

Baseball in the CBI

Initially important to the Allied war effort because of plans to invade Japan from the Chinese mainland, the China-Burma-India Theater (CBI) became mainly an effort to keep China supplied and in the war, and is often referred to as the forgotten theater of World War II. Only about 250,000 Americans (approximately 2% of those mobilized during the war years) were assigned to the CBI. The Army Air Force flew supplies over "The Hump" from India to China, fought the Japanese in the air over China and Burma, and used B-29 Superfortresses to bomb mainland Japan. Merrill's Marauders and the Mars Task Force fought through the jungles of Burma and Army Engineers built the Ledo Road, a supply lifeline from India to China.

Professional baseball scattered its family all across the globe during World War II, and the CBI was no exception. Hank Greenberg and Buddy Lewis are the two best-known major leaguers to serve in the theater, but they are by no means the only ones. The following pages provide details on the big leaguers, minor leaguers and Negro League players who served in the CBI, as well as giving an insight into the role baseball played in this area during those years.

Major League Players in the CBI

Bill Atwood, Phillies catcher from 1936 to 1940

Harry Boyles, White Sox pitcher in 1938 and 1939

Bubba Church, post-war National League pitcher

George Crowe, post-war Negro and National League first baseman

John "Red" Davis, Giants third baseman in 1941

Ray Dobens, Red Sox pitcher in 1929

Hank Greenberg, Hall of Fame first baseman whose career spanned 1930 to 1947

Bob Kuzava, post-war major league pitcher

Buddy Lewis, Senators all-star outfielder from 1935 to 1949

Jim Thorpe, Olympic athlete and National League outfielder from 1913 to 1919

Bill Atwood



A keen civilian pilot, Bill Atwood made his big league debut with the Phillies in 1936, and batted .302 in 71 games as a back-up catcher to Earl Grace. He remained with the Phillies until 1940, playing a career high 102 games in 1938. He was with

Jersey City of the Class AA International League in 1941 and was signed by the Hollywood Stars of the Pacific Coast League for 1942. At the end of that season, on October 9, he enlisted in the Army Air Force. With 1,400 hours of flying time already under his belt, Atwood initially attended the Central Instructors' School of Aviation and served as an instructor at Kelly Field and Randolph Field in Texas. After receiving his flight officer warrant and Army service pilots wings in July 1944, he was stationed at Love Field in Dallas, Texas, making hundreds of ferry

Baseball in Wartime Newsletter No. 35 May 2015

trips across the USA and several trans-Atlantic flights to England and North Africa. Assigned to the India-China Division of the US Army Air Force Air Transport Command in December 1944, Atwood was stationed at Sookertang, India, flying C-46 over "The Hump". After completing 200 hours of flying time, Atwood served as a C-46 pilot instructor at Sookertang, occupying the co-pilot's seat while student pilots flew on instruments, practised landings and learned emergency procedures for becoming "Hump" pilots.

Captain Atwood was discharged from service at the end of 1945. Aged 34, he returned to the Hollywood Stars in 1946, but after batting just .167 in 16 games he became team's third base coach. In 1947, he became player/manager of the Sherman-Denison Twins of the Class B Big State League and was with Ballinger of the Class D Longhorn League in 1948.

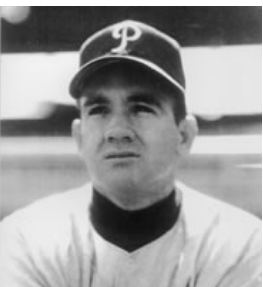
Harry Boyles



Harry Boyles made his major league debut with the Chicago White Sox in August 1938. He appeared in nine games for an 0-4 record and 5.22 ERA. Most of 1939 was spent with the St. Paul Saints of the Class AA American Association but he did make a final two appearances for the White Sox in August of

that year. He ended his professional playing career pitching for the White Sox farm team at Waterloo in the Class B Three-I League and the Fort Worth Cats of the Class A1 Texas League in 1940. Boyles served as a corporal with the Army Air Force and was stationed at Kunming, China in 1945, where he pitched for the Mustangs, representing a fighter squadron, in the American Baseball League.

Bubba Church



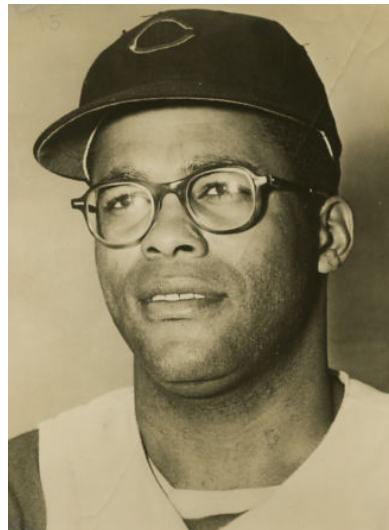
Bubba Church entered military service in March 1943, and served 27 months with the US Army's 472nd Quartermaster Truck Regiment in the province of Assam, India, near the Burmese town of Myitkyina on

the Ledo Road. "It was uncomfortable," he told The Sporting News in August 1950, "while the Japs were about 15 miles from us, but when they were cleaned out it was just like the Parkway in Philadelphia."

Church earned notoriety pitching for the 472nd QTR in the Tea Patch League in India. "We had this young kid who just threw lights out," Ken Coleman - Hall of Fame broadcaster who also served with the 472nd - told author Todd Anton in No Greater Love. "We had some visiting pro players in to play against our team. The two guys that stood out on that team were Dixie Walker and Luke Sewell. He struck out 12 guys that day! Thus, the legend of 'Bubba' Church was born."

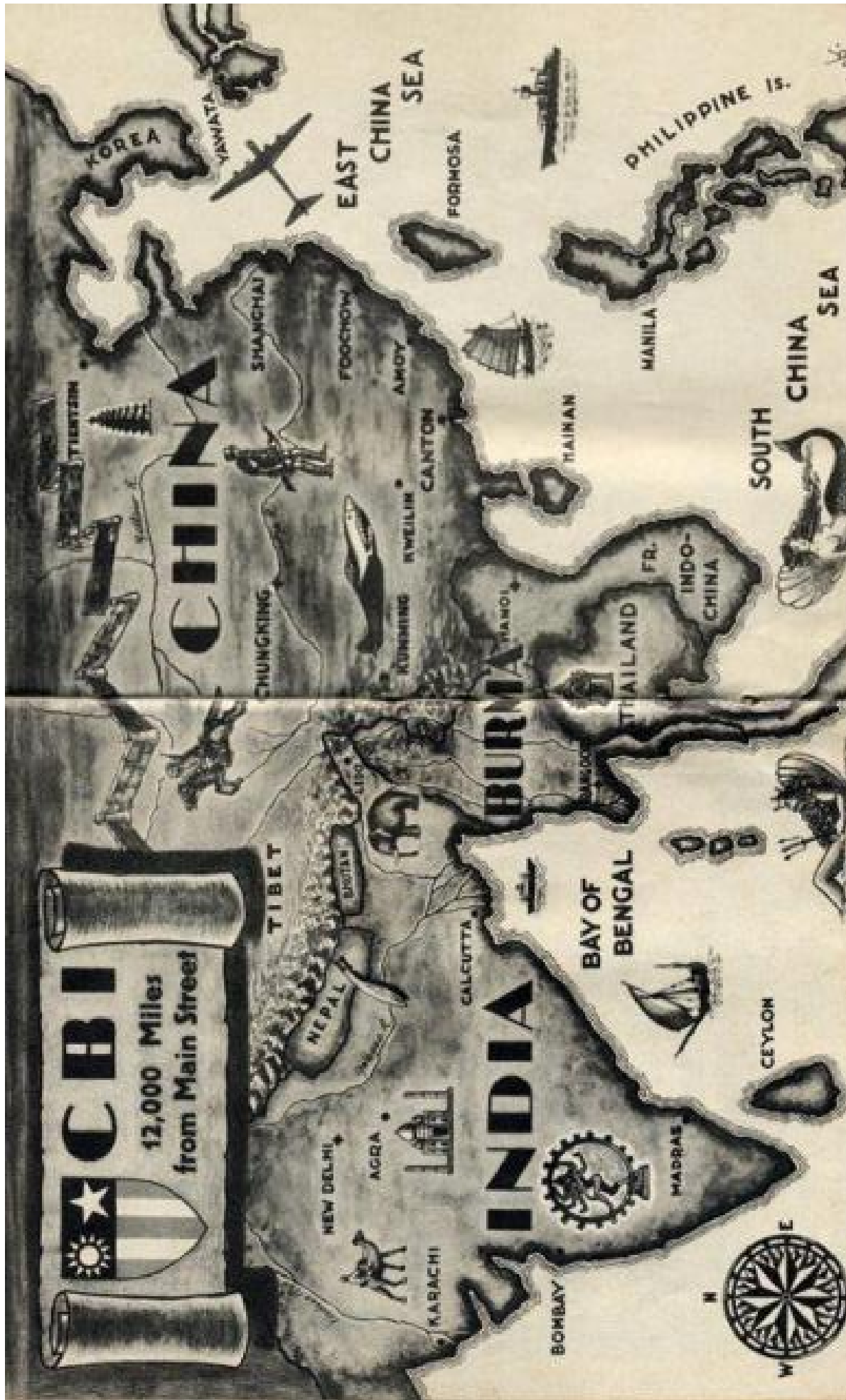
Church was discharged from the Army in late 1945. He was signed by the Phillies in 1947 and made his major league debut in April 1950. Near-tragedy struck on September 15 of his rookie season, when a screaming line drive off the bat of Cincinnati's Ted Kluszewski smashed into his face. Church was carried off the field by his stunned teammates, but was out on the mound again little more than a week later. He was the mainstay of the Phillies pitching staff with 15 wins in 1951, and continued to pitch in the majors until 1955.

George Crowe



George Crowe served with the the US Army in the CBI during World War II. Upon his discharge in 1946, he joined an integrated basketball team known as the Los Angeles Red Devils, where he was a teammate of Jackie Robinson. He also played for the famed barnstorming team,

the Harlem Renaissance, and played baseball with the New York Black Yankees of the Negro National League in 1947 and 1948. The following year, Crowe was signed by the Boston Braves and made his big league debut in April 1952. He played in the major leagues until 1961 and was an all-star in 1958.



Baseball in Wartime Newsletter No. 35 May 2015

John "Red" Davis



Red Davis began his professional baseball career in the Cardinals organization in 1935, making his big league debut with the New York Giants in September 1941. In a major league career that spanned just 21 days, the 25-year-old third baseman played 21 games and batted .214.

Davis entered military service with the Army Air Force a month after Pearl Harbor and was in the CBI by late 1944. Staff Sergeant Davis was discharged in 1946 and returned to professional baseball, playing and then managing in the minor leagues until 1976.

Ray Dobens



Ray Dobens played just one season in the major leagues, pitching 11 games for the 1929 Boston Red Sox. He later became a Special Investigator with the United States Department of the Treasury, and during World War II, held the rank of Lieutenant Commander in Naval Intelligence, serving as a director of a police school in Chungking, China.

Hank Greenberg



Tigers first baseman, Hank Greenberg, was a four-time all-star and had led the American League in home runs and RBIs three times before entering military service on May 7, 1941. Greenberg soon attained the rank of sergeant with the Army but was honorably discharged on

December 5, 1941, after Congress released men aged 28 years and older from service. Two days later, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and on February 1, 1942, Greenberg re-enlisted, was inducted at Fort Dix, New Jersey, and volunteered

for service in the Army Air Corps. "We are in trouble," he told *The Sporting News*, "and there is only one thing for me to do – return to the service. This doubtless means I am finished with baseball and it would be silly for me to say I do not leave it without a pang. But all of us are confronted with a terrible task – the defense of our country and the fight for our lives."

Greenberg graduated from Officer Candidate School at Miami Beach, Florida, and was commissioned as a first lieutenant. He was assigned to the Army Air Force physical education program and requested an overseas transfer in 1944. Greenberg joined the 58th Bomb Wing – the first group of Boeing B-29 Superfortresses to go overseas. He spent six months in India before being ferried over Burma to China where he served in an administrative capacity. "I'll never forget the first mission our B-29s made from our base to Japan," Greenberg told Arthur Daley, writing in the February 14, 1945 *New York Times*. "I drove out to the field in a jeep with General Blondie Saunders who led the strike, and took my place in the control tower. Those monsters went off, one after the other, with clock-work precision.

"Then we spotted one fellow in trouble. The pilot saw he wasn't going to clear the runway, tried to throttle down, but the plane went over on its nose at the end of the field. Father Stack, our padre, and myself raced over to the burning plane to see if we could help rescue anyone. As we were running, there was a blast when the gas tanks blew and we were only about 30 yards away when a bomb went off. It knocked us right into a drainage ditch alongside the rice paddies while pieces of metal floated down out of the air."

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

Baseball in Wartime Newsletter No. 35 May 2015

In June 1945, Captain Greenberg was placed on the military's inactive list and he returned to the Tigers. Without the benefit of spring training, he joined Detroit's starting line-up on July 1, 1945. Before a crowd of 47,729, he homered against the Athletics in the eighth inning. Greenberg's return helped the Tigers to a come-from-behind American League pennant, clinching it with a grand-slam home run in the final game of the season. Greenberg remained in the major leagues until 1947 and was inducted in the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1956.

Bob Kuzava

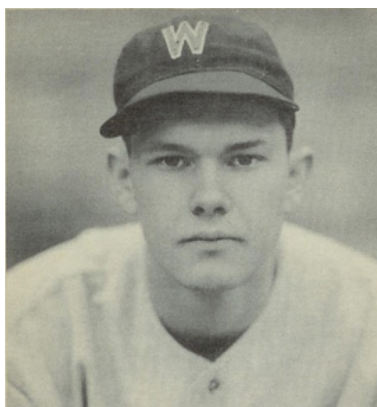


Bob Kuzava was signed by the Cleveland Indians in 1941 and was 21-6 with a 1.72 ERA for the Charleston Senators of the Class C Middle-Atlantic League in 1941. He entered military service the following year and served with an MP detachment in Calcutta, India. In a game against the BAB Flyers in November

1945, the Tiger Rag newspaper reported how Kuzava "mixed a fine curve with a blazing fast ball that had our boys handcuffed. He struck out fourteen men, and allowed only three hits."

Kuzava was back in the minors in 1946 and made his debut with the Indians in September. His big league career spanned 10 seasons, mostly as a relief pitcher, and he continued to play in the minors until 1960.

Buddy Lewis



Buddy Lewis signed with the Senators in 1934 and made his debut in the majors the following year. Playing third base and the outfield, he was an all-star in 1938 and hit over .300 three times before entering military service

following the 1941 season. A C-47 transport pilot with the 1st Air Commando Group in the China-Burma-India Theater, Captain Lewis amassed 1,799 flying hours of which 611 were in combat over 392 missions, during 18 months in the CBI. In March 1944, as part of Operation Thursday, he towed gliders loaded with Major General Wingate's Chindits (British special forces troops who operated behind enemy lines), safely flying them over the jungle-clad 7,000-foot Chin hills of Burma and across enemy-held positions before delivering them 200 miles behind the Japanese lines. He also flew the same route loaded with Wingate's reinforcements, plus mules, artillery and supplies, landing his plane on a jungle air strip. During this time he was told that if he crashes to come out of the plane with a baseball in his hand because the Japanese loved baseball and it might just save his life. He was also told to carry a cake of cocaine in his pocket because if he crashed, the natives loved the stuff and would get him out of the jungle to safety.

Upon his return to the United States in 1945, with the Distinguished Flying Cross and Air Medal pinned to his chest, he commented, "I've been away so long, I've practically forgotten baseball."

"My good friend, Buddy Lewis," recalled George Case, "left for war and missed four years of baseball. He left a dark-haired man and came back to us at the end of 1945 with a full head of white hair and some hair-raising stories." Lewis remained with the Senators until 1949 and was a second-time all-star in 1947.

Jim Thorpe

Considered one of the most versatile athletes of



modern sports, Jim Thorpe won Olympic gold medals in 1912, played college and professional football, professional basketball, and played major league baseball for the Giants, Reds and Braves between 1913 and 1919. By 1945, Thorpe was 58 years old, an

Baseball in Wartime Newsletter No. 35 May 2015

alcoholic and a shadow of his former self, serving as a carpenter's mate with the Merchant Marine aboard an ammunition ship that docked at Calcutta, India, on at least one occasion.

Minor League Players in the CBI

Gene Bergerson

Gene Bergerson had pitched three seasons in the minors, latterly with the Dallas Rebels of the Class A1 Texas League, before entering military service in September 1942.

Staff Sergeant Bergerson served with the U.S. Army's Quartermaster and Field Artillery mule pack outfits on a 2,300-mile trail into Burma. During that time he hauled a battered fielder's glove and catcher's mitt and a half-dozen baseballs with him across Burma and into China. "Every time we bivouac I talk somebody into playing catch," he told the military publication, *Along the Burma Road*, in August 1945. "Gotta keep the old salary wing in condition even if I am in the middle of nowhere."

Gene Bergerson returned to the minors in 1946. In his only post-war season, he pitched for Lubbock, Quincy, Beaumont and Newark.

Keith Bissonnette

Keith Bissonnette signed with the St. Paul Saints of the Class AA American Association in the late summer of 1939. The infielder/outfielder spent most of 1940 with Leesburg of the Class D Florida State League and had stops at Utica, Augusta and Jacksonville before joining the Saints in 1942. Before



the 1943 season got under way, Bissonnette was in military service, earning his pilot's wings and a commission as a second lieutenant, and leaving the United States for overseas duty in India, with the 88th Fighter Squadron of the 80th Fighter Group. As part of the Tenth Air Force, the 80th Fighter Group was a vital element in the victory in Burma. During its two years in combat in the CBI, this group, which called

itself the Burma Banshees, flew patrols in support of the cargo airlift over "the Hump" between Assam, India and Kunming, China. The 80th also provided offensive strikes in the Huwang Valley of northern Burma to protect allied engineers building the Ledo Road. The duties of the group were later extended to include offensive strikes in northern Burma to prevent the establishment of enemy bases from which Allied planes might be attacked. But Japanese opposition was not the only enemy. In the dense jungles temperatures could reach 140 degrees Fahrenheit with humidity hovering near 100 percent. Crews had to work amidst swarms of beetles and flies, and sleep beneath mosquito netting. Disease hospitalized more men than opposing enemy fire.

Bissonnette flew a P-40 Warhawk fighter plane with the group's distinctive death's head skull painted on each side of the engine cowling. In addition to escorting bomber forces into and out of Burma, Bissonnette flew fighter sweeps on Japanese air bases. In June 1944, the 80th Fighter Group began the conversion from P-40s to the P-47 Thunderbolt, the largest single-engined fighter of its day. By July, Bissonnette was operating from bases in Assam, India, attacking Japanese forces in the Bhamo, Loiwing and Lashio areas, which had been unreachable with P-40s.

"Lieutenant Keith Bissonnette, former infielder belonging to St. Paul ... has been awarded the Air Medal for distinguished service," announced *The Sporting News* in November 1944. Bissonnette flew over 200 missions, and also received the Distinguished Flying Cross with one oak leaf cluster plus three oak leaf clusters to go with the Air Medal.

On March 28, 1945, almost a year after he first arrived in the CBI, First Lieutenant Bissonnette took off from the squadron's airfield at Myitkyina, Burma, and never returned. Flying into central Burma, Bissonnette was attacking Japanese troop concentrations and supply areas. He was killed when his P-47 crashed two miles southeast of Keng Tung, Burma, near the border with China.

Baseball in Wartime Newsletter No. 35 May 2015

Herb Coley

Herb Coley was signed by the Philadelphia Athletics and played for the Williamsport Grays of the Class A New York-Penn League in 1937. He served in the CBI with Merrill's Marauders, a U.S. Army long-range penetration special operations jungle warfare unit. Named for its commander, Major General Frank Merriwell, the unit became famous for its missions behind Japanese lines, often engaging forces superior in number. Herb Coley did not return to baseball after the war.

Pat D'Auria

Pat D'Auria starred on the infield at Southwestern Louisiana Institute (now Louisiana University at Lafayette) and played one season in the Yankees farm system with the Port Arthur Tarpons of the Class D Evangeline League before entering military service with the Army Air Force in September 1941. He served in the CBI from 1943 to 1945, attaining the rank of staff sergeant, while playing and coaching on a fast-pitch softball team that won a USO championship.

Lloyd Duncan

Outfielder Lloyd Duncan had signed with the Kansas City Blues of the Class AA American Association before entering military service. In 1945, he played baseball with the Rinkydinks in the American Baseball League in Kunming, China.

Mike Feduniak



Mike Feduniak played baseball, football and basketball at Kent State University before signing with the Boston Red Sox. In 1942, the 21-year-old catcher played 38 games with the Bluefield Blue-Grays of the Class C Mountain State League and five games with the Oneonta Indians of

the Class C Canadian-American League. He enlisted in the Army Air Force in September 1942, graduated as a pilot with a rank of second-lieutenant in April 1944, and was sent to Ledo, India to serve with the 315th Troop Carrier Squadron of the 443rd Troop Carrier Group in November 1944. Feduniak became a flight leader after seven months

and was sent to Dinjan, India, to fly C-46s over the "Hump" until the Japanese surrender. He earned two Distinguished Flying Crosses, three Air Medals, a Purple Heart and a recommendation for a Congressional Medal of Honor. He returned to the United States as a first lieutenant in December 1945, and continued to play minor league baseball from 1946 to 1949.

Pete Felice

Pete Felice pitched for the San Jose Owls in the Class C California League in 1942, posting a 7-4 won-loss record with an ERA of 3.24. Sergeant Felice was stationed in Kunming, China and pitched for the Bulldogs in the American Baseball League during 1945.

Ty Fleming



Ty Fleming's professional baseball career had only just begun when he was drafted for military service. After playing just three games in 1941 for the Cocoa Fliers, a White Sox farm club in the Class D Florida East Coast League, Fleming entered service with the Army Air Corps.

He played on the ball team at Gunter Field, Alabama, before serving in the CBI as a Staff Sergeant with the 72nd Service Squadron, part of the 52nd Service Group, at Jorhat, India. Fleming was a carpenter in the service and constructed buildings as well as reflooring airplanes. "Everything had wood in them back then," he told writer, John Mullen, in 2011. "They had wooden floors. I had to repair all of those. We had to make patterns. They'd call in and say we got ten B-25s coming in got to have new floors. The crews would take them out and we'd have them made when they got there and they'd put 'em in."

George Gamble



Gamble got his first taste of professional baseball as an outfielder with the Sydney Mines Ramblers of the Class D Cape Breton Colliery League in the summer of 1937. He played 46 of the scheduled 48 games with the

Baseball in Wartime Newsletter No. 35 May 2015

Ramblers that year and hit .305 (fifth best in the league) with 22 RBIs, as the team finished third. The following year, he joined the Rome Colonels of the Class C Canadian-American League, but appeared in just 14 games and batted .178. It marked the end of his professional baseball career. Four years later, on September 11, 1942, Gamble entered military service with the Army Air Force. He earned his pilot's wings as a fighter pilot and served overseas flying a P-51B Mustang out of Kunming, China, with the 26th Fighter Squadron of the 51st Fighter Group, 14th Air Force. The 51st Fighter Group's duties involved defending the Chinese end of the "Hump", as well as supporting the Chinese army. It also carried out attacks on Japanese shipping.

On December 4, 1944, flying his 29th mission, Second Lieutenant Gamble was wingman to First Lieutenant Shirley G. Wilson on a reconnaissance flight over French Indo-China (now Vietnam). They were heading southwest, following the railroad just out of Lang Son when they spotted a Japanese troop train. Lt. Wilson went in to attack; Lt. Gamble followed close behind. Shortly afterwards there was a huge explosion and Wilson believed Gamble had made a direct hit on the locomotive but did not see his wingman pull up.

"I started calling him [on the radio], but with no answer," Wilson later reported. "I had previously had good radio contact with him."

He then made at least ten passes and spotted small pieces of wreckage. His last pass over the target area was with flaps down and at a very slow speed. This time he could clearly see pieces of wreckage strewn everywhere and one large piece was a wing tip with part of the Army Air Force insignia showing. Gamble's P-51 had been caught in the explosion he had created by hitting the target.

John D. Hamilton

John Hamilton was a standout athlete at high school in Maine, and signed with the St. Louis Cardinals for a short-lived minor league career. He later worked as a welder at the Portsmouth (NH) Naval Shipyard and served in the CBI during the war.

Walter Lentz

Walt Lentz pitched three years in the minors before entering military service in September 1942. He was 11-3 with Statesville in the Class D Tar Heel League in 1940, 10-8 with Cocoa in the Class D Florida East Coast League in 1941 and 13-14 in 1942, when he returned to the Statesville who were playing in the Class D North Carolina State League that year.

Lentz trained as an aerial gunner and served with the 45th Bomb Squadron of the 40th Bomb Group at Chakulia, India. Staff Sergeant Lentz was part of Captain Robert Shanks' crew aboard a Boeing B-29 Superfortress. On December 14, 1944, the target was to be the Rama VI Railroad Bridge at Bangkok, Thailand. On arriving at Bangkok the railroad bridge was found to be obscured by cloud cover to such an extent that it was impossible to bomb visually. As there were neither fighters or flak in the area two bombing runs were made before it was decided to turn back and bomb the secondary target at Rangoon, the Central Railroad Station and Yards.

Shortly after dropping their bombs there was a tremendous explosion among the formation and Captain Shanks' Superfortress was badly damaged. The crew were forced to bail out and eleven airmen, including Staff Sergeant Walter Lentz were taken prisoner by Japanese ground forces. They were held at the Rangoon Prisoner of War Camp and released five months later on May 9, 1945.

After spending some time at the 142nd General Hospital in Calcutta, India, Lentz returned home to the United States and continued his baseball career. His was 6-4 in 38 appearances for the Tulsa Oilers of the Class AA Texas League in 1946, and 12-7 with the Moultrie Packers of the Class C Georgia-Florida League. He spent the next four seasons with the Lenoir Red Sox of the Class D West Carolina League, posting won-loss records of 15-13 in 1948, 16-9 in 1949, 11-6 in 1950 and 4-5 in 1951.

Dan Magner

Dan Magner of Higham, Massachusetts, had played for the New Orleans Pelicans of the Class A1 Southern Association and was under contract to the New York Giants before a severe injury to his left shoulder ended his playing career in 1940. He served

Baseball in Wartime Newsletter No. 35 May 2015

as a first sergeant with the 316th Depot Supply Squadron of the Army Air Force and was stationed at the Bengal Air Depot in India in 1945. That year, he was often seen on the ball field, taking a few cuts and learning to throw right-handed in the hope of restarting his career after the war.

Jim Perenchio

Jim Perenchio briefly pitched for the Lubbock Hubbers of the West Texas-New Mexico League in 1941 before entering military service. He attained the rank of Master Sergeant in the army and served in the CBI where he played baseball with the Commandos in the American Baseball League at Kunming, China, in 1945.

Bill Peters

Private First Class Bill Peters was in the St. Louis Cardinals farm system before entering military service. He played for the Rinkydinks in the American Baseball League in Kunming, China, in 1945.

Al Pirtle



Al Pirtle, a high school outfielder from Granite City, Illinois, entered military service in April 1943 and served as a cook with the Army Air Force in India and Burma. Baseball was never far from his mind and on one occasion he traded a pair of boots just to get his hands on a ball glove and be able to play catch.

Pirtle began playing professional baseball in 1947 and played in the Class D Florida State League for seven years. He batted .316 with Palatka his rookie year and hit .314 the following year between Palatka and Gainesville. In 1949, he hit a whopping .383 with Gainesville and followed that with a .341 average for DeLand in 1950. Pirtle finished his career with a .333 batting average.

Harry Purcell

Harry Purcell played in the minor leagues from 1916 to 1927. He batted .316 his rookie year at Jacksonville in the Class C Sally League, hit a league-leading .380 with Ionia of the Class C Central



League in 1921, and advanced to the Indianapolis club in the Class AA American Association in 1922. By 1945, Purcell was in his late 40s and serving in the CBI as a lieutenant. He played first base for the Rinkydinks in the American baseball League in Kunming, China.

Chet Redmon

Pitcher Chet Redmon began his professional baseball career with Johnson City of the Class D Appalachian League in 1940 and was with the Sioux City Soos of the Class D Western League in 1941, before entering military service with the Army Air Force. He served in India at the Bengal Air Depot, Titagarh, and played baseball for the Rebels in the Air Depot league. In 1945, Redmon led the Rebels to league victory with a 10-4 victory over the Blue Devils on the last day of the season.

John Regan

John Regan was signed by the Chicago Cubs' organization in 1942 and sent to the Ashland Colonels of the Class C Mountain State League. After a brief stay he joined the Janesville Cubs of the Class D Wisconsin State League, where he made two appearances. His fledgling baseball career was put on hold in November of that year, when he entered military service with the Army Air Force and trained as a radio operator. He was sent to the CBI in November 1943, and served with the 373rd Bomb Squadron of the 308th Bomb Group, Fourteenth Air Force, at Yangkai, China. Technical Sergeant Regan flew regular ferrying missions in a B-24J Liberator over the "Hump" to India, and on May 25, 1944, he was the radio operator/gunner on B-24J "Zoot Chute", piloted by First Lieutenant Robert M. King. On board were five other crew members in addition to Regan and King, plus three passengers. The plane was bound for Chabua, India, and the last radio contact was made 30 minutes east of its destination. It was never heard from again. One year later the crew were officially declared dead and due to the mountainous terrain where the plane was lost, it was believed that even if the wreckage were located, it

Baseball in Wartime Newsletter No. 35 May 2015

would be impossible to recover the remains. In fact, the American Graves Registration Service made two unsuccessful attempts to find this missing airplane in the late 1940s.

John Regan was posthumously awarded the Air Medal, and is memorialized at the Manila American Cemetery at Fort Bonifacio in the Philippines. On October 26, 2008, 64 years after Zoot Chute disappeared, it was discovered by aviation archaeologist Clayton Kuhles. Kuhles conducts regular expeditions to Burma, India, Bangladesh and China, to locate and document missing-in-action Allied aircraft lost in that area during World War II. He discovered the B-24 at over 11,000 feet elevation on a rugged mountain north of Damroh. The nearest village was Milang, a five-day trek. Kuhles intends to locate and notify the surviving family members.

Larry Rhodes



Larry Rhodes of Far Rockaway, New York, signed with the New York Giants out of high school. A shortstop, he suffered a career-ending elbow injury early in his career and took a job at the Republic Aviation plant. He entered military service in 1943 and became a B-29

Superfortress gunner with the 767th Bomb Squadron of the 462nd Bomb Group. From an air base at Paradoban, India, about 60 miles northwest of Calcutta, he and his crew flew 27 combat missions over Singapore and mainland Japan between January and August 1945.

Harold Sherman

Harold Sherman, was 18 years old when he attended an open tryout with the St. Louis Cardinals in September 1939. The right-hander was signed to a minor league contract and joined the Fayetteville Angels of the Class D Arkansas-Missouri League before moving to the Beaver Falls Browns of the Class D Penn State Association, seeing little action with either team. In 1941, Sherman pitched for two last-place teams. He began the season with the

Paragould Browns of the Class D Northeast Arkansas League, where he had a 2-11 won-loss record and 5.93 ERA over 19 games, and he finished the year with the Huntington Aces of the Class D Mountain State League, where he was 1-6 with a 4.87 ERA in eight appearances.

Sherman entered military service in September 1943, and trained as a pilot with the Army Air Force. He was commissioned a flight officer and served overseas with the 492nd Bomb Squadron of the 7th Bomb Group, Tenth Air Force in India, where he ferried fuel and supplies over the "Hump" into China. On July 7, 1945, Sherman piloted a B-24L Liberator that left Tezpur, India, bound for Chengtu in China. The plane and its crew of five never reached their destination, crashing about 30 miles south of Mowkung, China, with the loss of all lives.

Edwin Walls

Second baseman Edwin Walls began his baseball career with the Clarksdale Ginners of the Class C East Dixie League in 1935. He remained with the team over the next two years as they moved to the Class C Cotton States League, and then played two seasons with Rocky Mount in the Class B Piedmont League. He was player-manager in 1940 and 1941 with the Centreville Red Sox of the Class D Eastern Shore League. Walls, who also served as deputy sheriff in Pulaski County, Arkansas, entered military service in September 1943, and served in the CBI with the Criminal Investigation Division, investigating crimes committed by or against military personnel.

Walls returned to professional baseball after the war as player-manager for the Salina Blue Jays in the Class C Western Association in 1946, batting .260 in 100 games. He remained with Salina as manager in 1947, then left baseball but returned for one season in 1953 as manager of the Fort Smith/Van Buren Twins of the Western Association.



Baseball in Wartime Newsletter No. 35 May 2015



The Rebels, baseball champions of the Bengal Air Depot in 1945 Standing, left to right: Tony Perea SS, Jimmy Higgins CF, Chester Redmon P, Dickey Wellborn, Ernie Martin 1B, Ted Boese (Blue Devils SS who posed with the champs), Charles Thompson Mgr, Bert Lightner C. Kneeling: Ed Kilgore RF, Sherman McLam 3B, Henry Daveau 2B, Alonzo Fulmer LF, Jimmy Barr LF.



Photos taken by the 7th Photographic Technical Squadron at Bally, India.



A ball game played by a team of African-American servicemen is stopped to allow an Indian gederya (shepherd) to guide his flock across the diamond.

Baseball in Wartime Newsletter No. 35 May 2015

Negro League Players in the CBI

Joe Lillard



Joe Lillard, who also played in the NFL with the Chicago Cardinals, was a pitcher in the Negro Leagues from 1932 to 1937, playing for the Chicago American Giants and Cincinnati Tigers. In 1945, along with fellow Negro Leaguer Bill Yancey, UCLA football star Kenny Washington, boxer Henry Armstrong and newspaper

sports editor Dan Burley, Lillard was part of an African-American USO tour of the China-Burma-India Theater.

Bill Yancey



Bill Yancey was a Negro League shortstop for 10 seasons, playing for the Hilldale, the New York Black Yankees, New York Cubans and Philadelphia Stars among others. He also played basketball with the New York Renaissance Five, a team that was inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame in 1963. When his playing career ended in 1936, Yancey moved to Panama, where he continued to be involved in baseball. In 1945, he was part of an African-American

USO tour of the China-Burma-India Theater.

Other Ballplaying Servicemen

John Coughlin

Colonel John Coughlin, former baseball star for the Military Academy at West Point, served with the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) in the CBI. The OSS was a predecessor of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). By 1944, he was China's OSS chief.

Norman McNeill

Colonel Norman McNeill, was a catcher on the baseball team of the Military Academy at West Point, and captained the team in 1917. In February 1945, he received the Legion of Merit for his outstanding service as first commander of the General Staff School for Chinese officers in Yunnan province, China. The citation pointed out that "his vision and great effort have brought into being a school which has now been accepted by the Chinese and is contributing greatly to the war effort."

Teddy Shapou

Teddy Shapou had starred in baseball and football at Georgetown College in Kentucky before enlisting in the Army Air Force. He served as a fighter pilot with the Flying Tigers in Burma and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, Silver Star and Air Medal for shooting down several Japanese planes in 1943.

Fred Thomsen

Lieutenant-Colonel Fred C. Thomsen, who served as a special service officer on the staff of General Claire Chenault, was awarded the Legion of Merit for organizing an entertainment, recreation and sports program that did much to maintain the morale of the Fourteenth Air Force in China. Before the war, Thomsen, who had lettered in baseball, football, track and wrestling at the University of Nebraska, had served as head coach of the University of Arkansas football team from 1929 to 1942.

Japanese Ball Players

A number of the troops Allied forces were fighting against had played professional baseball in Japan before the war. At least 13 lost their lives in the China-Burma-India Theater, including Nankai second baseman Shoichi Kuniyama, Hankyu third baseman Hajime Kuwashima, Osaka pitcher Hachiro Miwa, Nagoya infielder Saburo Nakamura, Tokyo third baseman Masami Nakamura, Hankyu first baseman Uzaburo Shintomi and catcher and future Japanese baseball hall of famer Masaki Yoshihara.

Baseball in Wartime Newsletter No. 35 May 2015



Softball at Kalikunda, India in December 1945.



Major League catcher Bill Atwood,
boarding his C-46 in India.



Future Hall of Famer Hank Greenberg, in China in June 1944.

Baseball in Wartime Newsletter No. 35 May 2015

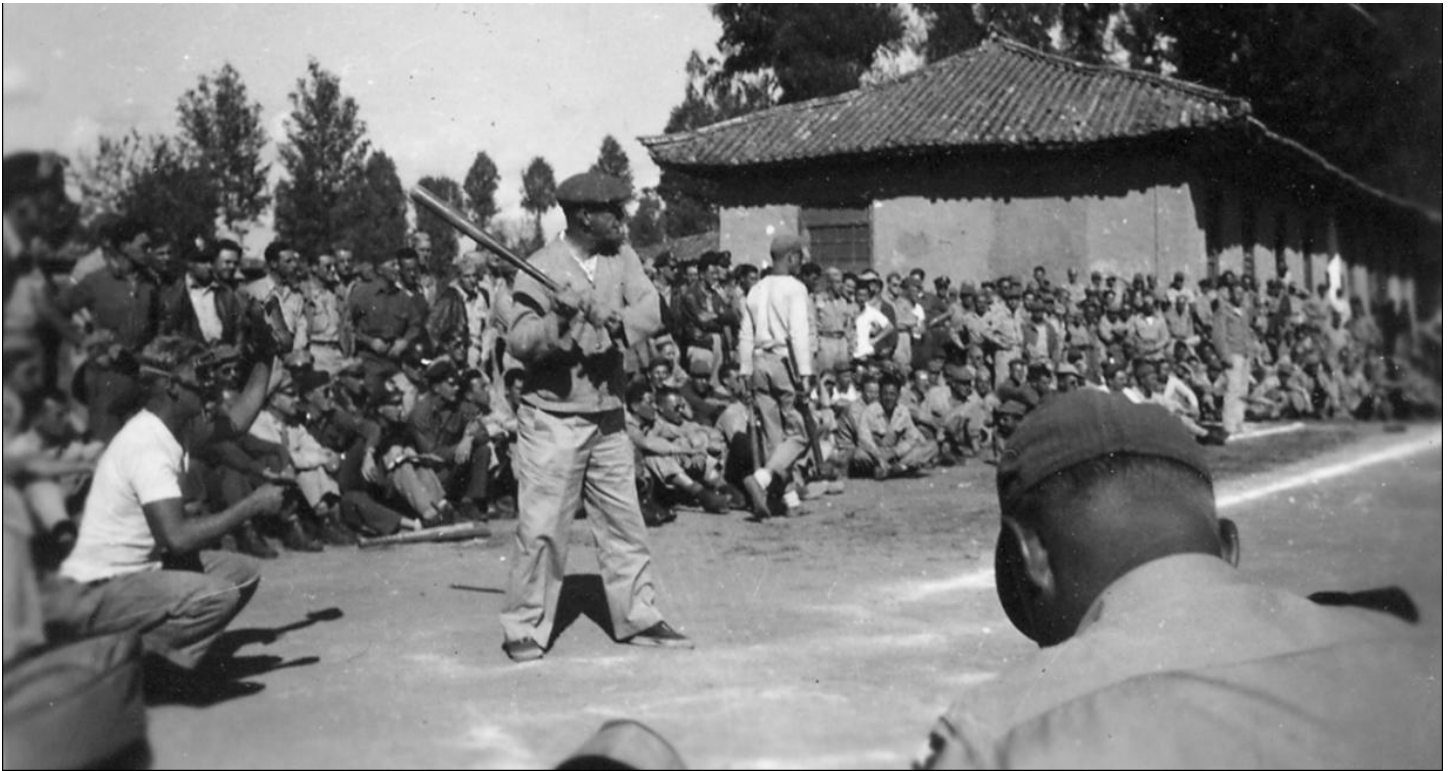


An Indian policeman getting some batting advice from African-American servicemen.

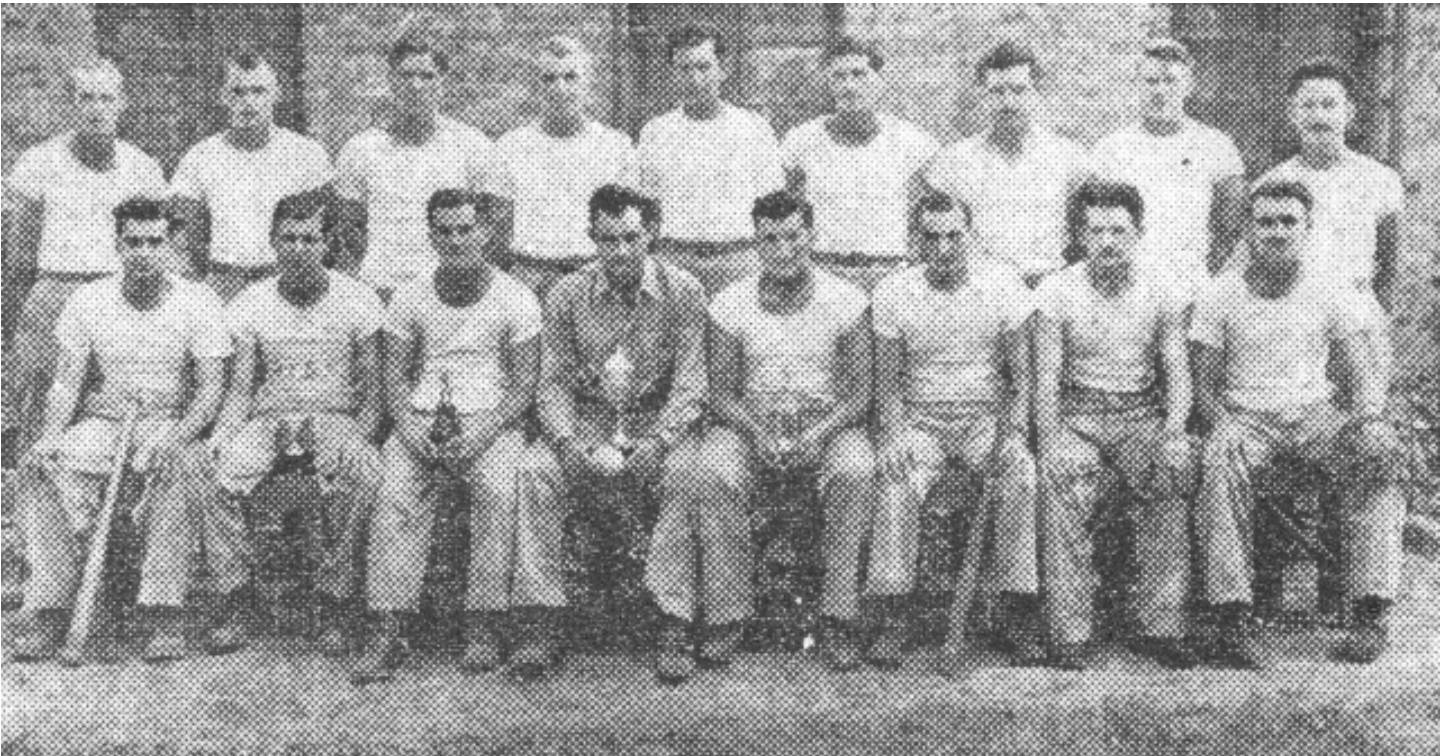


A ballgame played by the 1st Transport Squadron in India.

Baseball in Wartime Newsletter No. 35 May 2015



General Claire Chennault at the plate.



The Chinaside Air Depot Group softball team. This team had a 61-6 record in games between Texas and China. They won the Rear Echelon League at Kelly Field, Texas, the Kelly Field championship and were runner-up in the Texas Service League. Seated left to right: Corp. Keith W. Rigio, Cedarville, Ohio; Corp. Herman B. Killian, South Pittsburg, Tenn.; Pfc. Bob M. Nedrow, St. Joseph, Mo.; Corp. Joe Manley, Alameda, Cal.; Pfc. Edward D. Hubbard, Oswego, N.Y.; Sgt. Earl E. Meyers, Clupper, Va.; Corp. Joseph B. Mackin, Osceola Mills, Pa.; and Corp. Clarence J. Richardel, Lockport, La. Standing left to right: Corp. Joseph J. Mousley, Chatham, N.J.; S/Sgt. Bob Ralston, Denver; Lt. Reid E. Wagner, Barberton, Ohio; Sgt. William T. McCue, Paterson, N.J.; Corp. Foy H. Hammons, Jr., Hope, Ark.; 1st Sgt. Wilmer Stone, Harrisburg, Pa.; Pfc. Chester Bolinski, Buffalo, N.Y.; Pfc. Wayne White, Raleigh, N.C. and Pfc. Irving R. Winogradsky, New York.

Baseball in Wartime Newsletter No. 35 May 2015

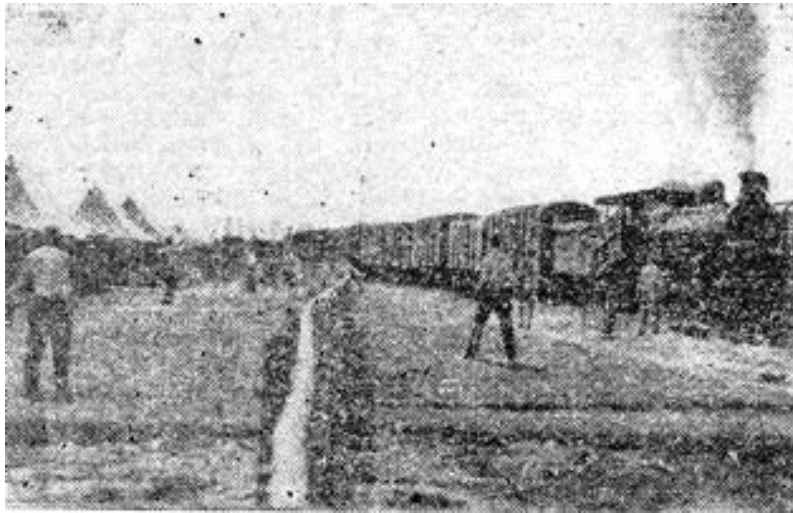


Softball action at the Bengal Air Depot in 1945.



Chinese youngsters learn to play baseball.

Baseball in Wartime Newsletter No. 35 May 2015



American servicemen playing ball alongside the railway in India.



Staff Sergeant Gene Kelly of the radio station Wings Over the orient (WOTO), commentates while playing first base for the Rotation Ramblers against the Burma Bums at Bhamo in Burma.

C · B · I

Roundup

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Servicemen watch a baseball game at the KAB Baseball Field at Malir, India. (National Air and Space Museum Archives, Smithsonian Institution)

Baseball in Wartime Newsletter No. 35 May 2015



A ballgame at the KAB Baseball Field at Malir, India. (National Air and Space Museum Archives, Smithsonian Institution)

Baseball in Wartime Newsletter No. 35 May 2015



Crossing home plate at the KAB Baseball Field at Malir, India. (National Air and Space Museum Archives, Smithsonian Institution)

Major League Baseball's USO Tour of the CBI 1944/1945

In November 1944, a USO-sponsored tour, organized by the Special Services Division of the Army, began a 35,000 mile tour of the CBI. Part of this tour was Dixie Walker, National League batting champion of the Brooklyn Dodgers, veteran outfielder and future Hall of Famer Paul Waner of the New York Yankees, Luke Sewell, manager of the American league champion St. Louis Browns and sports writer Arthur "Red" Patterson of the New York Herald Tribune. USO tour 418 visited military camps in China, Burma and India, talking to servicemen, telling tales of big league baseball and the world series. They also appeared in an Army/Air Force softball game whilst in China, playing for the Air Force with Major General Claire Chanault on the mound and Brigadier general Edgar Glenn behind the plate. Despite this formidable battery along with Sewell at first base, Waner in left field, Walker in center and Patterson in right, the Army team won 11-10.

Whilst in India, Paul Waner was in the mess hall at an army camp, when a winged bat flew from the rafters. As people ducked under tables to avoid the flying mammal, Waner rolled up a newspaper, readied himself, and swung as the bat flew toward him. One swing and the bat's days were over. When someone suggested that he could have missed the bat, staining his reputation as a great hitter, Waner shrugged and said, "So what? I still would have had two strikes left."



Arthur "Red" Patterson (right, holding baseball), talks with troops of the Mars Task Force in their bivouac area in Burma. Paul Waner is left center, wearing dark cap.

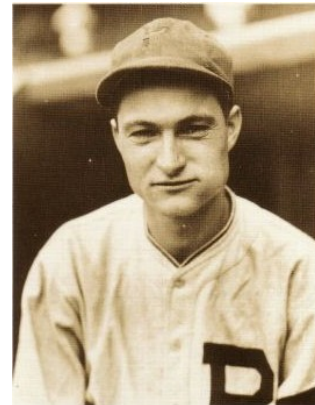
It would be eight weeks before the group returned to the United States. Three weeks later, at the annual dinner of the New York Chapter of the Baseball Writer's Association of America, Walker recalled meeting Buddy Lewis at an airfield on the tour.

"I stood there talking to Buddy Lewis. Finally, Buddy said that he'd have to get back to quarters. And so he picked up his lunchbox, or maybe it was a tool kit, and started back on the road through the jungle. I watched him until he was out of sight, and he never looked back.

"A lot of things happened on our USO trip that I'll remember for the rest of my life, but somehow that moment seems to have made the biggest impression, on me. I had known Lewis only casually, just from playing against him in the American League. But all of a sudden I felt very close to him and unaccountably lonely as he walked away. It was like having a brother on the other side of the world."



Dixie Walker



Paul Waner



Luke Sewell

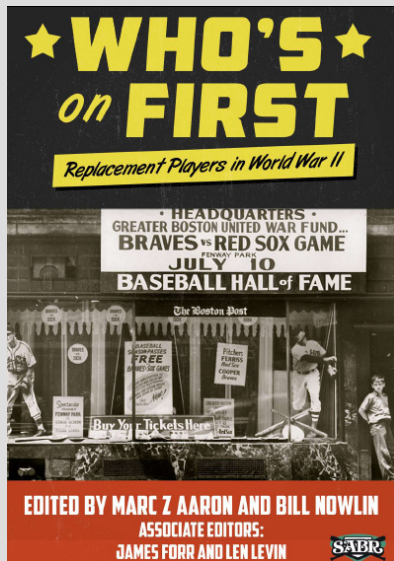


Red Patterson

Baseball in Wartime Newsletter No. 35 May 2015

Who's on First: Replacement Players in World War II

Edited by Marc Z. Aaron and Bill Nowlin



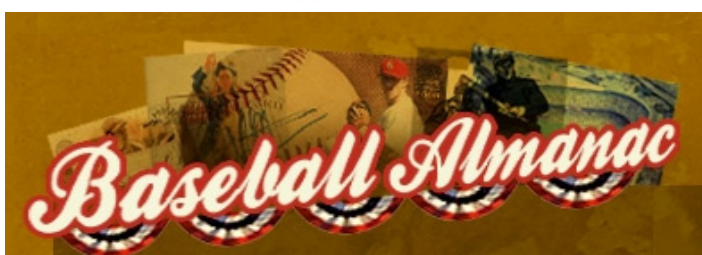
This highly detailed look at baseball on the home front and the replacement players of the war years has recently been released by SABR. It will make a great addition to any military/baseball fan's library.

Ray Nemec (1929-2015)

Raymond J. Nemec, a founding member of SABR, passed away on April 17, 2015. Ray had been a tremendous help to me over the many years I have been conducting wartime baseball research. He never failed to answer my requests for information on minor league players and I will always be grateful to him for helping me to accurately portray the playing careers of many players on both the Baseball in Wartime and Baseball's Greatest Sacrifice websites.

Thank you, Ray!

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ETO Baseball/Battlefield Tour in 2016?

How would you like to stand on the beaches at Normandy and hear how minor league pitcher, Joe Pinder, earned his Medal of Honor? Or see the exact spot where Lefty Brewer, property of the Washington Senators, lost his life following the Battle at La Fiere? Or maybe follow in the footsteps of Cecil Travis during the Battle of the Bulge?

Talks are currently underway to arrange the first ever tour of European battlefields from a baseball perspective. This once-in-a-lifetime opportunity is planned for the summer of 2016. Watch this space for more information.

Artie Forrest—Minor League catcher and World War I Medal of Honor recipient

I'm currently researching the life of Arthur J. Forrest, a minor league catcher from Missouri who, in 1918, singlehandedly attacked and repulsed a German machinegun nest in France. The full story will be in the next edition of this newsletter.



Get in touch

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