gerald (Utility), Phil Simione (SS), Clovis "Bob" White (2B) and Frank Hecklinger (1B). Jeandron, White and Hecklinger all had minor league experience.



Pearl Harbor Submarine Base team of 1943. Winners of the Hawaii League, the Hawaiian Defense League and the Army-Navy Series. Front row, left to right: Emil Patrick, Peewee Atkinson, Bill "Red" Gerald, Bob Durkin, Bob McCorkle, Tom Bishop and Frank Snider. Second row: Phil Simione, Carl Gresowski, Clovis "Bob" White, Carl Fastnacht, Maurice Mozalli, Henry "Dutch" Raffeis (Coach), Oscar Sessions, Frank Hecklinger, John Jeandron and Jim Brennan. Third row: Ray Keim, Bill Stephenson, Hank Manteis, Johnny Rogers, Dick Trenton, Gene Rengel, John Powell and Jim Gleeson. Back row: Rankin Johnson, Jr., Walt Masterson, Arnie "Red" Anderson, Charlie Medlar, Ray Volpi and George "Nig" Henry. (photo courtesy of Shawn Hennessy)

With the Army-Navy series now tied at one game apiece, a further three games were scheduled for September to ascertain a champion. On September 21 at the Submarine Base's Weaver Field, the Army came away with a second victory as Jack "Red" Clifton hurled all 10 innings in the 1-0 win against Walt Masterson, allowing four hits and striking out 13 (Clifton had won 16 games with the Canton Terriers in 1942. He would go on to win 20 games with the Roanoke Red Sox in 1946). The following day at Schofield Barracks the Navy evened the series at two wins each as they hammered the Red Landers, 8-0, with Anderson scattering six hits. It all came down to the fifth and final game at Honolulu Stadium on September 23. "The Navy captured the five-game series with the Schofield Red Landers...at the stadium when they nosed out the Army nine, 4 to 2, in a 10-inning battle before close to 5,000 spectators," announced the Hawaii Advertiser the following day. Ray Volpi – who had won over 40 games in the minors before military service pitched all 10 innings for the Navy and opposing him was 31-year-old Carl Bielke for the Red Landers. Bielke had pitched for Eau Claire in the Northern League back in 1934. "The game was a thriller all the way," commented the Advertiser, "with both teams battling to annex the series honors." The Red Landers were first to score in the second, but the Navy tied the score in the sixth and added another in the seventh to take the lead only to have the Army even the score in their half of the inning. Three singles from Frank Snider, Johnny Jeandron and Bob White secured the win in the tenth.



The Schofield Red Landers. Front row, left to right: Frank "Wizard" Williams, Joe Buichi, Carl McLeod, Colonel O. E. Sandman (Post Commander), Jim Corea, Alex Orlando and Alphonse J. Ceriello. Middle row: Estill Marshall, George Padeken, Frank Lagrissimo, Carl H. Bielke, Troy Ray, Joe Ardanaz and Bob Brooks. Back row: Lieutenant Joe "Lucky" Losee (Head Coach), Bill "Flash" Filson, Pete Condellone, Bob "Moose" Makowsky, Gene Selmo and Lieutenant Harry R. Collins (Athletic Officer and Assistant Coach).

Also taking place in September was the Seventh Air Force baseball championships with six teams vying for the prestigious title. On September 8, Wheeler Field caused an upset when they beat Bellows Field, 8-6, to advance to the next round. On September 9, the Hickam Field Aces thrashed the Wildcats, 16-4, to earn a spot in the final, and the following day Kahuku Air Base defeated Fighter Command, 6-5, to advance to the next round. September 16 saw Wheeler Field take a come-from-behind, 5-3, victory over Kahuku Air Base which gave them a place in the finals against the Aces. On September 17, behind the two-hit pitching of future big leaguer John Andre, the Aces claimed the Seventh Air Force championship title with a 9-2 win over Wheeler Field.

The Army equivalent of the Air Force championships took place between November 14th and 21st with 12 teams representing Army outfits from Oahu, Hawaii, Molokai and Kauai. The tournament was held later than had originally been planned following an outbreak of dengue fever - a virus spread by the bite of an infected mosquito. As the teams were whittled down, four contenders stood out – 7th Infantry Division Hour Glass, 96th Coast Artillery Shrapnels from Hawaii, 160th Infantry Regiment Imperials and Bellows Field. In the semi-finals Hour Glass defeated Bellows Field, 6-2, to advance to the finals while the Imperials overcame the Shrapnels, 3-0, behind the pitching of Red Clifton. In the final on November 21st at Schofield Barracks, the 160th Infantry Regiment Imperials defeated 7th Infantry Division Hour Glass, 4 to 2, as Ed Wagner struck out 13 to take the Central Pacific Area baseball championship title.

One of the most outstanding performances of the tournament was by German-born pitcher Werner Strunk, who hurled his Molokai-based 33rd Infantry Division team to a 14-inning, 9-7, win over the Martin Gunners. Strunk, who pitched in the minors before and after the war, hurled all 14 innings and struck out 28 batters along the way, including the first 12 he faced.

A team that was missing from the Army championships was Fort Shafter. The Honolulu League champions' season came to an abrupt end with the tragic death of one of their players in August. Shortstop Paul Morris was a graduate of St. Michael High School in Pontiac, Michigan, where he played varsity baseball. Following basic training at Fort Eustice, Virginia, he arrived in Hawaii in 1942 and quickly earned a place on the Fort Shafter ball team. The chatterbox infielder was hit by a pitch from Lou Hagan in a game against the Hickam Field Bombers on August 28th. Taken to hospital, he briefly gained consciousness and his first words were, "How did the team make out?" Two days later, Paul Morris died. He was 24 years old. Later in the year the athletic office at Fort Shafter arranged for a plaque containing the names of all his teammates to be sent to his family in Michigan.



Paul Morris

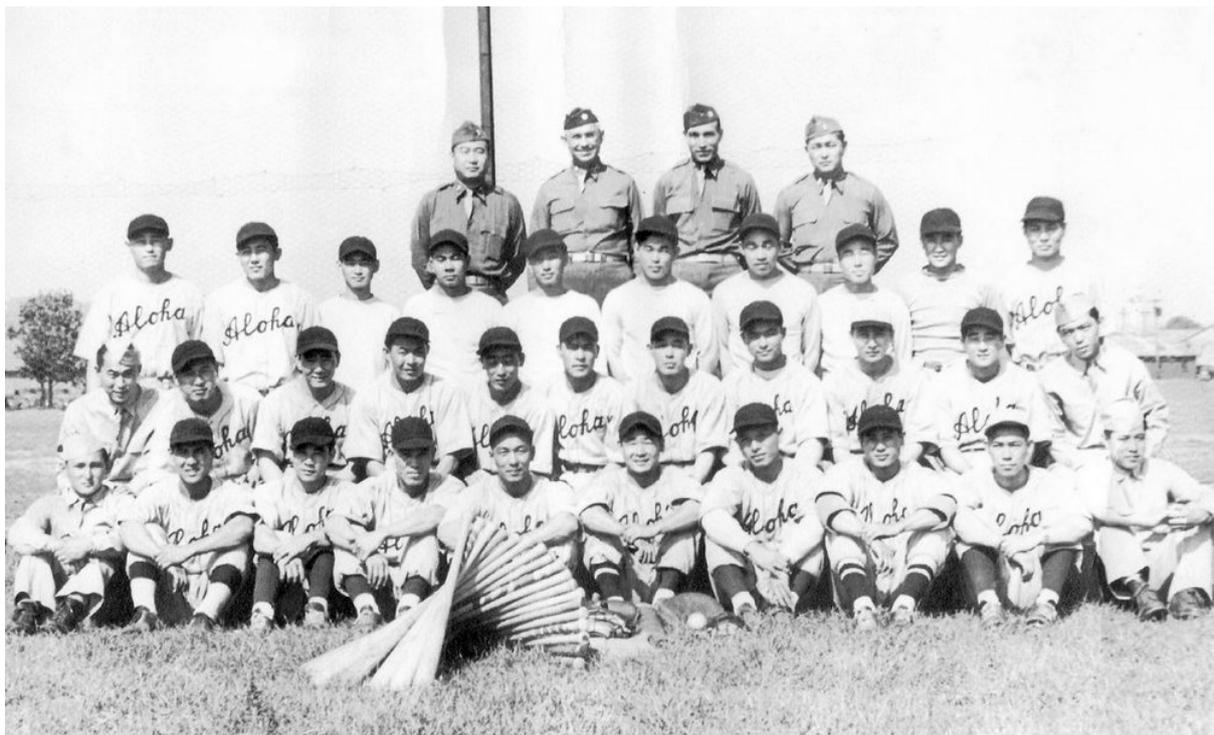


The 160th Infantry Regiment Imperials. Central Pacific Area Army Baseball champions. Front row, left to right: Captain Noyes W. Alger (Regimental Special Service Officer), Everett Cooley, Johnny Malish, Ray Rutowski, Sam Bronner (with trophy), Bill Scheske, Delphine Meinen, Edward Curej and Lieutenant Harry Gaumond (Manager and Baseball Officer). Middle row: Matthew Coenen, Johnny Markulis, Ray Nordell, Harold Snyder, Robert M. Zaparty (accidentally killed on New Britain Island May 1944), Frank Cresei and Albert Michaelis. Back row: Larry Benedict (Regimental Special Services), Russell Huff, Edward Wagner, Ralph Willingham, Jack Clifton, Edward Arndt (Head Coach) and Carl Howard (Regimental Special Services).

On November 4, 1943, Harushi "Blackie" Kondo was one of three men of the 100th Battalion laying communications wire near the town of Venafro, Italy. Blackie Kondo had come a long way from his home in Oahu. Unknown to the men, a German machine-gun was pointed directly at them. When it opened fire all three men were mortally wounded. Kondo had entered military service in December 1940, pitched for the 298th Infantry Regiment Warriors baseball team at Schofield Barracks, and – because he was nisei, second-generation Japanese – had had his weapon taken away from him immediately after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

In June 1942, Kondo had been one of 1,432 nisei who boarded the U.S. Army transport USAT Maui, under the cover of night and shipped to the mainland United States without saying goodbye to families or loved ones. Arriving at Oakland, California, they were designated the 100th Infantry Battalion and boarded a train to Camp McCoy, Wisconsin, for training. Baseball was in the hearts of many Hawaiian nisei and it wasn't long before a battalion team was formed. Recreational and Morale Officer at Camp McCoy was Captain Katsumi "Doc" Kometani, who had been the franchise owner of the Asahi team in Oahu. Kometani organized the regiment baseball team and called them "Aloha", but with only the military police unit to play against they soon sought competition in nearby towns, quickly earning a reputation among the local community as a team to come and watch. In a game against a minor league team

in Green Bay, Wisconsin, the Aloha squad made an outstanding defensive play. "An opposing batter hit a towering drive over our right fielder's head," recalled Takashi "Ted" Hirayama, Aloha manager. "After the outfielder retrieved the ball, he threw it to [Joe] Takata, who was playing center. Joe relayed it on a line to Mushie Miyagi, our second baseman, who then turned and threw the ball on one skip to the catcher, who tagged the surprised runner out. Joe's throw to the second baseman was outstanding. I still remember the announcer saying that it would take a major league team to make a play like that, and these little guys from Hawaii just did it. They play like pros." Joe Takata had played with the Azumi and Asahi teams in the Hawaii League before the war.



The 100th Battalion Aloha team at Camp McCoy, Wisconsin in 1943. Front row, left to right: Haruo Hayakawa, Yozo Yamamoto, Masaharu Takeba, Fred Wada, Wataru Kaneshina, Masayoshi "Mushie" Miyagi (killed in action), Yoshinao "Turtle" Omiya (permanently blinded in combat), Shunji Suzuki, Tadashi Ohta and Shigeo Igarishi (killed in action). Second row: Edward Mitsukado, Seiji Tanigawa, Shigeo J. "Joe" Takata (killed in action), Moichi Okazaki, Kenneth Kanako, Toshio "Lefty" Mizusawa, Goro Morigushi, Masaru Yamamoto (killed in action), Hide Yamashita, Tadashi Matsunami and Ted Hirayama. Third row: John Y. Yamada, Koichi Fukuda, Sam Tomai, Ronald Hamamura, Akira Akimoto, Albert Y. Nozaki (killed in action), Henry Shiyama (killed in action), Fumi Taniyama, Tadao Honbo and Mits Omori. Back row: Captain Katsumi Koetani, Colonel Farrant Turner, Major James Lovell and Captain Kiyoshi Kuramoto.

In January 1943, the 100th Battalion was transferred to Camp Shelby, Mississippi, where it received its battalion motto, "Remember Pearl Harbor". The battalion deployed from Camp Shelby in August 1943, and arrived in Oran, North Africa, in September. Despite being in North Africa for little more than two weeks there was still time for baseball. Joe Takata was one of five 100th Battalion players selected to join the 133rd Infantry Regiment team in a game against the 168th Infantry Regiment - undefeated champions of North Africa. With the help of the Hawaiian players the 133rd won the

game. "It was a close game all the way to the ninth inning," recalled Ted Hirayama. In their only game as a complete team the 100th Battalion Aloha boys were challenged by the 133rd Infantry Regiment. The 100th called upon Lieutenant Paul E. Froning - who had recently joined the unit - to pitch for them. Froning would pitch in the minors after the war and helped defeat the 133rd, 26 to 0.

On September 19, the 100th Battalion sailed from North Africa to southern Italy, and entered combat against German forces on September 29, 1943, near Salerno. Joe Takata - the scrappy little center fielder who had made the outstanding defensive play in Wisconsin a year earlier - was with the platoon that led the rest of the battalion along a portion of road bordered by a gully on one side and an olive grove on the other. It was 9.15am and hadn't stopped raining all night. Suddenly the platoon was trapped in a hail of machine-gun, mortar and artillery fire. "As soon as the machine guns opened fire, the [artillery] fired," recalled Sergeant Tokuichi Koizumi some years later. "On the left flank was open ground. We tried to get around the right side, but there was a ravine there and the guns already were zeroed in on the place. A shell landed. It hit the ground in front of Sergeant Takata. He couldn't talk ... I never forget that day. I never forget him. He was one of the best."

The 100th Battalion eventually silenced the enemy but their baseball hero, Joe Takata, was dead before the fighting was over.



Left to right: John Yamada, Lefty Mizusawa, Mushie Miyagi (killed in action), Koichi Fukuda, Fred Wada and Al Nozaki (killed in action)

Advancing against the enemy was slow and by November 4, when Blackie Kondo was mortally wounded, they had moved less than 70 miles. Kondo - after being hit - lay in the road in agony but still alive. His battalion comrades tried desperately to reach him but the Germans had the area covered and despite coming within five yards of him they were unable to drag him to

safety before he died at 5.30am. A day later, second baseman Masayoshi "Mushie" Miyagi and pitcher Dan Wada, were both killed in action. Masaru Yamamoto and Jerry Kuraoka were killed on November 29. Shigeo Igarashi was killed on December 3, while on January 7, 1944, with complete disregard for his own safety, Masaharu Takeba rescued a wounded comrade and carried him 75 yards to safety in the face of enemy machine-gun fire, an act that would earn him a Silver Star, albeit posthumously. He was killed in action three days later. On February 8, 1944, Blackie Kondo's batterymate from the 298th Infantry Regiment Warriors, Stan Funai, was killed in action. Henry Shiyama was killed in action on February 12, and Al Nozaki was killed

on April 28, 1944. The 100th Battalion's high casualty rate earned it the unofficial nickname the "Purple Heart Battalion."

"Your boy was an American and he fought and died as hosts of good Americans have always done . . . when the cause of freedom is threatened."

Colonel Kendall J. Fielder, March 1944, in ceremony to present Purple Heart medals to families of 60 members of 100th Battalion killed in Italy.

In October, the Honolulu Advertiser ranked the Top 10 military teams in Hawaii in 1943 as follows:

1. Pearl Harbor Submarine Base
(Hawaii League and Hawaiian Defense League Champions)
(Winner of Army-Navy Series)
2. Pearl Harbor Marines (Hawaiian Defense League Playoffs)
3. Fort Shafter (Honolulu League Champions)
4. Schofield Red Landers (Army-Navy Series)
5. Bellows Field Airmen (Windward League Champions)
6. 160th Infantry Regiment Imperials (Central Pacific Area Army Champions)
7. 298th Infantry Regiment Kamaaians
8. Fort Kamehameha Warriors
9. Hickam Field Bombers
10. Naval Air Station Kaneohe Klippers



The Pearl Harbor Marines. Ranked by the Honolulu Advertiser as the second best team in Hawaii in 1943. Back row, left to right: John Karley, William D. Campbell (killed in action at Saipan), Chiles D. Mitchell, John A. Gawencki, Jerry Vaculin and Frank Plush. Middle row: James H. Brown, Amos S. Lanie, Andrew J. Steinbach, Colonel Charles T. Brooks (Commanding Officer), William K. King, Harry F. Olds and Charles Brickart (Coach). Front row: Robert L. Perry, Herman W. Knesek, Sig Samson, Warren J. Reves, Charles Meyer and James W. Fauchoux.

Major Leaguers in Hawaii in 1943

Walt Masterson



Masterson was a standout basketball and baseball player at Northeast Catholic High School in Philadelphia, and was pitching for the semi-pro Landreth Seed Company team in Bristol, Pennsylvania, during the summer of 1938 when scouted by the Washington Senators. A year later, aged just 19, he was pitching for the Senators and had hurled over 100 big league games by the time he reached Hawaii in 1943. Masterson was player/manager of the Submarine Base team in 1944, but also served aboard the submarines USS Scorpion (SS-278), USS Seawolf (SS-197) and USS Tuna (SS-203), and the submarine tender USS Apollo (AS-25). By 1945, Chief Petty Officer Masterson was back in the United States at the New London

Submarine Base, Connecticut. He was discharged from service on September 11, 1945, and returned to the Washington Senators to pitch four games before the season ended. "It was not a happy time coming out of the service which I guess it should have been," he told a writer at the time. "The service," he said, "messes up your head. When you get to the position where you don't care whether you live or die, you're kind of strange to be around."

Masterson continued to pitch in the major leagues until 1956, spending time with the Red Sox and Tigers. His last season in professional baseball was in 1957 with San Francisco of the Pacific Coast League.

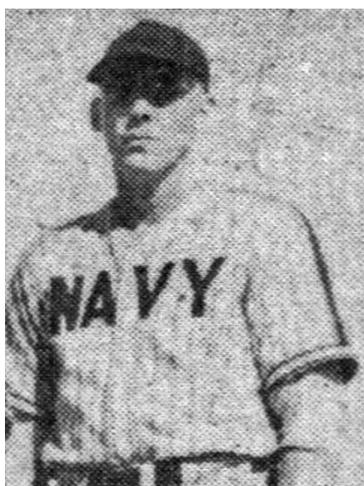
After baseball, Masterson was a national sales manager for a golf shoe manufacturer and later a national sales manager for a Kansas-based company that sold flour to bakeries. In 1972, he returned to baseball as a pitching coach with the Texas Rangers, and in 1980-81, he was the baseball coach at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia. Walt Masterson passed away at Duke University Hospital in Durham, North Carolina, on April 5, 2008. He was 87.

Rankin Johnson, Jr.



The son of a former major league pitcher, Johnson joined the Philadelphia Athletics in 1941 and made seven relief appearances for a 1-0 record and 3.60 ERA. He entered military service with the Navy the following year. As a yeoman he served aboard the troop transport/cargo ship William Ward Burrows (AP-6) and participated in Solomons campaign. He returned to professional baseball in 1946 and played two seasons with Williamsport and Chattanooga, later becoming a business manager with the Williamsport club. Rankin Johnson passed away on February 11, 2006, in Williamsport, Pennsylvania. He was 88.

Arnold "Red" Anderson



Anderson from Lawton, Iowa, got his first taste of major league baseball with the Washington Senators in 1937, making two appearances for an 0-1 won-loss record. He was back with the Senators for another two games in 1940 and made 32 appearances for the club in 1941. He was with Chattanooga when he entered military service in 1942, and served on a destroyer in the Pacific before being stationed at Pearl Harbor Submarine Base. Anderson was discharged at Lido Beach, New York, on November 17, 1945, and played in the minors in 1946. During the late 1940s and early 1950s, he managed and pitched for the semi-pro Kingsley Cubs in the Plymouth

County League in Iowa.

Anderson, who was a foreman for the Concrete Pipe Machinery Company, passed away after a 6-month illness on August 7, 1972. He was 60.

Jim Gleeson



Gleeson played three years in the minors before joining the Cleveland Indians in 1936, batting .259 in 41 games. After another couple of seasons in the minors he joined the Chicago Cubs in 1939, batting an unmemorable .223 in 111 games. But in 1940, he had a standout season, hitting .313 in 129 games (third best in the National League). He joined the Cincinnati Reds in 1941 and slumped to .233 in 102 games, and was with the Columbus Red Birds when he entered military service in May 1942.

Gleeson continued to play in the minors until 1950, and remained in the game as a minor league manager, and major league scout and coach, serving as the first-base coach on Yogi Berra's staff during the Yankees' 1964 pennant-winning season. In 1971 he joined Milwaukee's scouting staff and retired in 1975, 42 years after he began his professional baseball career. Gleeson passed away on May 1, 1996, in Kansas City, Missouri. He was 84.

Sid Gautreaux



Gautreaux, from Schriever, Louisiana, first played in the minors in 1933 and was with the Brooklyn Dodgers by 1936, appearing in 75 games and batting .268. He returned to the Dodgers for 11 games the following year and played in the minors until entering military service in February 1943.

After military service he returned to the minors as a player/manager until 1952, and was inducted in the Louisiana Baseball Hall of Fame in 1970. Gautreaux passed away at Lakewood Hospital in Morgan City, Louisiana, on April 19, 1980. He was 67.

John Andre



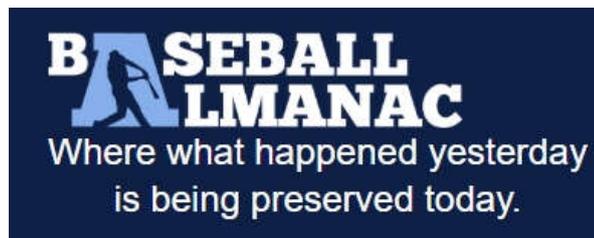
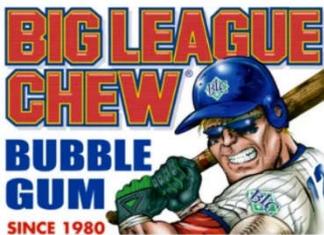
Andre, from Brockton, Massachusetts, had pitched for the Brockton Catholic Youth Organization team that won the New England sandlot championships before the war. His batterymate on that team was Rocky Marciano – future World Heavyweight Champion (1952 to 1956). Andre had signed to play with LaCrosse in the Wisconsin State League in 1940, but was released and joined the Army, aged 18, in June 1941 for service with the Army in Hawaii. During the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Private First-Class Andre was blown off a telephone pole, suffering a head wound and earning the Purple Heart.

After being released from military service in 1946 he signed with the New York Giants. On April 16, 1955, Andre, 32 years old, made his major league debut with the Chicago Cubs. He appeared in 22 games during the season and finished with an ERA of 5.04. "Johnny stuck to what he wanted until he made good," Rocky Marciano said at the time. Andre returned to the minors in 1956, and retired at the end of the season. He played for Minot in the semi-pro Mandak League in 1957 before arm problems ended his playing career altogether. John Andre passed away on November 25, 1976, in Centerville, Massachusetts. He was 53.



EBBETS FIELD FLANNELS

EST. 1988



[Chevrans and Diamonds](#)

Spotlighting the U.S. Armed Forces' Inseparable Bond with America's Pastime