

Gary Bedingfield's Baseball in Wartime

www.baseballinwartime.com

Bert Shepard (June 28, 1920 to June 16, 2008)

Baseball in Wartime extends its condolences to the family of Bert Shepard - one of baseball's true WWII heroes who, perhaps better than anyone, epitomizes what the Baseball in Wartime website is all about.

Bert Shepard was born in Dana, Indiana. In 1941, the lefthander was pitching with the Bisbee Bees in the Arizona-Texas League where he had a 3-5 won-loss record but was also a useful utility player appearing at first base and in the outfield.

By May 1942, Shepard was in military service with the Army Air Force. He served at Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana and Daniel Field, Georgia, in 1942, earning his pilot's wings the following year. He crossed the Atlantic to England on the Aquatania to join the 55th Fighter Group at Wormingford in early 1944. "From then on it was a lot of flying," Bert told me some years ago.

He did, however, have some time for baseball. "In early May, we leveled off a field, laid out a diamond and started practise. Our first game was scheduled for Sunday, May 21."

Shepard had already flown 33 missions in his Lockheed P-38J Lightning, and on May 21 - opening day for the 55th Fighter Group baseball season - he volunteered for his 34th mission. While attacking an airfield near Ludwigslust, east of Hamburg, Germany, his plane was hit by enemy flak with shells tearing through his right leg and foot.

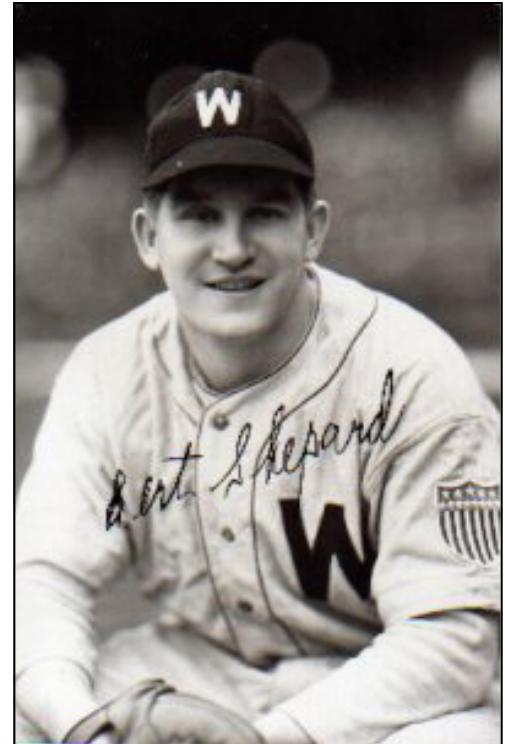
Shepard was knocked unconscious and at 380mph the fighter plane crashed into the ground.

Shortly after the crash landing, First Lieutenant Ladislaus Loidl, a physician in the German Luftwaffe, arrived at the smoking wreckage in time to save the injured pilot from a group of irate farmers on whose land the plane had crashed.

Loidl, with the aid of two armed soldiers, drove the farmers away and checked to see if the pilot was still alive. "He was unconscious, his right leg being smashed, and he bled from a deep wound on his head," recalled Loidl in 1993. "I recognized that the man could be saved only with an urgent operation. My emergency hospital was not equipped for that. So I drove the wounded man to the local hospital that was headed by a colonel. When [the colonel] refused to admit the 'terror flyer' as he called him, I telephoned the general on duty at the Reich's Air Ministry in Berlin and reported the case. Whereupon the general called the colonel and settled the matter. Lieutenant Shepard was admitted and operated on. A few days later I inquired about his condition and was told that he was doing fine."

Shepard's damaged right leg had to be amputated 11 inches below the knee. After a long period of recovery he was transferred to the Stalag IX-C prison camp at Meiningen in central Germany, and with the assistance of Doug Errey - a Canadian medic and fellow prisoner who crafted a makeshift artificial leg - Shepard was soon playing catch.

In February 1945, Shepard returned to the United States on a prisoner exchange, as determined as ever to continue with his baseball career. Whilst at the Walter Reed Hospital in Washington, DC, Shepard met with Under Secretary of War, Robert Patterson. When Patterson asked about his plans for the future, Shepard explained that he wanted to play baseball. Sceptical but impressed with the young flier's attitude, Patterson contacted



Senators' owner, Clark Griffith, and asked him to take a look at the young pitcher.

Shepard arrived at the Senators' camp on March 14. On March 29, he was signed as a pitching coach and pitched four innings against the Dodgers in a War Relief Fund game on July 10. On August 5, 1945, he made his first and last major league appearance. With the Senators down 14-2 to the Red Sox, Shepard came in in the fourth inning and struck out the first batter he faced, George "Catfish" Metkovich. He pitched the remainder of the game and allowed just three hits, one walk and one run.

Shepard played in the minor leagues until 1954 and then took employment as a safety engineer with IBM and Hughes Aircraft.

In May 1993, Shepard had an emotional reunion with Doctor Loidl, the man who had rescued him from the plane wreckage after he was shot down.

Bert Shepard - major league pitcher, WWII hero and icon for all disabled military veterans - passed away on June 16, 2008 at a California nursing home. He was 87.



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From the Ballfields of New Orleans to the Battlefields of World War II

In November 2007, I had the pleasure of attending the "When Baseball Went to War" conference at the World War II Museum in New Orleans. In addition to giving a keynote presentation on players who lost their lives in World War II, I also moderated a panel that explored baseball as a morale builder during the war years. On that panel with me was Johnny Pesky, New Orleans baseball historian Arthur Schott, Nisei Baseball Research Project Director Kerry Nakagawa, Playing with the Enemy author Gary W Moore, and former major league pitcher and New Orleans resident Lenny Yochim.

Since that time, Lenny and I have kept in touch and he has shared with me many stories of baseball during the war years. Lenny didn't serve in the military during World War II - he was too young. But his brother, Ray, who went on to pitch for the St Louis Cardinals, served with the Marine Corps and pitched for the Navy All-Stars in the Pacific.

Also attending the conference was Pete Parisi from Drexel Hill, Pennsylvania. Pete served with the US Navy in New Orleans during the war and played baseball for the Algiers Naval Station team during the summer of 1943.

What follows is a collaboration of the memories of Lenny and Pete along with other related items that tell the story of baseball during the war years from a very personal viewpoint.

It's a humid afternoon in Santa Barbara, California in late June 1941, and 18-year-old rookie pitcher Ray Yochim, smiles as he walks off the mound enjoying the applause from 1,300 fans. Ray, who had only recently joined the visiting Fresno Cardinals of the California League, has just held the Santa Barbara Saints to three hits in the second game of a double-header. The 10-0 win is Fresno's 16th consecutive and clinches the first-half pennant of the Class C circuit.

Ray, one of eight children, had signed with the St Louis Cardinals organization in 1941 after graduating from Samuel J Peters High School in his hometown of New Orleans. "He was mamas special," recalls Lenny. "All the others in the family had to use oleo. That was margarine with yellow bean mixed in to make it look like butter. Ray got the real thing, butter, real butter. None of us had any qualms that he was getting better treatment.



New Orleans in the 1940s

He was the favorite maybe because he was strong, he was a little wild, he could take care of himself. I looked up to him as a person, and surely as a ballplayer."

The Cardinals had optioned Ray to Sacramento of the Pacific Coast League who, in turn, assigned him to Fresno. Ray posted a record of two wins and a loss with Fresno, having worked 29 innings in five games, before being sold to the Springfield Cardinals of the Class C Western Association – another St Louis farm team that needed pitching.

Ray finished the year with a 7-7 record for Springfield and began the 1942 season with his hometown New Orleans Pelicans of the Class A1 Southern Association, where he won two games without a loss before being assigned to the Columbus Red Birds of the Class B South Atlantic League. The Red Birds struggled all season to get out the basement in the Sally League and Ray finished with a 3-15 record and 4.65 ERA.

The 20-year-old right-hander had little time to reflect on his losing record as military service beckoned and the next three years would be spent with the Marine Corps. "I was very proud to see that [Ray] enlisted in the Marines," recalls Lenny. "He could have

possibly been deferred because of a hernia operation. He wanted to be in the war."

However, military service didn't mean the end of his playing days. In fact, far from it, Ray didn't even get to finish boot camp because the Marine Corps Base at San Diego



Ray Yochim with the Columbus Red Birds

Courtesy of Derby S Gisclair

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needed a pitcher and he spent the summer months making a name for himself in the 11th Naval District League.

One of Ray's toughest outings was against the Santa Ana Army Air Base team, led by Joe DiMaggio. "I didn't think anything about pitching to DiMaggio until I looked up and saw him straddled at the plate with that bat in his hand," he later recalled. "Then suddenly I got the shakes. I had never pitched to a big league batter before and here was the great DiMaggio in front of me. I took a windup and threw a side arm curve and believe it or not that ball took a turn and went behind DiMaggio. Imagine that. Well, I didn't have any trouble with him after that. He probably figured I was some crazy kid that didn't know where I was throwing, but I fed him curve balls the rest of the game and he didn't hit a ball out of the infield."

Meanwhile, back in New Orleans, young Lenny Yochim was making a name for himself. Ray's younger brother was developing into a fine pitcher/first baseman with the Holy Cross High School team. And their competition was not limited simply to other local high schools because New Orleans and the surrounding area had become an important military location for the Army and Coast Guard. It was also the headquarters of the 8th Naval District and the Gulf Sea Frontier Command.

In 1943, the USO Baseball League of New Orleans was formed with nine participating teams. The Navy was represented with teams from Algiers Naval Station, New Orleans Naval Air Station at Lake Pontchartrain (just north of the city), and the Anti-Aircraft Training Center at Shell Beach. The Army had teams from LaGarde General Hospital, Station Hospital NOPE (New Orleans Port of Embarkation), New Orleans Army Air Base (located six miles northeast of the city),

Jackson Barracks (on the east bank of the Mississippi) and the 781st Railway Depot. The Coast Guard – with future National League pitcher Al Jurisich – was represented by the Coast Guard Station at New Orleans.

Stationed at the Algiers Naval Station on the west bank of the Mississippi River in New Orleans was Peter Parisi, a former high school and semi-pro catcher from Pennsylvania. Whether Lenny Yochim and Pete Parisi played against each other during the war years neither gentleman can recall for sure, but 60 years later they were brought together through the "When Baseball Went to War" conference at the WWII Museum in New Orleans.

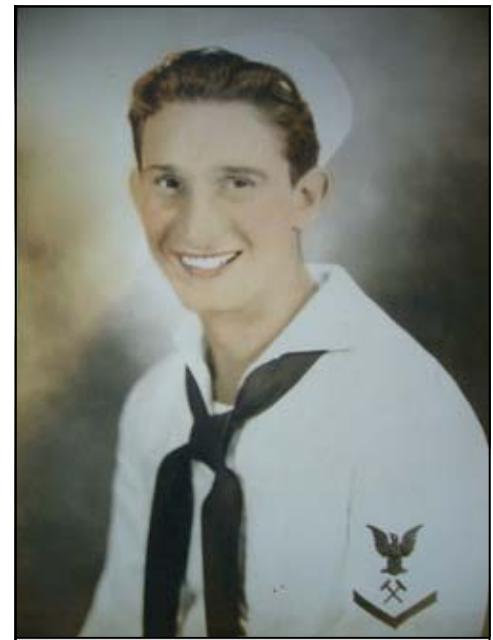
"I enlisted in the Navy in November 1942," recalls Pete. "From Norfolk, Virginia, Shipfitting School I was sent to New Orleans with a S/F 2c rating. At the Algiers Naval Base, all I did was play baseball and have liberty every night. I loved New Orleans' food, music, people and even the climate. I realized then that I would never have it so good again."

After the summer of 1943, Parisi was sent to Long Island, New York, from where he sailed for England just before Christmas. "I was with a Navy Ship Salvage Unit at Plymouth," he explains. "And all we did was play baseball. This baseball in the service was taken very seriously. A pitcher and I were sent to Exeter [about 50 miles away] on 'temporary duty' because the Navy team there had a big game coming up. We were all looking forward to playing the Army Air Force team in London on June 7, when I was recalled back to my outfit to get ready for D-Day."

Pete Parisi landed at Omaha Beach on D-Day plus 12 and baseball finally took a backseat as his outfit's job was to clear the French harbors of Cherbourg and Le Havre of

wreckage – a dangerous task as the Germans had booby-trapped many wrecks with mines.

During 1944, Ray Yochim again pitched for the San Diego Marine baseball team which was managed by Dee Moore of the Phillies and Harry Hughes – former pilot of the Atlanta Crackers. His teammates included Joe Gautreaux (a minor league pitcher from New Orleans who



Pete Parisi - US Navy - 1943

had played high school ball against Ray) and Ray Minor (pitcher with Mayfield of the Kitty League). The San Diego Marine Corps Base clinched the 11th Naval District championship in a three-game playoff with the Naval Training Center. Ray won 22 games against just five losses.

In November 1944, Ray told *The Sporting News* what was on the line for each game. "The Marines had the winning spirit from the commanding officers down," he said. "Any time I lost a game I had a lot of explaining to do, even though the teams we played, like the Ferry Command from Long Beach had Red Ruffing, Gerald Priddy, Max West, Nanny Fernandez and those big-time players. The Marines just aren't supposed to lose in baseball or war."

Ray Yochim returned home to New Orleans in November 1944. It was his first furlough in 17 months and after spending a brief time with his family, including kid brother Lenny, he was headed for duty in the South Pacific.

"Raymond Austin Yochim, former pitcher in the St Louis Cardinal system, is reported to have been killed in action on Iwo Jima," read the startling report in *The Sporting News* on April 19, 1945. Naturally, this news came as a shock to the Yochim family back in New Orleans, but because it only appeared to be word of mouth and no official report had come from the military or government, the family was confident he was alright. And he was.

Ray had sailed aboard the *USS General L M Hersey* bound for Guam at the beginning of 1945. Somehow, this ship was confused with another that was lost at Iwo Jima, and Dee Moore, former manager of the San Diego Marines ball team, who was in Hawaii by this time, wrote his friend, Jack Whipple, a



The Fleet Marines of 1945. Back row (left to right): Calvin Medley, Ray Yochim, Bob Revels and Oren Baker. Front row (left to right): Dee Moore, Bob Green, Boots Poffenberger

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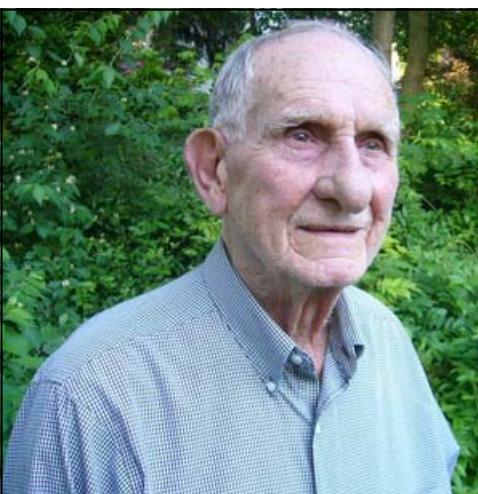
member of the Seattle Rainiers team, stating that Ray, along with Harry Hughes had both perished. This information was passed on to *The Sporting News*, who prematurely published their obit, then retracted it the following week.

"The other day, while reading a clipping from *The Sporting News*," Ray later wrote in a letter to Fred Digby of the *New Orleans Item*, "a funny feeling came over me for I was reading where I had been killed on Iwo Jima. I don't think that's so because I feel very much alive."

"Harry Hughes is alright, too... I hope that the people I owe money to don't feel too badly because they still have a chance of collecting."

By this time, Ray had been transferred from Guam to Hawaii, where he was stationed with the Fleet Marine Force (FMF) on Oahu. The FMF pitching staff featured Boots Poffenberger (formerly with Brooklyn), Oren Baker of the Los Angeles Angels and Negro Leaguer Calvin Medley. Aubrey Epps (former Pirates' catcher), Pacific Coast League first baseman Wimpy Quinn, future Cardinals' second baseman Nippy Jones, the Giants' outfielder Willard Marshall, Athletics' outfielder George Staller, Bob Green (ex-Dartmouth College star), and Bob Revels, formerly with Wellsville of the PONY League, made the FMF Flyers a strong contender in the 14th Naval District League.

Ray had a fine season and must have set some sort of record in June 1945 when he walked three men in one inning and not one runner reached second. Catcher Aubrey Epps picked one man off first and Ray trapped two off the bag.



Pete Parisi

But Lenny was not to be outdone back home in New Orleans. A week later, pitching for his American Legion team, he struck out 17 batters in a seven-inning game to set a new record in the New Orleans American Legion series.

Wimpy Quinn and Ray Yochim, along with two other later Marine Flyer arrivals, Ted Williams and Bob Kennedy, were selected for the Navy All-Star series that was played in September and October 1945. Ray pitched in Game Four on October 3. The third pitcher to be used by manager Billy Herman that afternoon, he gave up a couple of runs in the eighth inning as the Navy National Leaguers lost, 12 to 1, to the American Leaguers. The souvenir programme produced for the series includes a photograph of Ray Yochim with fellow Navy National League pitchers Max Wilson, Dee Moore, Clyde Shoun, Ray Coombs, Hugh Casey and Wes Livengood. They are all wearing caps with a large letter "N" embroidered on the front, except for Ray. He sent his home to Lenny.

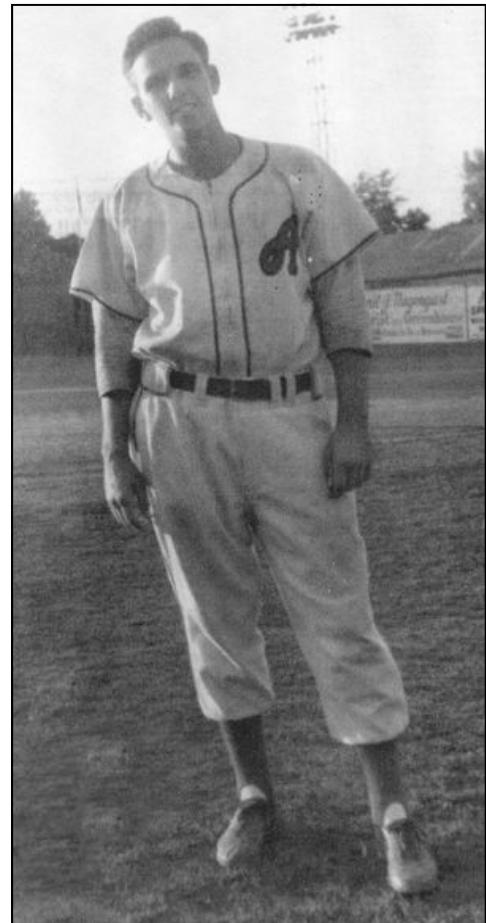
Ray advanced from the rank of corporal to sergeant in August 1945 but when the baseball season ended in Hawaii two months later, so did his rating. The Marines had too many sergeants!

With the war over, everybody's mind was focused on getting back to some sort of normality. Pete Parisi had left England for New York aboard the *Queen Elizabeth* in August 1945. He used the GI Bill to earn both a Bachelor's and Master's degree in education. He retired from the Philadelphia School District in June 1991 after 68 years teaching sixth grade.

"I am happy that I went into the service," recalls Pete, now 86, "as I really benefited from the free college. However, I did lose my hearing for which I am still compensated. I guess to sum it all up, I had the best of times and the worst of times in the Navy."

Ray was back with the Cardinals organization in 1946 and was assigned to the Rochester Red Wings of the Class AAA International League where he was 4-4 with a 3.81 ERA. Meanwhile, in July 1946, young Lenny Yochim was the first player selected by manager George Sisler for the World All-Star team. The team went on to play the Brooklyn Eagle All-Stars at Ebbets Field in August.

The following year, 18-year-old Lenny signed with his hometown New Orleans Pelicans and was optioned to the New Iberia Cardinals of the Class D Evangeline League where he was



Lenny Yochim spent his second year in pro ball (1948) with the Albany Senators of the Eastern League

20-6 on the mound and batted .343 with seven home runs and 38 RBIs. On July 9, pitching for the league-leading New Iberia club against the Evangeline League all-stars, Lenny single-handedly won the game when he drove home the winning run in the ninth inning of the 5-4 win. Ray, now 24 enjoyed a good season with the Red Wings in 1947, fashioning a 14-15 record and 3.57 ERA. The Cardinals purchased him on September 30.

Ray began 1948 with the St Louis Cardinals at their spring training camp at St Petersburg, Florida. A good showing saw him still with the club when they left for St Louis in April and he made his major league debut on May 2 against the Chicago Cubs at Sportsman's Park in front of 15,071. Despite having future Hall of Famers Stan Musial and Red Schoendienst in the line-up, his final inning appearance in the 13-4 loss wasn't exactly the debut he had hoped for, but after eight years as a professional baseball player and three years of military service, Ray Yochim was a bona fide major league pitcher.



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Courtesy of Derby S Gisclair

Ray Yochim with the St Louis Cardinals

Unfortunately, Ray's tenure with the Cardinals in 1948 was short-lived. Two days after his debut the Cardinals optioned him back to Rochester where his 1-4 record and inflated 6.40 ERA found him on the move in late June to the Columbus Red Birds of the Class AAA American Association. Ray settled down with the Red Birds and produced a 5-1 record and 3.13 ERA.

Meanwhile, Lenny was making the big jump from Class D to Class A ball in 1948, joining the Albany Senators of the Eastern League. Unfazed by the move, he had a 14-4 season with the Senators and produced an ERA of 3.38.

He made a further jump in 1949, joining New Orleans of the Class AA Southern Association where he was 5-10 with a 4.43 ERA, while older brother Ray, was back with the Cardinals for the start of the season and made three brief relief appearances before returning to Columbus.

In 1950, Lenny found himself back with the Albany Senators, where his 2-4 record and 5.94 ERA didn't seem to hold much hope for the future. But Ray was enjoying a promising season with the Birmingham Barons of the Southern Association with a 15-10 record and 3.78 ERA that he hoped would give him another chance to pitch in the majors.

It was to be the 1951 season that would turn things around for Lenny Yochim. Assigned to the Charleston Rebels of the Class A South Atlantic League, he had an outstanding 11-1 record and 2.82 ERA. And he picked up a further two victories in the Sally League

playoffs before the Rebels were eliminated. One of these was a 2 to 0, one-hitter against Montgomery, the single hit coming with two out in the ninth inning.

His performance not surprisingly caught the attention of the Pittsburgh Pirates – who were having another dismal season – and he was called up to the big league club in September. On September 18, 1951, before a home crowd of 8,036 at Forbes Field, manager Billy Meyer gave Lenny a starting assignment against the fourth-placed Boston Braves and was credited with a 6 to 5 win. Lenny was wild, walking eight, hitting one batter and making two wild pitches, but he yielded only seven hits over the seven-inning stretch before giving way to the relief help of Bill Werle and Ted Wilks. The Yochims had joined a select group of brothers who have played baseball in the major leagues.

Lenny made a further, less successful, start ten days later before returning to the minor leagues for the next two seasons. He reappeared with the Pirates in 1954, pitching ten games (nine in relief) before returning to the minor leagues for good. In December 1955, Lenny was back in the sports pages playing winter ball as he became the first pitcher to throw a no-hit, no-run game in the Venezuelan Association's eight-year affiliation with organized baseball when he led Caracas to a 3-0 victory over Magallanes.

Ray never made it back to "The Show" although he continued to pitch well in the minors and the Cuban Winter League. He turned his hand to managing in the mid-1950s and took over as manager of his hometown Pelicans in August 1958. Demonstrating his versatility, Ray caught several games and worked in relief. New Orleans' fans honored him on August 24, receiving a set of luggage and a sizeable check.

Ray was the founder of the Diamond Club of Greater New Orleans in 1959 - an organization of former players and coaches - serving as its first president from 1959 through 1961. Along with Lenny, Ray was inducted into the Diamond Club of Greater New Orleans Hall of Fame in 1972.

"Ray loved baseball very much," recalls Lenny. "He worked very hard at it. I wish I had the same intensity or desire or work ethic that he had. I'd have been a better pitcher."

Following a long illness, Ray Yochim passed away at the Veterans Affairs Medical Hospital in Metairie, Louisiana on January 26, 2002. He was 79.

Lenny remained involved in baseball after hanging up his ball glove in the mid-1950s. Working for the Pittsburgh Pirates' organization as a scout, he quickly rose to become the club's National Crosschecker,

travelling the United States looking at premium prospects that territorial scouts had discovered. It was while working as a scout that *The Sporting News*' 1945 erroneous report of his brother's death in the Pacific revealed its impact. Lenny was at the Ramada Inn in Lawton, Oklahoma, when he was approached by Rosey Gilhousen, a well-known scout with the California Angels. In a case of mistaken identity, Gilhousen greeted Lenny with "You SOB, you're supposed to dead!"

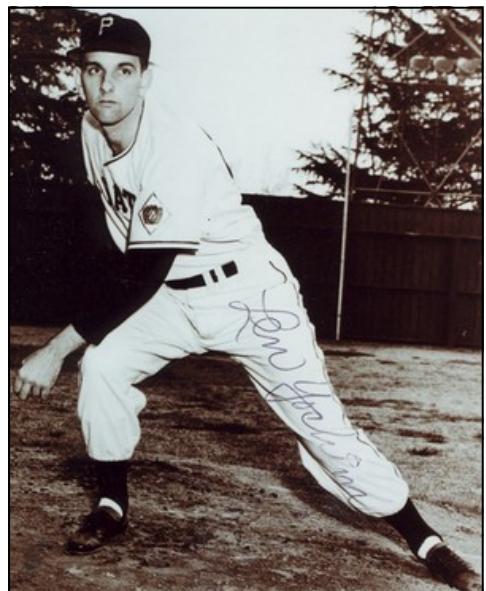
In the mid-1980s, Pirates' general-manager Joe L Brown, asked Lenny for his rating on two young players – Chris Gwynn (younger brother of Tony), and Barry Bonds (the son of former outfielder Bobby). "He did all the things you wanted to see," recalls Lenny of Barry Bonds, "he roamed the field with ease and confidence. And when he got up to the plate to hit he really impressed you, the bat was quick and the stroke was short. He was the best of the two players."

Lenny recommended Bonds and the Pirates drafted him as their number one pick in 1986. The rest, as they, is history.

At 79, Lenny Yochim remains involved with the Pirates and regularly meets with retired local ballplayers to talk about the game over some good Cajun cooking.

"I have no place at this event. I didn't serve," Lenny told me at the "When Baseball Went to War" conference back in November last year. I said it then and I'll say it again now. Lenny, you deserved to be there as much as any man present. Your early years were shaped by the war and your life was affected by having a sibling – a professional baseball-playing sibling – in the service over in the Pacific.

Thanks, Lenny Yochim and Pete Parisi, for sharing these memories.



Lenny Yochim with the Pirates in 1952

Negro League WWII Veterans "Drafted" by MLB Teams

On June 5, 2008, the Negro Leagues Player Draft was held prior to the Major League draft at Disney's Wide World of Sports Complex in Lake Buena Vista, Florida. Each Major League club drafted a surviving former Negro Leagues player, who represented every player who did not have the opportunity to play baseball in the major leagues.

Of the 30 players drafted, eight served with the armed forces during World War II.

Bill Blair (Drafted by the Houston Astros)

Bill Blair graduated from Booker T Washington High School in Dallas and briefly attended Prairie View A&M University. He began his baseball career at the age of 16, playing for a barnstorming team in Mineola, Texas.

Bill served with the Army during WWII and became the youngest African-American to serve as a first sergeant. After his discharge in 1946 he joined the Cincinnati Clowns of the Negro League and later played for the Cincinnati Crescents.

He retired from baseball after 1951 to work full-time as the founder and owner of *Southwest Sports News*, a newspaper that specialized in publishing scores from African-American college games throughout the US.

Jim Colzie (Drafted by the Boston Red Sox)

Jim Colzie entered military service with the Army in December 1942. Following his discharge after the war he played for the Indianapolis Clowns and Atlanta Black Crackers between 1946 and 1952. The highlight of his career was beating Satchel Paige in 1947.

Jim later worked with Little Leaguers and umpired in semi-pro leagues, while working as a junior high history and math teacher.

Walter McCoy (San Diego Padres)

Walter McCoy grew up in San Diego and played for the Chicago American Giants and Kansas City Monarchs of the Negro Leagues. He entered military service in July 1942 and earned an MVP award as a pitcher with an Army team.

Following his discharge in January 1945 he returned to the American Giants. He entered organized baseball in 1949, playing for Visalia of the California League. In 1950 he became the first black player to play for Sacramento of the Pacific Coast League. He later played for Tijuana of the Southwest International League and ended his professional playing days with Nuevo Laredo of the Mexican League in 1955.

Walter later worked as a building contractor and coached his grandson's Little League team.

John "Mule" Miles (Drafted by the Seattle Mariners)

A distinguished athlete in high school and at

Sam Phillips Junior College, he entered military service in 1942, and attended the special Aircraft Mechanic Journeyman Rating School in Tuskegee, Alabama, to assist the nation's first African-American flying training program, the Black Wings.

Following his discharge in 1946, he tried out with the Chicago American Giants and stayed with the team as a third baseman/outfielder through 1949.

Throughout the 1950s, "Mule" coached and managed baseball and basketball teams in San Antonio. In 1974, he completed a law enforcement course at San Antonio Junior College and became a commissioned officer.

In 1982, he received a Certificate of Recognition for Outstanding Contribution to the History of Black Americans from Lackland Air Force Base.

James "Red" Moore (Drafted by the Atlanta Braves)

"Red" Moore began playing in the Negro League in 1934 with the Atlanta Black Crackers. A slick-fielding first baseman, he was a three-time all-star and was recognized with a "Red Moore Day" at Ponce de Leon Park in 1938.

During WWII he served with a combat engineer battalion of the Third Army in Europe. "Red" returned to baseball after the war and retired after the 1958 season.

Hank Presswood (Drafted by the Chicago White Sox)

A shortstop and third baseman, Hank Presswood played for the Mill City Jitterbugs in 1936-1937 and the Denkman All-Stars in Canton, Mississippi, from 1938 to 1944.

Hank served with the Army from February 1945 to 1947, then returned briefly to the Denkman All-Stars before joining the Cleveland Buckeyes of the Negro League. In 1952, his last year in the Negro Leagues, Hank played for the Kansas City Monarchs.

When his baseball career was over, he played fast-pitch softball at Inland Steel, where he was employed for 30 years.

Joe Scott (Drafted by the Milwaukee Brewers)

A leadoff hitter, Joe Scott played with the Chicago American Giants, New York Black Yankees, Pittsburgh Crawfords and the Memphis Red Sox. He had played at Wrigley Field on a high school team in Chicago, earning the distinction as the first black to play at Wrigley.

Joe was given an engraved baseball bat by his teammates on the Memphis Red Sox in 1942 congratulating him for an astonishing .714 batting average during a season cut short when he entered the Army.

Joe served as a staff sergeant. While based at Wright Field, Ohio, he played baseball for the Wright Field Kitty Hawks against the Pittsburgh Pirates in 1944. He later served in Europe with the 350th Field Artillery, 46th Brigade of the US Army. Joe returned to baseball after receiving his discharge and retired in 1956 to become a truck driver.

Bert Simmons (Drafted by the Baltimore Orioles)

Bert Simmons entered service with the Army on April 21, 1943 at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. After being discharged at the end of the war he earned a degree in Business Administration from North Carolina A&T College, in Greensboro.

An outstanding ballplayer in college, Bert signed with the Baltimore Elite Giants of the Negro Leagues in 1950. After leaving baseball in 1952, he became a teacher in the Baltimore City School System for 30 years and retired in 1984. For more than 40 years, he coached baseball at the little league, high school and college levels. Following his retirement, Bert Simmons was inducted in the North Carolina A&T State University Sports Hall of Fame in 1978.

(Thanks to Bill Swank and Bill Nowlin for help with this article)

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This wonderful cartoon by Bob Coyne appeared in *The Sporting News* on May 7, 1942. I thought it would be interesting to look at what happened to the players mentioned. Here are the results. Of the 45 players named, 19 returned to the major leagues for more than one season, 10 played only one post-war major league season, 12 never played in the majors after the war, 3 died (Elmer Gedeon, Forrest Brewer and Gene Stack) and 1 was wounded by a German sniper and unable to play again (Lou Thuman).