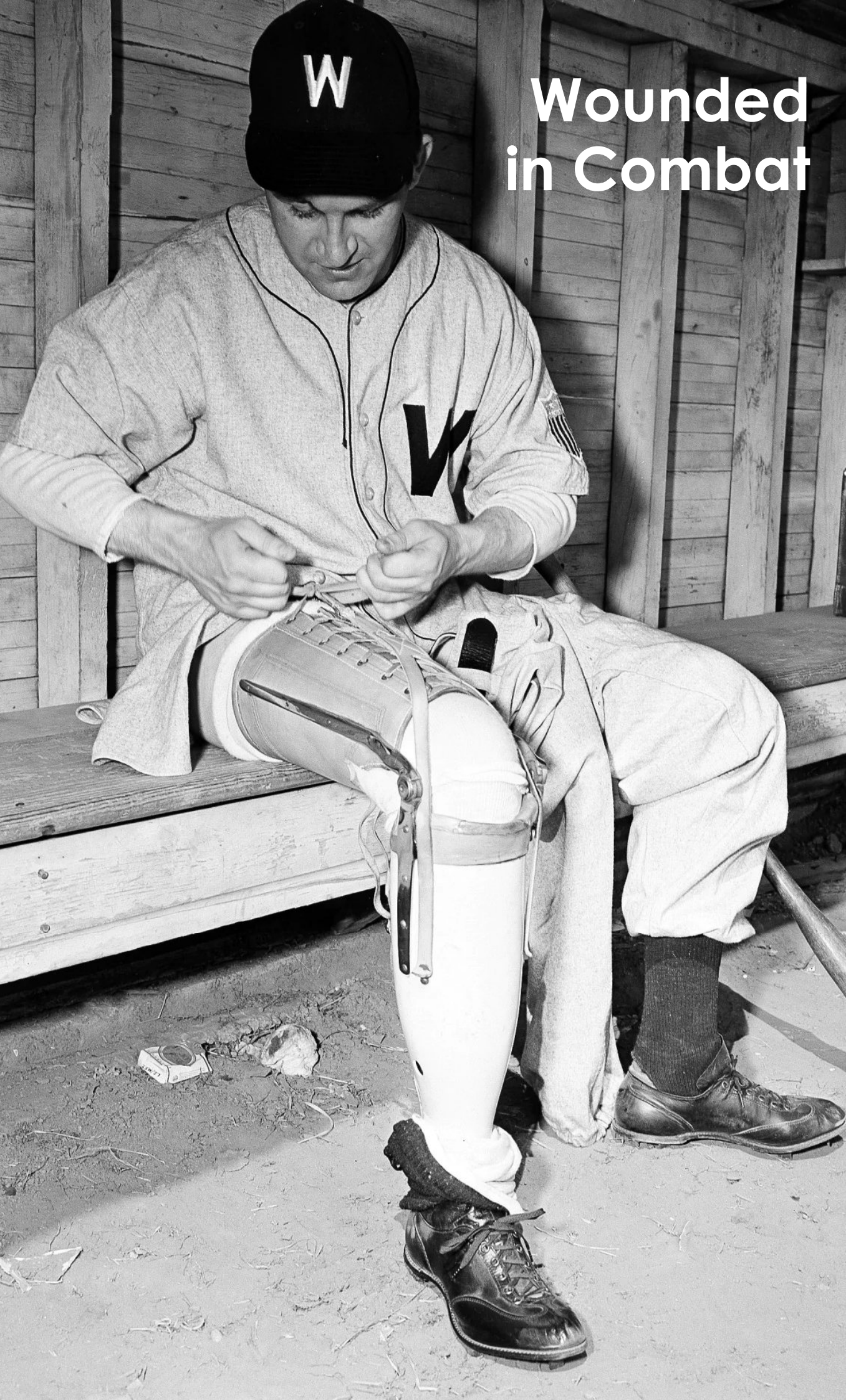


Wounded in Combat



Wounded in Combat

As many of you are aware, my website, Baseball's Greatest Sacrifice, is dedicated to ballplayers who lost their lives while in military service. During decades of research on this topic I frequently came upon incredible stories of the heroism and bravery shown by "battlefield ballplayers" who often displayed little concern for their own safety in helping to win the war against Germany and Japan.

Some of these stories have been included on my Baseball in Wartime website. Others have remained with me over the years, as I pondered the best way to ensure these stories were told. Finally, these press clippings, interviews and scraps of information are coming together as a brand-new section on Baseball's Greatest Sacrifice – Wounded in Combat.

There are some familiar names among the biographies included in this section of the website. Bert Shepard – as seen on the cover of this newsletter – lost a leg flying P-38s over Germany. Lou Brissie and Morrie Martin suffered harrowing leg wounds on the battlefield. Hall of Famers Warren Spahn and Hoyt Wilhelm sustained battlefield wounds and Yankees player/manager Hank Bauer was hit by shrapnel in the Pacific.

But you will find the names of players you're not so familiar with. Big leaguers like Jack Knott, Bob Savage and Skippy Roberge. Forgotten minor leaguers such as Angelo DeLucia, Chester Sheets, Carl Petroziello and Alvin Kluttz, brother of big league catcher, Clyde.

This newsletter contains a small selection of biographies from Wounded in Combat as well as a list of all players that have, so far, been included on the website. And what is the purpose of this venture? To ensure the incredible sacrifices made by these heroes of our game are never forgotten.

http://www.baseballsgreatestsacrifice.com/wounded_in_combat.html

Gary Bedingfield

www.baseballinwartime.com

www.baseballsgreatestsacrifice.com

Wounded in Combat

Table of Major League Players

Rank	Name	Position	Service	Location/Date Wounded
Pfc.	John E. Andre	Pitcher	US Army	Pearl Harbor (Dec '41)
Unknown	Rex E. Barney	Pitcher	US Army	Germany ('45)
Sgt.	Henry A. "Hank" Bauer	Outfield	US Marine Corps	Pacific (twice)
Sgt.	James R. Blackburn	Pitcher	US Army	Belgium (Dec '44)
Unknown	Edward J. Blake	Pitcher	US Army	Philippines ('45)
Cpl.	Leland V. "Lou" Brissie	Pitcher	US Army	Italy (Dec '44)
T/Sgt.	Nestor L. Chylak, Jr.	<i>Umpire</i>	US Army	Belgium (Jan '45)
Sgt.	Michael D. Dejan	Outfield	US Army	Germany (Apr '45)
Unknown	Dee V. Fondy, Jr.	First Base	US Army	Europe ('44)
Unknown	John Grodzicki	Pitcher	US Army	Germany (Mar '45)
Mjr.	Ralph G. Houk	Catcher	US Army	Germany (Jan '45)
Yeoman	Arthur H. Johnson	Pitcher	US Navy	off Formosa (Jan '45)
Pfc.	Edward T. Kazak (Tkaczuk)	Third Base	US Army	France (Sep '44)
Sgt.	Edward P. Kearsse	Catcher	US Army	France (Nov '44)
1/Lt.	John H. "Jack" Knott	Pitcher	US Army	Belgium (Jan '45)
Pfc.	Stanley E. Lopata	Catcher	US Army	Europe ('44/'45)
Sgt.	Omar J. "Turk" Lown	Pitcher	US Army	Germany (Mar '45)
Unknown	Morris W. "Morrie" Martin	Pitcher	US Army	Belgium (Dec '44)
Unknown	Robert A. "Maje" McDonnell	Coach	US Army	Germany (Dec '44)
Pfc.	William J. "Bill" Moisan, Jr.	Pitcher	US Army	Europe ('45)
Sgt.	Emmett J. "Heinie" Mueller	Infield	US Army	Germany (Feb '45)
Sgt.	Earl W. Rapp	Outfield	US Army	Germany ('45)
T/5	Joseph A. A. "Skippy" Roberge	Infield	US Army	Germany (Feb '45)
Unknown	Simon "Sy" Rosenthal	Outfield	US Navy	English Channel (Sep '44)
Lt.	John R. "Bob" Savage	Pitcher	US Army	Europe (3 times)
Lt.	Robert E. "Bert" Shepard	Pitcher	USAAF	Germany (May '44)
1/Lt.	Warren E. Spahn	Pitcher	US Army	Germany (Mar '45)
Unknown	Joseph J. Tepsic	Outfield	US Marine Corps	Guadalcanal ('42)
S/Sgt.	Louis C. F. Thuman	Pitcher	US Army	France (Jul '44)
Unknown	Clifford E. "Earl" Torgeson	First Base	US Army	France (Jan '45)
Pfc.	Harry W. Walker	Outfield	US Army	Germany (Mar '45)
M/Sgt.	Dick C. Whitman	Outfield	US Army	Belgium (Jan '44)
S/Sgt.	James H. "Hoyt" Wilhelm	Pitcher	US Army	Belgium (Dec '44)

S/Sgt. Hoyt Wilhelm, future Hall of Fame pitcher, was wounded in action during the Battle of the Bulge.

Sgt. Hank Bauer, Yankees outfielder and Major League manager, was wounded twice in the Pacific.

Major Ralph Houk, Yankees catcher and manager, was wounded in action in Germany.

1/Lt. Warren Spahn, future Hall of Fame pitcher, was wounded in the foot at Remagen.

Wounded in Combat

Table of Minor League Players

Rank	Name	Position	Service	Location/Date Wounded
Cpl.	Paul S. Almonte	Pitcher	US Army	Italy (Jul '44)
Mjr.	Robert J. Byrne	Third Base/Outfield	USAAF	North Africa (Jan '43)
Unknown	Fred R. Chumley	Pitcher	US Marine Corps	Saipan (Jun/Jul '44)
Sgt.	Joseph P. Damato	Infield	US Army	Belgium (Dec '44)
S/Sgt.	John T. DeJohn	Second Base	USAAF	English Channel (Nov '42)
T/Sgt.	Angelo P. DeLucia	Infield	USAAF	Pacific (twice)
1/Lt.	Alfred L. "Al" DeRenne	Outfield	US Army	Italy (Dec '43)
Sgt.	William P. Fennhahn	Pitcher	US Army	Germany ('45)
Sgt.	Beverly G. "Red" Ferrell	Outfield	US Army	France (Aug '44)
2/Lt.	Charles E. Greenockle	Pitcher	US Army	France (Jul '44)
Pfc.	Carl R. Heidel	Pitcher	US Army	Germany (Jan '45)
Unknown	John W. "Walt" Hemptery, Jr.	Infield	US Army	Germany (Apr '45)
Sgt.	Gerald M. "Jerry" Juzek	Pitcher	US Marine Corps	Guadalcanal (Aug '42)
S/Sgt.	Kenneth G. Kallenberg	Pitcher	US Army	Pacific (3 times)
PhM	Burt L. Kenmuir	Catcher/Manager	US Navy	Guadalcanal (late '42)
2/Lt.	Walter N. Lance, Jr.	First Base	US Army	Germany ('45)
Unknown	John Levitsky	Unknown	US Army	France ('44)
Unknown	Elias J. "Doc" Marett	Third Base	US Army	Pacific ('43)
Cpl.	Robert E. Mayence	Second Base	US Marine Corps	Saipan (Jun '44)
2/Lt.	Russell D. Niller, Jr.	Pitcher	USAAF	over Poland (Mar '45)
Pfc.	William R. "Tiny" Osborne	Pitcher	US Army	France (Jul '44)
S/Sgt.	Peter J. "Pete" Petropoulos	Pitcher	US Army	France (June '44)
Pfc.	Carl C. "Hoodsie" Petroziello	Third Base	US Army	Europe (four times)
Cptn.	Frederic P. Price	First Base	US Army	Savo Island (Aug '42)
Unknown	Daniel G. Radakovich	Catcher	US Navy	Carribbean (early '43)
Pfc.	Robert C. Ray	Third Base	US Army	Germany (Mar '45)
Cptn.	Lloyd J. Rice	Outfield	US Army	France (Jun '44)
1/Lt.	Chester W. Sheets	Pitcher	US Army	N. Africa and Germany
S/Sgt.	Halburt M. Simpson	Outfield	US Army	France (late '44)
Lt.	Morris A. "Mike" Skaalen	Pitcher	USAAF	Betio Island (Jan '44)
S/1c	Victor Slobe	Pitcher	US Navy	Morocco (Nov '42)
Sgt.	Robert E. "Perk" Smith	Pitcher	US Army	France (Aug '44)
Mjr.	George T. Stallings, Jr.	First Base	US Army	Belgium (Jan '45)
S/Sgt.	John L. "Jack" Suydam	Outfield	US Army	Belgium (Dec '44)
Sgt.	John E. Thoma	First Base	US Army	Germany (Apr '45)
Pvt.	Robert L. Vetter	Pitcher	US Army	France (Jul '44)
Pfc.	Melvin C. Wasley	Outfield	US Army	France (Jun '44)

S/Sgt. Pete Petropoulos, a pitcher with Daytona Beach, Leesburg, DeLand and Fort Lauderdale, was badly wounded at Normandy. He earned the Silver Star.

Sgt. Bill Fennhahn, a pitcher with Peekskill and Quebec, was a Ranger at Normandy. He was wounded three times.

2/Lt. Charley Greenockle, a pitcher with the Lexington Indians, suffered serious leg wounds at Normandy.

Bert Shepard

Shot down over Germany

It was through sheer self-belief and determination that Bert Shepard played baseball after the war. He is the only person to appear in a major league game with an artificial leg.

Robert E. "Bert" Shepard was born in Dana, Indiana, on June 28, 1920. He grew up with his maternal grandmother in nearby Clinton, Indiana, and played semi-pro baseball as the local high school didn't have a team.

A hard throwing, left-handed pitcher, Shepard wanted to play professional baseball and headed to California. He got a job at a local tire retread plant and played sandlot baseball. He was scouted by Doug Minor of the Chicago White Sox and given a contract for \$60 a month.



Shepard pitched for the Wisconsin Rapids White Sox of the Class D Wisconsin State League in 1940. Control problems plagued his performance and he was 3-2 in nine appearances, walking 48 batters in 43 innings, before being released.

He returned to Clinton to finish high school and then signed with the St. Louis Cardinals organization. He made three appearances for the Anaheim Aces of the Class C California League, and was 3-5 with the Bisbee Bees of the Class C Arizona-Texas League, contributing with his bat as a utility first baseman and outfielder. Shepard's baseball career began to take shape in 1942. He was a regular with the La Crosse Blackhawks of the Class D Wisconsin State League, appearing in 23 games for a 9-13 record and 4.45 ERA. If he could just overcome his control problems (122 walks in 172 innings) he could climb through the ranks of the Cardinals' farm system.

But there were other ranks that Shepard needed to climb through beforehand. He entered military service in March 1943, at Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana, and

attained his pilot's wings as a fighter pilot with the Army Air Force at Daniel Field, Georgia.

In late January 1944, Second Lieutenant Shepard crossed the Atlantic to England, on the Aquitania, to join the 38th Fighter Squadron of the 55th Fighter Group. The 55th was based at Wormingford, near Colchester, and was the first Fighter Group in Europe to be operational with the Lockheed P-38 Lightning - a distinctive looking twin-boom, twin-engined fighter plane that was used for bomber escort and ground attack over enemy-occupied Europe.

Shepard joined the 55th on February 13, 1944. "From then on it was a lot of flying," he recalled. He did, however, have some time for baseball. "In early May, we leveled off a field, laid out a diamond and started practice. Our first game was scheduled for Sunday, May 21."

Shepard had already flown 33 missions, and on May 21, opening day for the 55th Fighter Group baseball season, he volunteered for his 34th.



"While going in to strafe a German airfield northwest of Berlin," he explained later. "I was about a mile from the airfield flying at tree top level, wide open, approximately 380 mph, when my right foot was shot off. I called the colonel, told him what happened and that I would call back later. Evidently, I was hit in the chin by flak, as I had about a one-and-a-half-inch wound, causing me to lose consciousness. The next thing I remember is I'm about to crash at a slight angle, so I horse back on the wheel but not in time. I understand the P-38 crashed and burned but threw me clear.

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 he refused to admit the 'terror flier' 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."

"I remembered nothing until I woke up in a German hospital in Ludwigslust hours or days later," said Shepard. "My right leg had been amputated 11 inches below the knee and a 2-inch square of bone above my right eye had been removed.

"The amazing thing about the crash was that if I had not had the gunshot wounds and the gunshot to cave my head in I could have walked away from the crash for I had no other injuries except some scratches on my face and head.

After a long period of recovery, Shepard was transferred to a Prisoner of War camp. "The Germans provided the finest medical care to save my life," he reflected. He was held at Ludwigslust, Wismar, Frankfurt, Meiningen and Annaberg-Bucholz. While at Meiningen, 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, he 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. Skeptical 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.

Amid much publicity, Shepard arrived at the Senators' spring training camp at College Park, Maryland, 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. Throughout the summer months he pitched batting practice for the Senators, and visited veteran's hospitals, offering encouragement to other wounded soldiers. On August 5, 1945, he made his only 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 remained with the team but was not used again. The Senators were in a pennant race with the Detroit Tigers and manager, Ossie Bleuge, was reluctant to use the rookie. He was at spring training with the Senators in 1946, but the camp was stocked with returning veterans.

He pitched for Chattanooga, Decatur and Duluth in 1946, but was released by the Senators organization. Shepard played semi-pro ball at Williston, North Dakota, in 1947, but further surgery on his leg kept him out of the game for 1948. He returned to the minors in 1949, as player-manager with the Waterbury Timers of the Class B Colonial League, making 20 appearances for a 5-6 record.

Shepard worked for International Business Machines (IBM) selling typewriters in 1950 and 1951, but made a brief comeback in 1952, with St. Augustine and Hot Springs. After returning to semi-pro baseball with Williston, Shepard ended his professional playing career, aged 35, with the Modesto Reds of the Class C California League in 1955.

Bert Shepard worked as a safety engineer for Hughes Aircraft in California. He took up golf and won the Shepard won the US amputee golf championship in 1968 and 1971. 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. Until that time, he had never known who had saved his life.

Bert Shepard suffered a stroke and passed away on June 16, 2008, at a Highland, California nursing home. He was 87 years old and is buried at Riverside National Cemetery in Riverside, California.



1/Lt. Chester Sheets had been a Cardinals' farmhand and pitched for Daytona Beach Harrisonburg and Williamson. He was wounded in action in North Africa, was awarded the Bronze Star for setting up and maintaining an observation post while under constant enemy fire, and was wounded again in Germany.

Cpl. Bob Mayence, USMC, was a second baseman in the Tigers' organization. He was hit by machine-gun fire at Saipan and had his right shoulder shattered and lost his right eye.

S/Sgt. Hal Simpson was an outfielder in the Pirates' organization and was awarded the Silver Star for leading his squad through heavy machine-gun fire to eliminate a German machine-gun. He also got a Purple Heart for a bullet wound to his left leg.

Pfc. Carl Heidel was a left-handed pitcher in the Yankees' organization. His pitching hand was badly damaged by shrapnel from a mortar blast. Army doctors did all they could, so he could return to baseball after the war.

Carl Petroziello

Wounded in combat four times

The pained cry of "Medic!" brought him on the run. Petroziello left behind a promising baseball career to care for his buddies on the battlefield.

Carl C. "Hoodsie" Petroziello, the son of Alphonso and Theresa Petroziello, was born on December 20, 1922, in Pittston, a city between Scranton and Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. His parents were immigrants from Italy, and his father - a coal miner - was one of many who had come from Europe to boost the labor force of the local mines.

Petroziello, a stocky, left-handed hitting third baseman, was a graduate of Pittston High School and was playing semi-pro baseball in the local area when he signed with the Batesville Pilots of the Class D Northeast Arkansas League in 1941. In 25 games, the 18-year-old batted .279. In 1942, he joined the Moultrie Packers of the Class D Georgia-Florida League and batted .250 in 125 games. In 1943, Petroziello found his stride at the plate. In 104 games with the Hornell Maples of the Class D PONY League, he batted .310 with 67 RBIs and a league-leading 11 home runs, and was looked upon as the best third baseman in the circuit.



On September 13, 1943, Petroziello was sold to the Albany Senators of the Class A Eastern League, but military service intervened before he could report.

The 20-year-old began six months of army training on October 21, 1943, before leaving for Europe, where he served as an aid man (medic) with 1st Battalion, 315th Infantry Regiment of the 79th Infantry Division.

The medic was the man who lanced and patched up blisters. He gave aspirin for head colds and watched over the purity of his unit's drinking water. In combat he was the one expected to come to the rescue of his wounded comrades. The pained cry of "Medic!" brought him on the run. It was the rapid response of the medic and his litter bearers, often under hazardous conditions, administering first aid, applying tourniquets, injecting pain-killing morphine, and rushing a casualty from the front that was responsible for saving many lives.

Private First-Class Petroziello was in combat in France, Belgium, Holland, Germany and Czechoslovakia. He was wounded four times and was missing in action, presumed dead, for many days, before rejoining his outfit. In Czechoslovakia, in January 1945, with complete disregard for his own safety, Petroziello performed a feat that earned him the Bronze Star. In the heat of a battle against German forces, Petroziello carried three wounded comrades to a building, crossed to an open space covered by enemy fire to radio for a medical vehicle and, meeting the truck behind the lines, took over, drove the truck alone under heavy fire, loaded the casualties into the truck and raced them back to safety.

In addition to a Bronze Star, Petroziello was honorably discharged from service on December 15, 1945, with a Purple Heart with three oak leaf clusters, and three battle stars.

The 23-year-old, who had missed two vital seasons of professional baseball, was determined to pick-up where he left off with his career. Joe Palla, a major league scout who lived in Scranton, heard that Petroziello was back from the war and would be in good condition to play. "Hope this is true," Pall remarked, "as this boy is a fine prospect, or was before he went into the service."

In 1946, Petroziello joined 30 other ballplayers who were looking for a job with the Albany Senators at their month-long spring training camp at Saratoga Springs, New York. Although he hit the ball well in training, manager Rip Collins, chose Tom Webster over Petroziello to play third base and optioned him to the York White Roses of the Class B Inter-State League at the start of May. He played 19 games at York at batted .317, but decided to quit baseball.

Petroziello married Mary Estock on November 11, 1946, and he attended the Greater Pittston GI Vocational School, where he continued to play baseball for the Black Knights against local college and semi-pro teams.

Carl "Hoodsie" Petroziello passed away on August 14, 1980. He was 57 years old and is buried at Mount Olivet Cemetery, in Carverton, Pennsylvania.



T/Sgt. Angelo DeLucia was an infielder with the Bluefield Blue-Grays before the war. He was wounded during the Pearl Harbor attack, earned the Soldier's Medal for his part in shooting down Japanese fighter planes as a B-17 gunner, and earned a second Purple Heart.

Major George Stallings, son of the 1914 Miracle Braves manager, was a first baseman with Chattanooga, Spartanburg and Selma before the war. He earned the Distinguished Service Cross at Normandy. Later in the war a sniper's bullet shattered a rib and punctured his lungs.

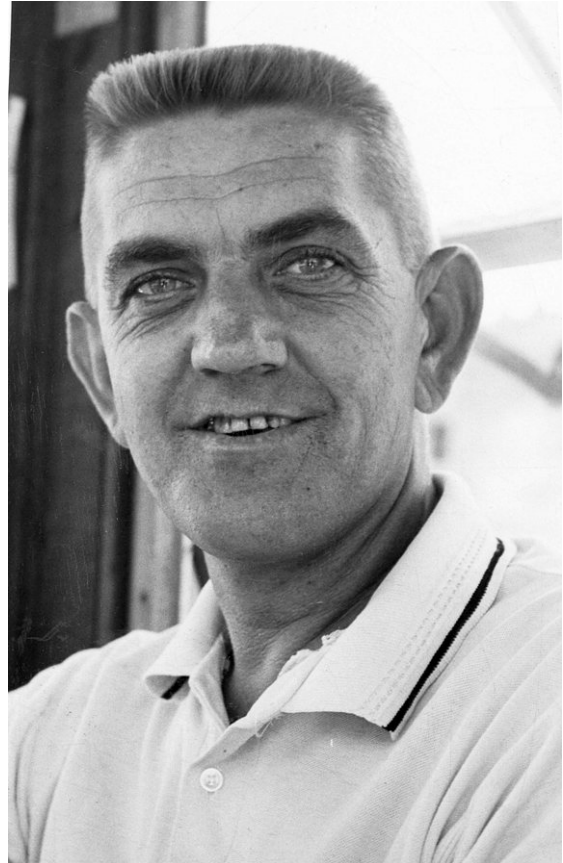
Pvt. Bob Vetter, who pitched for Jamestown, was wounded in the head, chest, stomach and side at St. Lo. He was awarded the Bronze Star.

Alvin Kluttz

Shot and hit by shrapnel in combat

While his brother worked behind the plate for the Boston Braves, former minor leaguer Alvin Kluttz, was on the snow-covered battlefields of France.

Alvin C. Kluttz, the son of Arthur and Roxie Kluttz, was born on January 13, 1922, in Salisbury, North Carolina. Alvin was an outstanding baseball and basketball player at Boyden High School in Salisbury, and, like his older brother, Clyde, he signed with the St. Louis Cardinals after graduation. Clyde was four years Alvin's senior and had begun his pro career in 1938 with Johnson City. When Alvin signed with the Cardinals in 1941, Clyde was making a name for himself with the Pacific Coast League's Sacramento Solons and hit .336 for the season. Alvin, a catcher like his brother, was assigned to the Springfield Cardinals of the Class C Western Association, where he batted .173 in 32 games. Playing the outfield in Springfield for much of that year was future Hall of Famer Stan Musial, who would get his first taste of the big leagues that year.



In February 1942, Kluttz received a telegram from Branch Rickey, general manager of the Cardinals. The team needed an extra bullpen catcher for spring training at Fort Lauderdale, Florida, and asked if he'd like the job. You would think that his brother, Clyde, was the person who suggested this, but Clyde was not with the Cardinals for spring training in 1942. He'd been selected on waivers by the Boston Braves and was with them at Sanford, Florida. What seemed a great opportunity turned sour when Alvin was hit in the ribs by a Max Lanier fastball. The injury led to pleurisy, the inflammation of the tissue between the lungs and ribcage, which caused sharp chest pains.

While Clyde began a major league career that would span eleven years (656 games), by playing 72 games for the Braves and batting .267, Alvin - who was assigned to the Asheville Tourists of the Class B Piedmont League, virtually sat out the entire season, unable to play.

In 1943, Alvin was assigned to the Lynchburg Cardinals of the Class B Piedmont League. Sharing catching duties with two minor league veterans - Ken Blackman and George Pratt - Alvin played 65 games and batted .227, before entering military service in July. Kluttz was stationed at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, for nine months and played on both the baseball and basketball teams. In the summer of 1944, he

was sent to Camp Gruber, Oklahoma, and assigned to Company F, 222nd Infantry Regiment of the 45th Infantry Division. The Division left the United States for France at the beginning of December 1944, and entered combat on Christmas Eve.

Private Kluttz was a BAR (Browning Automatic Rifle) gunner - a light machine-gun that weighed around 20 pounds that was used to support riflemen in an attack. On January 1, 1945, in northeastern France, the Germans launched Operation North Wind, their last major offensive of the war. The attack came against thinly stretched Allied lines and the 222nd Infantry Regiment was at the heart of it.

On the morning on January 6, 1945, Company F were crossing railroad tracks and entering an open, snow-covered field about 200 yards wide, when German troops - hidden in a wooded area - opened fire with mortars and machine-guns. Kluttz was ordered to take out one of the machine-guns with his BAR. He crawled forward 150 yards, but as he reached for his ammunition clip, a bullet tore through his upper left arm. Kluttz lay in the snow-covered field for several hours. Enemy shells continued to explode all around him, and one shell was close enough to send 48 pieces of shrapnel into his chest.

When darkness fell, Kluttz was able to crawl back to Allied lines. He was taken to a field hospital where doctors were able to save his arm and remove 27 of the 48 pieces of shrapnel from his body. He was later hospitalized in Paris and England, before returning to the United States on a hospital ship in April 1945. He was further hospitalized in New York and Georgia, before being discharged on October 6, 1945.

Despite requiring further surgery during 1946, Kluttz returned to the Cardinals organization and played 73 games with Lynchburg, the team he'd last played for before joining the Army. He batted only .207, but showed he could still work behind the plate. One of his battery mates in 1946 was future major leaguer Al Papai. In 1947, he played four games for the Houston Buffs of the Class AA Texas League - the highest level he would reach - and for much of the season was assigned to the Carthage Cardinals of the Class D K-O-M League as a player/manager. Kluttz batted only .133 with Carthage in 1947, as he continued to struggle with his shoulder injury, but he returned as player/manager for the team in 1948 and batted .296 in 45 games.

Kluttz batted .294 for the Kingsport Cherokees of the Class D Appalachian League in 1949, and .373 for the Clinton-Sampson Blues of the Class D Tobacco State League the following year. In 1951, his last year in professional baseball, the 29-year-old hit .287 for the High Point-Thomasville Hi-Toms of the Class D North Carolina State League.

While brother, Clyde, continued his pro career for a few more seasons, Alvin returned home to Salisbury and took a job with the city's sanitation department, and was the head of the department from 1956 to 1967. He was a basketball official for high school and college games until a blocked artery in his left leg led to an amputation in 1963. But he remained involved in sports as a local radio broadcaster.

In 1978, Alvin Kluttz was awarded the Bronze Star for his World War II service. He passed away on May 22, 1985, in Asheville, North Carolina. He was 63 years old and is buried at Salisbury National Cemetery.

Johnny Grodzicki

Paratrooper wounded in combat in Germany

"When I had Grodzicki at Columbus in 1941, I thought he was the best minor league pitcher I ever saw."

Eddie Dyer, major league pitcher and manager, April 1946

John Grodzicki was born in Nanticoke, Pennsylvania, on February 26, 1917. He won a scholarship offered by The Sporting News to attend Ray Doan's Baseball School in 1936, and his professional career began with a brief stint with the Houston Buffs of the Class A1 Texas League, before spending the season with the New Iberia Cardinals of the Class D Evangeline League, where he was



16-12 in 40 appearances. In 1937, the 6-foot-1-inch right-hander was back with Houston and won 18 games against 11 losses with a 2.88 ERA. During the Texas League all-star game on July 17, 1937, at Houston, Grodzicki struck out six batters in a row.

He was again with Houston in 1938 and 12-21 in 46 appearances. He advanced to the Rochester Red Wings of the Class AA International League in 1939, and spent two seasons with the club as a relief pitcher. In 1941, he made his major league debut with the Cardinals on April 18, against the Cubs, but spent most of the year with the Columbus Red Birds of the Class AA American Association, posting an excellent 19-5 record and 2.58 ERA.

Grodzicki was one of the top prospects in the Cardinals organization but on January 14, 1942, he followed in the footsteps of his two brothers and entered military service with the army. He was initially based at Fort Knox, Kentucky, and on May 24, 1942, Grodzicki was selected by Bob Feller – along with fellow servicemen Cecil Travis, Zeke Bonura, Emmett Mueller and Ken Silvestri – to join Dizzy Dean's all-stars in an exhibition game at Wrigley Field against Satchel Paige and the Kansas City Monarchs.

On July 7, 1942, Grodzicki was selected for an All-Service team that played against an American League all-star squad at Cleveland's Municipal Stadium. Before 62,059 fans, the American League beat the servicemen, 5-0.

Grodzicki later transferred to the paratroopers and joined the 17th Airborne Division. The 17th Airborne Division was sent to England in August 1944. They remained there until December, when they were flown to the Reims area in France and took over the defense of the Meuse River sector from Givet to Verdun. In January 1945, they marched through the snow to Morhet, relieving the 28th Infantry Division. The 17th entered the Ardennes campaign (better known as the Battle of the Bulge) on January 4 at the Battle of Dead Man's Ridge.

On March 24, 1945, the 17th Airborne Division took part in their first airborne assault. Taking off from marshalling areas in France, nearly 4,000 aircraft from the British 6th Airborne Division and the American 17th Airborne Division dropped fighting men – including Grodzicki – behind enemy lines, into Westphalia near Weselon, which was east of the Rhine River. Their mission was to capture key points and so assist the advance of the ground troops. It was the first airborne invasion over the Rhine into Germany itself. On March 25, the 17th Airborne Division had secured bridges over the Issel River and had entrenched itself firmly along the Issel Canal. Moving eastward, it captured Haltern on March 29, and advanced on Munster the following day. It was on this day that a shell exploded nearby, shrapnel flew, and a large, jagged piece cut deep into Grodzicki's flesh just below the right hip, and another piece entered his lower right leg.

Grodzicki was removed to a field hospital. Examination disclosed that the sciatic nerve had been badly damaged. There was danger that he would never walk again. An operation was performed, and the shrapnel was removed. Grodzicki was then sent to a hospital in England, and finally to the United States for recuperation. He learned to maneuver with a cane and steel brace on his right leg, and after receiving his honorable discharge in October he went home to Nanticoke to rest.

But Grodzicki didn't stay home for very long. In October he headed for Panama where he pitched batting practice for the Colon club. The arrival of the New Year found Grodzicki eager and ready for spring training. Daily treatments were given his leg. Hot towels were applied, and special massages administered in the hope that he would be able to play again.

On April 11, 1946, in a spring training game against the Oklahoma City Indians of the Texas League, Grodzicki made his post-war pitching debut. Wearing his leg brace and with a perceptible limp, Grodzicki pitched the last four innings and gave up four singles in the Cardinals' 8-1 win.

Grodzicki made just three regular season appearances for the Cardinals in 1946 as he continued on his road to recovery. In 1947, as a short reliever, he made 16 appearances for the Cardinals. Sports writer, Bill Corum, said of Grodzicki on April 21, 1948: "Johnny has plugged away and plugged away, hour after hour and day after day. Kind hearted Eddie Dyer has fretted over him and worked with him, and all but cried over him. Not because Grodzicki looked like one of the greatest prospects in

the game before the war. But because Eddie loved his spirit and his stark refusal to accept defeat in his ambition to make the big time."

On April 13, 1948, Grodzicki was optioned to the Houston Buffs of the Texas League, the team he had pitched for back in 1937. After a couple of relief appearances, he earned his first starting assignment on May 3, and it was against the Oklahoma City Indians again. Grodzicki went the distance and beat them 7-2, scattering eight hits with seven strike outs. He also helped win the game with a single that drove in two runs. "My legs didn't get tired as I had suspected," he said in an Associated Press report on May 6, 1948, "but, boy, the rest of me was ready to call it quits for a while after the last out. That's the most pitching I've done in many a year."

In June 1949, Grodzicki left Houston and joined Rochester of the International League – another team he had played for back in the late 1930s. He made his first start for the Red Wings on July 2, and staggered to a complete game, 11-7, win over the Baltimore Orioles.


Through a working agreement with the Cardinals, the Geneva Redbirds of the Class D Alabama State League acquired the services of Grodzicki as their player/manager in 1950, but he was replaced in July and joined Omaha in the Class A Western League where he pitched for the rest of the season. He posted a 3-1 record with the pennant winners.

In January 1951, Grodzicki – who had been playing winter ball in Panama for the last four years – was named player-manager of the Balboa Brewers in the Canal Zone League. Returning to the United States at the end of the winter season, Grodzicki started the 1951 season with the Columbus Red Birds. He was sent back to Omaha in June, and in July 1951, he moved on to the Winston-Salem Cardinals of the Class B Carolina League. He remained with Winston-Salem through 1952.

Grodzicki became a pitching coach and scout with the Cardinals organization in 1953, touring the United States and Canada instructing young hurlers. He remained in that position until taking a coaching assignment in 1963, with the Buffalo Bisons under manager and former teammate, Whitey Kurowski.

After a season with Buffalo, Grodzicki left baseball for two years but was enticed back by the Detroit Tigers, who hired him as a minor league pitching instructor in 1966. He remained in that role until 1979, when the 62-year-old returned to the major leagues as a coach with the Detroit Tigers.

Johnny Grodzicki passed away on May 2, 1998, in Daytona Beach, Florida. He was 82 years old.



Pfc. William "Tiny" Osborne, son of the former Cubs and Dodgers pitcher, was, himself, a pitcher with Columbus, Gastonia and Springfield. He was hit in the legs by shrapnel from an exploding shell at St. Lo.

A little help please!

Remembering players who were wounded in combat is a new venture and I'm sure there are many names missing from the list. If you can help with information on ballplayers who were wounded in combat, please let me know and I'll gladly add them to the website. Thanks!

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All information contained in this newsletter is accurate to the best of my knowledge. However, most of these events happened more than 70 years ago. The information has been obtained from first-hand recollections of events, family memories and contemporary published articles. If you can correct any information, I'd be very pleased to hear from you gary@baseballinwartime.com