

In this issue of the Baseball in Wartime Newsletter, we're looking back on the major league veterans we lost in 2014. In total, 23 big leaguers with World War II service passed away last year, including Hall of Famer Ralph Kiner. The number of World War II vets still living is less than 100, and before we know it, there will be none to talk about their military service. As we approach that time, I am becoming more aware of the important role played by the Baseball in Wartime website and newsletter. The memories and sacrifices of these unsung heroes will always be preserved through Baseball in Wartime and, while I may never be able to provide the complete story of wartime baseball as I would like (due to lack of availability of complete records), I will ensure that every detail I am able to track down will be included on the site. In the meantime, please enjoy this newsletter. Another one will be on its way to you in March!

Big League Vets Who Passed Away in 2014

Vern Benson (US Army – Europe)



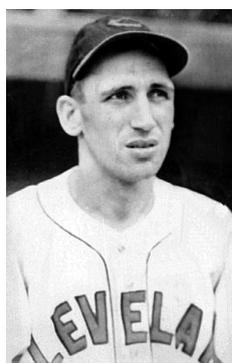
Benson signed with the Philadelphia Athletics in 1943 and made two pinch hit appearances that season. He spent 31 months in military service with the Army and was stationed at Fort Bragg, North Carolina before serving in France and Germany under General Patton.

Benson received the EAME (European-Africa-Middle Eastern) Campaign Medal and Bronze Service Star.

He briefly returned to the Athletics in 1946 and resurfaced in the majors in 1951/52 with the St. Louis Browns. He was also a minor league manager, major league coach and scout. Benson was the interim manager for one game after Ted Turner was told that he couldn't manage the Atlanta Braves in 1977.

Vern Benson passed away on January 20, 2014, in Salisbury, North Carolina. He was 89.

Al Cihocki (US Coast Guard – USA)



Cihocki played with Batavia in the Class D PONY league before serving with the Coast Guard at Curtis Bay, Maryland. He played 92 games with the Cleveland Indians in 1945 and spent the next seven seasons with Baltimore of the Class AAA International League.

Al Cihocki passed away on March 27, 2014, in Nanticoke, Pennsylvania. He was 89.

Mel Clark (US Navy – Pacific)



Clark served with the Navy and was on a destroyer in the Pacific. Assigned to a landing craft, he saw action at Iwo Jima, the Philippines and New Guinea.

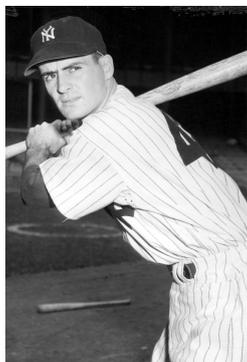
Clark signed with the Philadelphia Phillies in 1947 and made it to the major leagues in 1951. He stayed with the Phillies through

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1955, and reappeared in the big leagues with Detroit in 1957.

Mel Clark passed away on May 1, 2014, in West Columbia, West Virginia. He was 89.

Jerry Coleman (US Navy/US Marine Corps – Pacific)



Coleman had been signed by the New York Yankees before entering military service in 1942. He earned his pilot's wings with the Navy then transferred to the Marines. As a dive bomber pilot flying the Douglas SBD Dauntless, Coleman flew 57 missions against the Japanese with VMSB-341. First Lieutenant Coleman returned to

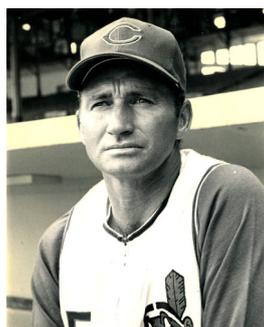
the United States in July 1945 with a Distinguished Flying Cross. When the war ended he was at Cherry Point learning to fly the SB2C Helldiver.

Coleman made his major league debut with the Yankees in 1949 and was an all-star in 1950. He was recalled to military service in May 1952, during the Korean War. Holding the rank of captain, he flew 63 missions between January and May 1953, piloting an AU-1 Corsair ground attack fighter. He earned a second DFC and a further 13 Air Medals. Coleman later said that the highlight of his life was "flying for the Marines."

Coleman retired as a player in 1958 and served in the Yankees' front office. In 1960, he became a broadcaster, calling games for the Yankees and then the California Angels. In 1972, he became the radio announcer for the San Diego Padres.

Jerry Coleman passed away on January 5, 2014, in La Jolla, California. He was 89.

Al Dark (US Marine Corps – China-Burma-India)



Dark was at LSU before joining the Marine Corps' V-12 program in 1943. He was commissioned at Quantico in January 1945, and served in China, guarding and helping transfer supplies at a railroad south of Peking.

Dark made his major league debut with the Boston Braves in 1946. In a career that lasted until 1960, he also played for the Giants, Cardinals, Cubs, Phillies and Milwaukee Braves. He was a major league manager between 1961 and 1977.

Al Dark passed away on November 13, 2014, in Easley, South Carolina. He was 92.

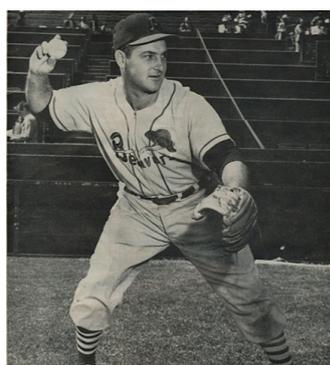
Grant Dunlap (US Marine Corps – Pacific)



Dunlap played two years in the minors before serving in the Pacific with the Marine Corps. He made it to the major leagues in 1953, playing 16 games for the St. Louis Cardinals.

Grant Dunlap passed away on September 10, 2014, in Vista, California. He was 90.

George Freese (US Army Air Force)

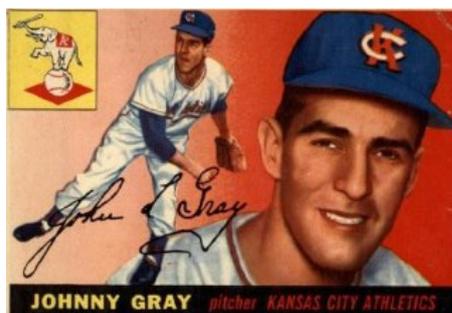


Freese served with the Army Air Force during World War II. He later attended West Virginia University and was signed by the Brooklyn Dodgers. Freese made it to the major leagues with the Tigers in 1953, then shared the infield at Pittsburgh

with his brother, Gene, in 1955. He returned to the majors with the Cubs in 1961.

George Freese passed away on July 27, 2014, in Portland, Oregon. He was 87.

Johnny Gray (US Army – Mediterranean)



Gray served with the Army in the Mediterranean Theater during World War II. He signed with the Yankees organization in 1950 and made

his major league debut with the Philadelphia

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Athletics in 1954. He was with the Athletics in Kansas City in 1955, the Indians in 1958 and the Phillies in 1958.

Johnny Gray passed away on May 21, 2014, in Boca Raton, Florida. He was 87.

Art Kenney (US Army Air Force – Europe)

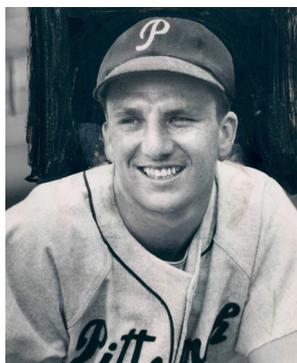


Kenney pitched for Holy Cross and was signed by the Boston Braves upon graduation in 1938, making two major league appearances that season. He served with the Army Air Force as a communications officer with the 398th

Bomb Group in England during World War II.

Art Kenney passed away on March 12, 2014, in Littleton, New Hampshire. He was 97.

Ralph Kiner (US Navy – Pacific)



Hall of Famer Kiner was signed by the Pittsburgh Pirates in 1941. During the war he served with the Navy, earning his pilot's wings and a commission at Corpus Christi in December 1944. He flew submarine patrols in Martin PBM Mariners from Kaneohe Bay Naval Air Station in

Hawaii, accumulating 1,200 flying hours.

Kiner made his major league debut with the Pirates in 1946. In a career that spanned 10 years with the Pirates, Cubs and Indians, he was a six-time all-star and led the National League in home runs for seven straight years. He retired after the 1955 season and became general-manager of the San Diego Padres in the Pacific Coast League - a position he held until 1960 when he launched a career as a broadcaster with the White Sox and the Mets.

Ralph Kiner passed away on February 6, 2014, in Rancho Mirage, California. He was 91.

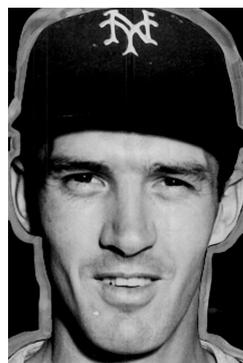
Chuck Kress (US Army – USA)



Kress began playing professional baseball in the Cincinnati Reds organization in 1940. He then served in the Army between 1943 and 1945 as a physical trainer stationed in Florida and Mississippi. Kress made his major league debut with the Reds in 1947. He was back with the Reds in 1949 before being purchased by the White Sox in June. His final season came in 1954, playing for the Tigers and Dodgers.

Chuck Kress passed away on March 4, 2014, in Colville, Washington. He was 92.

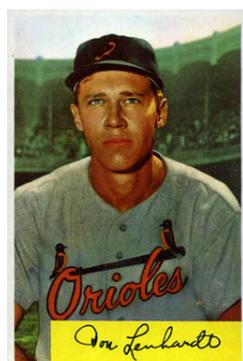
Les Layton (US Navy)



Layton was signed by the New York Giants in 1944. He served with the Navy during 1945 and was released from service in April 1946. He played his only season in the major leagues with the Giants in 1948, appearing in 63 games.

Les Layton passed away on March 1, 2014, in Scottsdale, Arizona. He was 92.

Don Lenhardt (US Navy – Atlantic and Pacific)



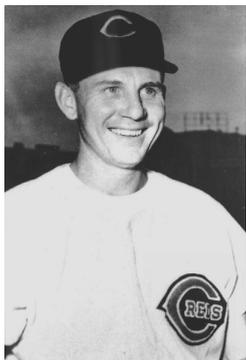
Lenhardt joined the Navy in January 1942, and served as part of a Naval Armed Guard Unit on merchant ships that were transporting supplies for the war effort. He spent time in the North Atlantic and the Pacific.

Lenhardt was signed by the St. Louis Browns in 1946 and made his major league debut in 1950. In a career that spanned five seasons, he also played for the White Sox, Red Sox, Tigers and Orioles. Lenhardt worked for the Red Sox organization after his playing days ended. He was a first base coach in the early 1970s and a Midwest-area scout for over four decades.

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Lenhardt passed away on July 9, 2014, in Chesterfield, Missouri. He was 91.

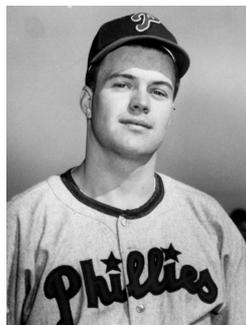
George Lerchen (US Navy – USA)



Lerchen was signed by the Tigers organization in 1942. He served with the Navy at Great Lakes Naval Station, Illinois, during World War II and made his major league debut with the Tigers in 1952. He also played for the Cincinnati Reds the following season.

George Lerchen passed away on March 26, 2014, in Garden City, Michigan. He was 91.

Jackie Mayo (US Marine Corps)



Mayo served as a second lieutenant with the Marine Corps during World War II. He later attended Notre Dame and was signed by the Phillies in 1947, making his major league debut the following year. Mayo remained with the Phillies until 1953.

Jackie Mayo passed away on August 19, 2014, in North Lima, Ohio. He was 89.

Pat McGlothlin (US Navy – USA)



McGlothlin attended the University of Tennessee before enlisting with the Navy and was stationed in Texas. He was signed by the Dodgers organization in 1946 and made his major league debut with Brooklyn in 1949, appearing in seven games. He made a single appearance

for the Dodgers the following year.

Pat McGlothlin passed away on October 24, 2014, in Knoxville, Tennessee. He was 94.

Roger McKee (US Navy – Pacific)

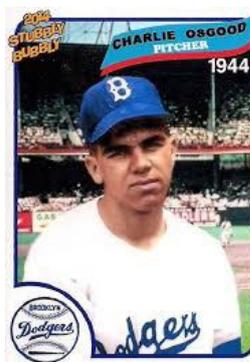


McKee was just 16 when he made his major league debut with the Philadelphia Phillies in 1943, appearing in four games that year, he made a final appearance the following season. McKee served with the Navy in the Pacific in 1945 and then played in the

minors until 1957.

Roger McKee passed away on September 1, 2014, in Shelby, North Carolina. He was 87.

Charlie Osgood (US Coast Guard – USA)



Osgood was 17 years old when he made his only major league appearance with the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1944. He served with the Coast Guard in 1945, and played in the minors until 1947.

Charlie Osgood passed away on January 23, 2014, in Tewksbury, Massachusetts. He

was 87.

Bill Renna (US Marine Corps – Pacific)



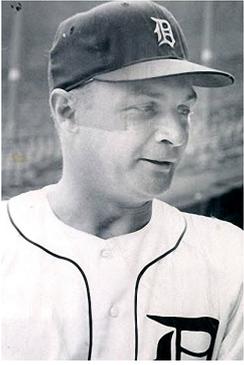
Renna served in the Pacific with the Marine Corps during World War II. He was signed by the Yankees after graduating from Santa Clara University in 1949 and made his major league debut with that club in 1953. Renna was with the Athletics from 1954 to 1956 and played for the Red Sox in 1958 and

1959.

Bill Renna passed away on July 19, 2014, in San Jose, California. He was 89.

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George Spencer (US Navy – Pacific)



Spencer enlisted in the Navy in 1944. Following training at Great Lakes Naval Station, Illinois, he served in the Pacific. He signed with the New York Giants in 1947 and made his major league debut with that club in 1950. He remained with the Giants until 1955 and played for the Tigers in 1958 and 1960.

George Spencer passed away on September 10, 2014, in Galena, Ohio. He was 88.

Dick Teed (US Marine Corps)



Teed served with the Marine Corps during World War II. He was signed by the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947 and made his only major league appearance, as a pinch hitter, in 1953. Teed continued to play in the minors into the 1960s and in the 1970s he became the Dodgers head

scout for the Northeast Region.

Dick Teed passed away on August 17, 2014, in Newport, Rhode Island. He was 88.

Bob Usher (US Navy – Pacific)



Usher signed with the Cincinnati Reds organization in 1944. He served with the Navy in the Pacific in 1945 and made his big league debut with the Reds in 1946, appearing in 92 games. During a career that spanned six seasons over 12 years, Usher also played for the Cubs, Indians and Senators. After baseball, Usher

was a US Naval Intelligence agent and a member of the Coast Guard Auxiliary.

Bob Usher passed away on December 29, 2014, in San Jose, California. He was 89.

George Zuverink (US Army Air Force – Pacific)



Zuverink served with the 93rd Airdrome Squadron of the Army Air Force and spent two years in Australia, New Guinea and the Philippines. "My job was driving gas and oil trucks for refueling," he told me some years ago. "Not too exciting but I did

my job - someone had to do it!"

Zuverink was signed by the St. Louis Cardinals in 1946, and made his big league debut with the Cleveland Indians in 1951. In a career that spanned eight seasons, he also played for the Reds, Tigers and Orioles.

George Zuverink passed away on September 8, 2014, in Tempe, Arizona. He was 90.

Final exhibit at Mickey Vernon Museum

The Mickey Vernon Sports History Museum at the Granite Run Mall opened on April 21, 2013. Since then, over 8,000 visitors have come to appreciate the great sports heritage of Delaware County, Pennsylvania.

The museum will close this year and as its final exhibit, the museum will present a retrospective on its namesake, Mickey Vernon. Titled "Mickey Vernon: Grand Memories of a Great Champion", the exhibit will feature numerous photos and artifacts of Mickey's days in Major League Baseball as a player, manager, coach and scout. This final display of the museum will start on February 4, 2015, closing on March 7, 2015. Please take advantage of visiting the museum for what will be your final opportunity to see over 100 years worth of showcased Delco athletes.

The museum is located on the second floor of the Granite Run Mall, close to Boscov's, and is open Tuesday through Saturday from 11 am to 4 pm. For more information, view the website www.mickeyvernonssportsmuseum.com or contact Jim Vankoski at 610-909-4919 or vankoski21@comcast.net

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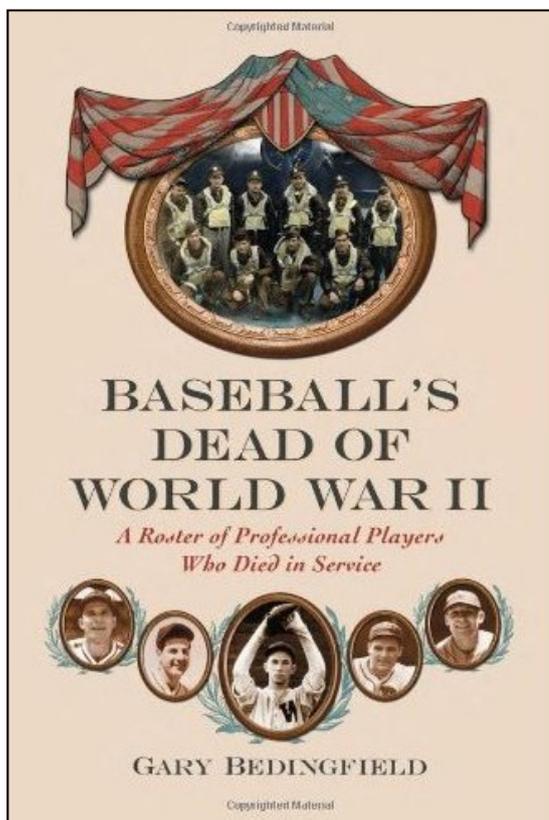
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While most fans know that baseball stars Ted Williams, Hank Greenberg, and Bob Feller served in the military during World War II, few can name the two major leaguers who died in action. (They were catcher Harry O'Neill and outfielder Elmer Gedeon.) Far fewer still are aware that at least another 125 minor league players also lost their lives during the war. Baseball's Dead of World War II draws on extensive research and interviews by author Gary Bedingfield to bring their personal lives, baseball careers, and wartime service to light.

272 pages

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Got a comment or something to contribute?

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