

Welcome to the first edition of the Baseball in Wartime Newsletter for 2015. We're starting the year with a rather over ambitious project—a record of major leaguers who served in the European Theater during World War II. The list includes 147 major league players, one manager, three coaches, four umpires, a broadcaster and 18 Negro League players. For the majority of these, I have included brief biographical sketches of their time in Europe which I hope you will enjoy. Future issues of the newsletter will look at players who served in the Pacific, the Mediterranean, the Atlantic and the United States.

Researching WWII baseball is, and always will be, an ongoing project for me. If you can add any names to this list of players who served in Europe I would be very pleased to hear from you.

I'd like to thank Ken Sulik for his assistance with information for this project.

# Big Leaguers in the ETO

**M**ore than 500 major league players swapped flannels for military uniforms during World War II, and stars like Joe DiMaggio, Ted Williams and Stan Musial served their nation off the diamond. This issue of the Baseball in Wartime Newsletter looks at those who served in the European Theater, including no less than eight future Hall of Famers. But before we look at those involved, let me clarify what constitutes the European Theater.

During World War II there were four theaters of operation: Europe (ETO), the Mediterranean (MTO), the Pacific, and China-Burma-India (CBI). The European Theater included Great Britain, France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Holland, Germany and Austria. The Mediterranean Theater included North Africa, Sicily and Italy. It's true to say that Italy and Sicily are a part of Europe, but for this exercise I have kept players who served in Italy and Sicily out of this list. They will be included in a future issue which will deal exclusively with the Mediterranean Theater. Having said that, those who served in the Mediterranean but were prisoners-of-war in Germany, have been included.

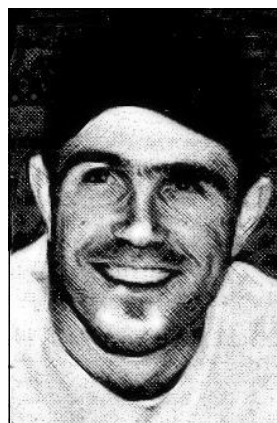
## Bios of Big Leaguers in the ETO

### **Andy Anderson (St. Louis Browns)**

Anderson served in Europe with the 423<sup>rd</sup> Infantry Regiment of the 106<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. During the early days of the Battle of the Bulge, the 423<sup>rd</sup>

Infantry Regiment, along with the 422<sup>nd</sup>, were encircled by enemy forces and cut off from the remainder of the 106<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division in the vicinity of Schonberg, Belgium. The two Regiments (6,000 troops) surrendered to the Germans on December 19, 1944, in one of the largest mass surrenders in American military history. Suffering a debilitating case of frostbite he was held at Stalag 9B in Bad Orb Hessen-Nassau, Germany. When Anderson was liberated on May 4, 1945, his weight had dropped from 185 pounds to 125 pounds.

### **Bill Ayers (New York Giants)**



Ayers was with the 65<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division in Europe in 1945, and pitched for the division baseball team following the German surrender. Ayers perfected his forkball during this time and the 65<sup>th</sup> were II Corps champions. He was then selected to play for the 71<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division – Third Army representatives – in the 1945 ETO World Series in September 1945. Pitching in Game Four of the ETO World Series against Negro League sensation, Leon Day of the OISE All-Stars, on September 7, Ayers hurled a five-hit 5-0 shutout to tie the series at two games apiece (the OISE All-Stars clinched the series in the next game).

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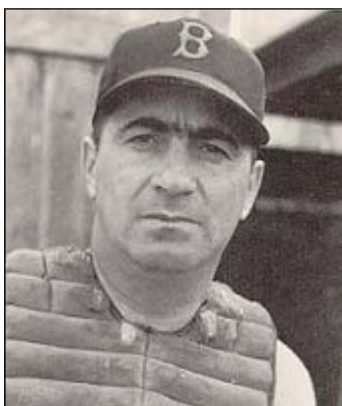
## Dick Aylward (Cleveland Indians)

While advancing with the Army through a ruined German town, a bullet creased Aylward's skull. "I went down like I was hit by a baseball," he told *The Sporting News* in 1953. "Spent four months in the hospital before going back into the line. It was no good. I had five campaign ribbons, but now I had nerves." Aylward spent a further six months at a hospital in the United States.

## Rex Barney (Brooklyn Dodgers)

Barney served with the 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Armored Divisions in France and Germany during 1945. He was the commander of a lead tank, roaming the advance positions to draw enemy fire from sunup to sundown, and suffered shrapnel wounds to his leg and back. He received two Purple Hearts and a Bronze Star. With the war over in Europe, Barney pitched briefly for the 65th Infantry Division baseball team before returning to the United States.

## Moe Berg (Dodgers, White Sox, Senators, Indians and Red Sox)



From September 1943, Berg was assigned to the Secret Intelligence branch of the Office of Strategic Services - a predecessor of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). He was in London in May 1944, and until December of that year, Berg hopped around Europe interviewing physicists and trying to convince several

to leave their homeland and work in America.

Despite Berg's wartime vocation calling for anonymity, he did betray himself on one occasion. While at a field hospital in France, Berg could not resist the temptation to join in a game of catch with a couple of GIs. After the former major leaguer had made a couple of throws one of the soldiers remarked, "You're a pro." Soon afterwards the soldier added, "You're a catcher," another throw and his cover was blown, "and your name is Moe Berg."

At the beginning of December 1944, Berg attended a lecture in Switzerland by prominent German physicist Werner Heisenberg. Carrying a pistol, his orders were to shoot the scientist if there was any indication that the Germans were close to building an atomic bomb. Fortunately, Berg was not required to fulfill his virtually suicidal orders as the Germans were far behind in the race to build an atomic weapon.

## Yogi Berra (New York Yankees and New York Mets) Hall of Famer

Hall of Famer Yogi Berra, sailed for the British Isles in February 1944, on the USS Bayfield, where he was as a gunner's mate on board a rocket-launching landing craft in the D-Day invasion at Omaha Beach, "It was just like a Fourth of July celebration," he later recalled.

## Jim Blackburn (Cincinnati Reds)

Blackburn was the squad leader of a light machine-gun outfit of the 7th Armored Infantry Battalion. He was wounded on December 23, 1944 during the Battle of the Bulge when his division was surrounded by German forces for four days. Regaining consciousness after being hit by shrapnel, Blackburn found several Germans standing over him and he was taken prisoner. His wife was notified that he was "missing in action" in January 1945 and it was not until April that she learned he was a prisoner-of-war. Blackburn was forced to live daily on a loaf of black bread at Stalag IVB in Muhlberg Sachsen, Germany. His weight dropped by 75 pounds as he was marched from one prison camp to another and the German guards attempted to keep one step ahead of the advancing Allies. Blackburn eventually collapsed from weakness and malnutrition.

Hospitalized by his captors and too weak to move, an Allied bomber dropped its payload close to the hospital. This act so outraged a German guard that he obtained a pair of pliers and pulled out Blackburn's toenails as a means of torture and retaliation. Blackburn was finally liberated by the 69th Infantry Division in April 1945 and sent to a Paris hospital to recuperate.

## Ewell Blackwell (Reds, Yankees and Athletics)



In January 1945, Blackwell was sent to Europe as a mess sergeant with the 71st Infantry Division. After the cease of hostilities in that area he played baseball for the Division team, helping them win the American League division of the Third Army baseball league. "All-star play in the European Theater is equal to

the class of the war-time major leagues," he told the United Press in August 1945. A five-game Third Army Championship Series followed in August 1945 against the National

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League division winners - the 76th Onaways. With two shutouts by Blackwell - including a no-hitter in the second game - the 71st Infantry Division Red Circlers advanced to the Army Ground Force Championship Series and easily put aside the 29th Infantry Division in three games to move on to the ETO World Series against the OISE All-Stars from France. In front of crowds of 50,000 at Soldier's Field in Nuremberg, Germany, the Red Circlers won the first game, 9-2, with Blackwell allowing only five hits. Blackwell suffered his first defeat of the year in game three. Despite allowing only three hits and striking out eight, he was defeated, 2-1, by Sam Nahem of the Pittsburgh Pirates. In the decisive fifth game Blackwell was again beaten, 2-1, on a combined effort by Sam Nahem and Bobby Keane (post-war minor leaguer).

In October 1945, a baseball instructional clinic, sponsored by the 71st Infantry Division newspaper, The Red Circle News, was held at Augsburg in Germany for local boys from 8 to 15 years of age. More than 350 kids turned out for the week long clinic with Blackwell, along with big leaguers Harry Walker, Maurice Van Robays and Ken Heintzelman helping out as instructors.

## Roy Bruner (Philadelphia Phillies)

Bruner served with the Army Air Force in Europe as a bombardier. He held the rank of captain and flew 50 missions.

## Paul Campbell (Detroit Tigers and Boston Red Sox)



Campbell served in England with the 306th Bomb Group and was the hitting star with the 306th "Reich Wreckers" ballteam. He also played in the all-professional game, before 21,500 fans, at London's Wembley Stadium in August 1943. Following

this game the Eighth Air Force team toured US military camps all over England. In 29 games, Campbell led the 20-man squad with seven home runs and a .470 batting average. He also played for the "Greys" in the UK All-Star game held at Stamford Bridge Stadium in London in June 1945. When asked how he felt about losing vital playing years during the war, he replied: "That's the way it was and, besides, I had fun playing ball over there."

## Nestor Chylak (American League Umpire) Hall of Fame

Hall of Fame umpire Nestor Chylak served as a technical sergeant with the Army in the European

Theater. He almost lost his sight on January 3, 1945, during the Battle of the Bulge, when he was struck by shrapnel from an exploding German shell. He was in hospital for eight weeks and doctors didn't know whether he would be able to see until they removed his bandages ten days after the operation. Following a full recovery, Chylak returned to the front line and received the Silver Star and another wound before the war ended in Europe.

## Merv Connors (Chicago White Sox)

Connors served as a private with the 517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team and saw action during the Battle of the Bulge, receiving a Bronze Arrowhead for participating in an airborne combat assault. Following the German surrender, he played first base with the 13th Airborne Division Black Cats during 1945 and provided the offensive punch behind the pitching of Dave Koslo that led the team to a remarkable 33-4 record.

## Billy Cox (Dodgers, Pirates and Orioles)

Cox served overseas with the 814th Signal Corps. He saw action in North Africa, Sicily, Italy, France and Germany. His unit would come in behind the front line troops, laying wires and setting up communication centers.

## Jim Delsing (Tigers, Browns, White Sox, Yankees and Athletics)

Delsing was with the 95th Evacuation Hospital of the Army Medical Corps and served in France and Germany.

## Murry Dickson (Cardinals, Pirates, Phillies, Athletics and Yankees)



For 10 months, Dickson advanced through Europe with the 35th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop as the driver of a point jeep. He was in combat at the breakout at St. Lo, the Battle of the Bulge, the crossing of the Rhine and the final thrust through Germany. On one occasion he was forced to dive into a foxhole to avoid enemy fire. Shortly afterwards, someone else jumped on

top of him. Dickson soon discovered that it was none other than General Patton. After they got out of the fire and were able to retreat to the safety of the Allied lines, Patton asked Dickson to become his personal jeep driver to which he reclined. He later said "no way, Patton is nuts, he doesn't think anyone can kill him." Patton was killed in a road accident in

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Germany in December 1945.

When the war ended, Dickson pitched the 35th Infantry Indians to a series of victories in exhibition games in Germany and France. When he returned to the United States he had with him a vast assortment of "souvenirs" including German hand guns, cameras, binoculars and watches.

## **Augie Donatelli (National League Umpire)**



Donatelli served as a tail-gunner on a B-17 Flying Fortress with the 379th Bomb Group in England. He flew 17 missions before being shot down in March 1944, during the first American raid on Berlin. Donatelli was able to parachute to safety but did not have a smooth landing. "I came down in a forest and broke a bone in my right ankle," he later

recalled. "I was trying to walk when I heard someone shout, 'Halt!'" Donatelli soon found himself at Stalag Luft IV and during his 14 months as a POW, he tried to escape twice but was recaptured. Former National League umpire, Doug Harvey, later recalled: "He always laughed when he talked about his second attempt. He was hiding in a haystack, but didn't get all the way in. His rear was showing. One of the German guards got him out with a pitchfork." While a POW, Donatelli began umpiring prison softball games. He was liberated by advancing Russian forces in May 1945.

## **Walt Dropo (White Sox, Tigers, Red Sox, Orioles and Reds)**

Dropo was stationed in Europe, rebuilding bridges with the Army Corps of Engineers in France, Italy and Germany. He played baseball in Germany after the cease of hostilities.

## **Jake Early (Washington Senators and St. Louis Browns)**

Early served with an artillery unit of the 87th Infantry Division and saw action during the Battle of the Bulge. "If you think catching knucklers is hard work ... it's nothing to firing those 105s when you're knee deep in mud, and when you're playing for keeps with every shot," he told Frank O'Neill in *The Sporting News* in March 1946. "It's easier than trying to hit a Jerry tank when a miss may cost the lives of some of your buddies up ahead." Talking about the Battle of Bulge, Early explained how the Germans got too close for comfort. "Their tanks were less than a mile from the position of my battery. At least one

company of their infantry was so close we could see them."

## **Bruce Edwards (Dodgers, Cubs, Senators and Reds)**

With the rank of sergeant, Edwards spent 20 months in Europe with the 629th Tank Destroyer Battalion and saw enough action in France, Belgium, and Germany to have been awarded four battle stars.

## **Bill Evans (Boston Red Sox and Chicago White Sox)**

Evans saw combat in France and Germany in 1945 with the 76th Infantry Division, receiving the Silver Star and Bronze Star. After the war's end he had time to play baseball. "Bill played lots of baseball in Germany," Evans' widow, Melba, explained. "He was based in Hof, Germany but played in Nuremberg for the Third Army. His team also played in France, Belgium, Luxembourg and Czechoslovakia."

## **Jerry Fahr (Cleveland Indians)**

Fahr was with the 2nd Armored Division in central Europe. It was the first American unit to reach the Elbe River and to enter Berlin. Remaining in Europe with the Army of Occupation after the cease of hostilities, Fahr regularly played baseball for the 2nd Armored Division team.

## **Eddie Feinberg (Philadelphia Phillies)**

Feinberg fought through Europe with the 106th Infantry Division. On July 24, 1945, he was back in baseball flannels, playing shortstop for the division team against the 36th Infantry Division. The game was held in Karlsruhe, Germany, and its purpose was to dedicate a local stadium as "Ardennes Stadium" in honor of the men of the 106th who had fought so valiantly at the Battle of the Bulge.

## **Ed Fitz Gerald (Senators, Pirates and Indians)**

Fitz Gerald served with the Army and was responsible for capturing two German soldiers on the Rhine single-handedly. He was on guard duty on the Germany-Austria border after the war.

## **Ray Flanigan (Cleveland Indians)**

Flanigan served in Europe and commanded a volunteer unit that held back German forces. He was recommended for a Silver Star and battlefield commission, and his unit was recommended for a citation. When news of Flanigan's heroics was reported in February 1945, it prompted International League president, Frank Shaughnessy, to say, "It burns me up whenever I read stories which convey the impression that few, if any of the professional ball players are getting close to combat areas. That's not true. I know that quite a number of major and minor league players have had battle experience, and there's a bunch of them on the front lines today. It is



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ridiculous for anyone to think or say otherwise."

## Dee Fondy (Cubs, Pirates and Reds)

Fondy served in Europe with the Army, landing at Utah Beach, Normandy in September 1944. He received the Purple Heart.

## Larry French (Cubs, Pirates and Dodgers)

French served as a lieutenant with the US Navy Supply Corps, providing spare parts for landing craft. He played his only service baseball games of the war in England. In his first outing in mid-April 1944, French allowed just three hits in an 8-1 win over an opposing Navy team.

## Mike Garcia (Indians, Senators and White Sox)

Garcia served in Europe with the Army stringing communication lines with the Signal Corps.

## Elmer Gedeon (Washington Senators)

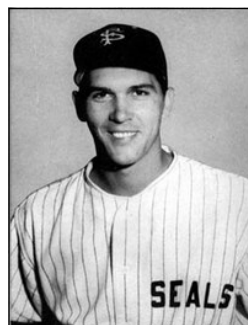


Elmer Gedeon was a bomber pilot with the 394th Bomb Group at Boreham Field in England. Known as the "Bridge Busters," the Group flew tactical missions in support of the Allied build-up to the invasion of Europe. Gedeon was the Operations Officer for the Group's 586th Bomb

Squadron and in charge of planning missions, and the assignment of crews and planes. With his duties as operations officer, Gedeon was not a regular flyer but on the afternoon of April 20, 1944, just five days after celebrating his 27th birthday, he piloted a B-26B Marauder on a bombing run against a German VI site being constructed at Bois d'Esquerdes, France. It was nearly 7:30 P.M. when the group approached the target area and encountered blinding searchlights and intense, accurate, heavy anti-aircraft fire. The sky was suddenly full of puffs of black explosions that were silhouetted against the searchlights. These explosions generated hundreds of pieces of jagged steel that could easily set oxygen and gas tanks blazing, or rip through the wings of a plane and just as easily through the bodies of the men inside. Lining up to make the bombing run the flak grew heavier, thicker and more deadly, causing planes to bounce around from nearby bursts. "We got caught in searchlights and took a direct hit under the cockpit," recalled co-pilot James Taaffe. "I watched Gedeon lean forward against the controls as the plane went into

a nose dive and the cockpit filled with flames." Taaffe, with his clothing on fire, desperately struggled to open the pilot's and co-pilot's top hatches. He looked back and saw no movement from Gedeon as he scrambled to safety through the hatch. Descending through the night sky he watched the flame-engulfed airplane spiral out of control and explode on impact with the ground, carrying Gedeon and five others to their death. Gedeon was the only major league player killed in Europe during World War II.

## Jim Gladd (New York Giants)



Gladd was a second lieutenant with the 33rd Field Artillery Battalion of the 1st Infantry Division. Their 105mm howitzer guns were in action in Normandy, Northern France, Rhineland, Ardennes-Alsace and Central Europe. After the cease of hostilities, Gladd played ball for the 71st Infantry Division Red Circlers - Third Army

representatives in the 1945 ETO World Series.

## Mickey Grasso (Senators, Giants and Indians)

Grasso served in the Mediterranean Theater with the 34th Infantry Division. He was taken prisoner by German forces in February 1943 and sent to Stalag III B in Furstenberg, 60 miles southeast of Berlin, Germany. On a daily ration of thin soup and a slice of bread, Grasso dropped from 205 pounds to 145, but baseball was never far from his mind. Also in the camp was former Appalachian League outfielder, Harold Martin and, together with another POW, Keith Thomas, they devised a baseball game using playing cards which kept them entertained during the long periods of boredom during the winter months of 1943-1944. During the summer of 1943, competitive fast-pitch softball leagues were formed at Stalag III B and Grasso was a star player with his team, the Zoot Suiters. In the summer of 1944, the highly organized leagues were divided into major and minor leagues, with the majors divided into National and American divisions. Games were always well attended, the level of play was high and culminated in a World Series in August.

In the final days of the war against Germany, Grasso devised an escape with nine other prisoners. "They were marching us to Denmark after the Russians broke through," he explained, "and the guards they put on us were all 65 or 70 years old. Ten of us slipped away into a field when we stopped for a rest. We had a French fellow in the group and a Jewish boy who spoke German. We marched through about ten villages in columns of twos. We were stopped a

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couple of times by German officers, but the Jewish boy saluted smartly, explained we were a working detail, headed down the road and we got away with it. We marched from the Oder to the Elbe, discovered a rowboat with one oar by a home on the edge of the river, found a sheet and painted a big black cross on it. The Russians and Germans were firing at each other a few hundred yards down the river, but we piled into the boat anyway and took off for the other side. We drifted downstream toward the fighting, but finally made it to the other side. It seemed like about nine million GIs came out of the bushes to meet us. We were looking down the barrels of a lot of 35th Infantry Division rifles, but we told 'em who we were and, thank God, they believed us. Then they told us we were crazy to escape – that the war was all but over. Anyway, they got us back to some chow. They shoved a ton of good food at us, but about all we could do was nibble on a chicken leg. Our stomachs had shrunk so much we couldn't handle any more than that."

## Ross Grimsley (Chicago White Sox)

Grimsley served with the Army Air Force as a corporal and arrived in England in early 1943. As part of a signal battalion at VIII Bomber Command Headquarters in High Wycombe, Grimsley pitched for the Bomber Command Bombers throughout the war years. During one spell in 1943, he struck out 86 batters in seven games. Grimsley also played for an Eighth Air Force team of former professional players that toured military camps throughout Britain for 30 days. The team finished the tour with a 29-1 record and Grimsley contributed three wins as well as suffering the one loss.

## Johnny Grodzicki (St. Louis Cardinals)

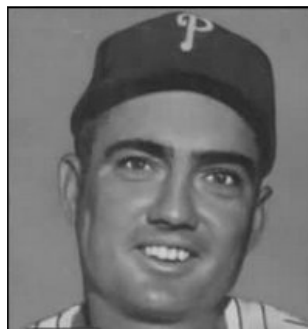


Grodzicki served with the 17th Airborne Division, which took over the defense of the Meuse River sector from Givet to Verdun, France in December 1944. In January 1945, the Division marched through the snow to Morhet, relieving the 28th Infantry Division, entering the Battle of the Bulge on January 4 at the

Battle of Dead Man's Ridge. On March 24, 1945, the 17th Airborne Division took part in their first airborne assault, dropping behind enemy lines 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 29th, an enemy shell exploded near Grodzicki and a jagged piece cut

deep into his flesh just below the right hip. Another piece entered his lower right leg. Grodzicki was removed to a field hospital and 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.

## Ken Heintzelman (Philadelphia Phillies and Pittsburgh Pirates)



Heintzelman served in Europe with the 65th Reconnaissance Troop (Mechanized) of the 65th Infantry Division. They breached the Siegfried Line in mid-March, crossed the Rhine at the end of the month, the Danube in late-April and reached Austria in May 1945. Heintzelman

served as a driver, radio operator, car commander and a mortar gunner. "I shot my share of Germans," he later recalled. "How many, I don't know. I didn't bother trying to keep score. It was too dangerous."

After the cease of hostilities in Europe, he played for the 65th Infantry Division baseball team. "Our baseball really started about June," he told *The Sporting News* in January 1946. "We had to wait for most of our baseball equipment, and until it arrived, we had a German cobbler make our shoes and we fixed our own spikes out of steel. The fields weren't in such good shape. We could have used an expert groundskeeper. But I did find plenty of baseball interest. All the fellows wanted to talk baseball and I took a lot of ribbing, especially from Pirate fans from Pittsburgh."

He was later selected to play for the 71st Infantry Division Red Circlers team - Third Army representatives in the 1945 ETO World Series, playing in front of crowds of 50,000 at Soldier's Field in Nuremberg, Germany. "I had a good experience pitching for Army teams," he recalled. "My Army service did something to me. I know I have more confidence in myself now. Another thing. If I ever did any complaining, I'll never do it again. Nobody had it too tough over here [in the United States during the war]. I remember one trip of 350 miles we took over in France. It took us two days and two nights. A bus ride over these roads in the United States will be a real pleasure now."

## Ralph Houk (New York Yankees)

Houk served in Europe with the 89th Cavalry

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Reconnaissance Squadron (Mechanized) of the 9th Armored Division. He got his first taste of action during the Battle of the Bulge and was wounded in the calf at Willbillig, Germany.

"One day in the middle of the battle I sent Ralph out in a jeep to do some scouting of enemy troops," said Caesar Fiore, his commanding officer for three years. "After being out two nights we listed him as 'missing in action. When he turned up he had a three-day growth of beard and hand grenades hanging all over him. He was back of the enemy lines the entire time. I know he must have enjoyed himself. He had a hole in one side of his helmet, and a hole in the other where the bullet left. When I told him about his helmet he said 'I could have sworn I heard a ricochet.' We marked him 'absent without leave' but were glad to have him back alive."

Houk was later promoted to the rank of captain and led platoons into trouble spots. "I sent him on three missions in April of 1945 and one day he returned with nine prisoners of war," recalled Fiore. "His reports invariably had an undetermined number of enemy killed."

Houk received the Purple Heart, Silver Star, Bronze Star with oak leaf cluster, four campaign stars and clusters during his service in Europe. "He was an extremely popular platoon commander," Fiore explained. "His baseball training helped." Following the German surrender in May 1945, Houk teamed up with Ken Trinkle for the 9th Armored Division baseball team that made it to the play-offs of the 1945 ETO World Series.

## **Millard "Dixie" Howell (White Sox, Reds and Indians)**

Advancing with the 60th Infantry Regiment of the 9th Infantry Division through Belgium on September 6, 1944, Howell and other infantrymen had to cross the River Meuse in boats because all bridges had been destroyed by the retreating German troops. On the other side of the river they were surprised by enemy troops and 150 Americans, including Howell, were taken prisoner. Howell was taken to the Stalag VIIA prisoner-of-war camp at Moosburg, Germany – about 40 miles northeast of Munich. "In the morning," he said, "we got nothing except bad coffee. The noon fare was usually some sort of soup and in the evening we'd get minced ham ... the fellows called it horse meat ... potatoes and bread.

"The Red Cross would give us chocolate bars and other things hard to get and some of us would trade these things for bread. The camp officials would deal out the bread about five men to a loaf. If you worked at cleaning up the buildings, on the farms or on the railroad, you would get better food. We slept

on straw beds without adequate covering, so we would use our clothes to help keep warm at night. But I stood it all pretty good and I don't think I lost much weight. We didn't realize how near the war was to ending. Now and then we would get information from the guards, but it was never accurate."

In April 1945, Howell – 75 pounds lighter than his usual 210 – was liberated by advancing Allied forces.

## **Billy Johnson (New York Yankees and St. Louis Cardinals)**

Johnson entered service with the Army and served in Europe with the 87th Infantry Division during 1944 and 1945, as part of an 81mm mortar crew.

## **Earl "Lefty" Johnson (Boston Red Sox and Detroit Tigers)**



Johnson served with the 120th Infantry Regiment of the 30th Infantry Division, US Army. The Division landed at Omaha Beach, Normandy on June 11, 1944 and spearheaded the St. Lo break-through. On September 30, 1944, Johnson, a rifle platoon sergeant earned his first combat honor – a bronze star. His citation read: "During heavy concentration of hostile fire, a friendly truck was struck by an enemy shell and had to be abandoned. The fact that the vehicle contained vital radio equipment made it imperative that it be recovered before falling into enemy hands. Sergeant Earl Johnson and several others members of his unit were assigned to this hazardous mission. They courageously braved a severe hostile fire and were completely successful in dragging the vehicle over an area in plain view of the enemy."

In addition to the Bronze Star, Johnson also received a battlefield commission promoting him to second lieutenant. Months later, Johnson was awarded a Silver Star for bravery during the Battle of the Bulge, and further promotion to first lieutenant. In 1945, Red Sox general manager Eddie Collins received a letter from Johnson dated February 10. "I have been in combat for six months," Johnson wrote. "It sure has been a long road. It really has been tough. It seems like I have been fighting for years. I sure will be glad when it is over."

Reminiscing about his Army life, Johnson told of the time he and his platoon were trying to knock out some German tanks. Earl threw a couple of hand grenades and missed. A member of his platoon – a kid who had never thrown a baseball in his life –

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threw two grenades and scored two direct hits. "If only I had that kid's control," he concluded, "what a pitcher I would be."

## Eddie Kazak (St. Louis Cardinals and Cincinnati Reds)



Kazak served with the Army in France. Following the D-Day invasion, he was in close quarters combat and sustained a severe bayonet wound to his left forearm. The wound required 19 stitches. A short while later, in the vicinity of Brest, northwestern France, his right elbow was shattered by shrapnel. Kazak spent 18

months in hospitals in England and California enduring numerous operations including one to put a plastic patch in place of the missing bone in his elbow.

## Eddie Kearse (New York Yankees)

Kearse served as a sergeant with the 125th Armored Engineers of the 14th Armored Division in Europe and was seriously wounded during a mortar barrage in France on November 22, 1944. He underwent several operations that left appalling scars on his back and shoulders.

"Three years ago," said Yankees' scout, Joe Devine, in March 1947, "a doctor told me Eddie Kearse would never play ball again. In fact, the doc intimated Eddie's condition was so serious the kid might never get out of bed. And look at him, will you! Hitting that ball and moving around as though he never had an injury or an ailment."

## Art Kenney (Boston Braves)

Kenney was a communications officer with the 398th Bomb Group in England. "We would give instructions to pilots about what to do if the plane went down and dealt with everything from the mechanics of radar, to escape strategies, to devising secret information that we would write on rice paper so it could be eaten if crew members were captured," he told writer John W. Gearan. "It was tough when a plane was lost, but even tougher when dead crews members were still aboard when a B-17 made it back to base."

On opening day of the baseball season in England in April 1945, Kennedy pitched the 398th team - known as Lew's Yanks - to a 10-1 win against the 339th Fighter Group.

## Ted Kleinhans (Reds, Yankees and Phillies)



Kleinhans - who had spent 14 months in service during World War I as a sergeant with the 145th Infantry Regiment of the 37th Division and was wounded in action - served in England as a captain in medical administration with the 52nd General Hospital during World War II. One of his early responsibilities in England was to stop food wastage at the hospital. "Right now saving food over here is much more important than saving base hits," he told the Syracuse

Herald-Journal on May 31, 1943. "Food shipped over here all takes up valuable space and costs sailors' lives. We impress that on our men and have taught them not to take more food than they can eat. If they underestimate their appetites, they can always come back for more.

"As to baseball," Kleinhans responded when asked about the role of major league baseball in time of war by the Syracuse Herald-Journal in May 1943, "I feel that it has a very definite place in our war effort, for it gives the people needed relaxation. Perhaps the teams won't be quite up to the standards of past years, but they'll be good. Right now, though, I'm more interested in feeding a large group of hungry soldiers."

Kleinhans pitched for the 52nd General Hospital Chiefs in England, and estimated that the 22 games played by the team in 1943 were watched by a total of 25,000 spectators and raised \$12,500 for various charities.

The first casualties from Normandy arrived the second week of June 1944, and from that time until early 1945, baseball took a backseat as the beds at the 52nd General Hospital were filled nearly to capacity. Altogether the 52nd treated more than 21,000 patients. Kleinhans returned to playing baseball in England after the German surrender and he was the starting pitcher in the UK servicemen all-star game held in June 1945.

"He was a superb gentleman," Dr. Max Kutzer, who served with Kleinhans at the 52nd General Hospital, told the Syracuse Herald-Journal in July 1985, "a great leader, and an inspiration to anyone who was associated with him - particularly his athletes on his baseball teams."



# Baseball in Wartime Newsletter No. 32 January 2015

## Jack Knott (Browns, White Sox and Athletics)

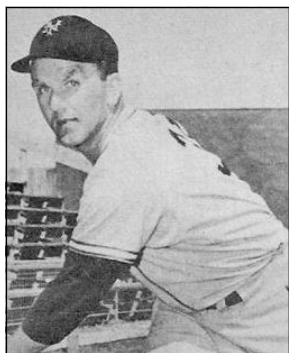
Knott arrived in France with the 104th Infantry Division in September 1944. The Division was involved in the Battle of the Scheldt – an operation in northern Belgium aimed at opening the port of Antwerp to Allied shipping - and the Battle of Hurtgen Forest. In January 1945, he received a battlefield commission, when he was promoted to second lieutenant. Two days later he was wounded and was awarded the Purple Heart.

The Division later moved across the Roer River, entered Cologne after heavy fighting, and crossed the Rhine River at Honnef in March 1945. Knott earned a further promotion during this time, being made a first lieutenant. After liberating the Mittelbau Dora concentration camp near Nordhausen in April, the Division met up with the Russian Army at Pretzsch, where it remained until the German surrender on May 7, 1945.

## Don Kolloway (White Sox, Tigers and Athletics)

Kolloway served with the 29th Infantry Division and saw combat in Europe, where he was awarded the Bronze Star. Following the German surrender, he played for 29th Infantry Division Blue and Grays ballteam - Seventh Army Champions.

## Dave Koslo (Giants, Braves and Orioles)



Koslo spent seven months with the 13th Airborne Division at Sens, Joigny and Auxerre, France. The Division did not see combat and Koslo had plenty of time for baseball. The 13th Airborne Blackcats played a 37-game schedule in 1945 – losing just four games. Koslo hurled 14 straight victories, including a 9-0 five-hitter against the UK All-Stars at

Sens in June 1945, and a 4-0 five-hitter against the same team in London the following month.

## Joe Krakauskas (Washington Senators and Cleveland Indians)

In July 1943, Krakauskas left Canada for England where he served as a radio mechanic with a Royal Canadian Air Force night fighter squadron.

## Howie Krist (St. Louis Cardinals)

Krist was in France with the Army in late 1944 and suffered a neck injury while diving into a foxhole. He also badly injured his leg while carrying ammunition and spent much of 1945 in a hospital in England. He returned to the United States with a Purple Heart in late 1945.

## Steve Kuczek (Boston Braves)

Kuczek was a weapon's specialist with the 6th Armored Division and heavily engaged in the battle for Bastogne. He received six battle stars while in Europe and played some baseball in Germany after the cease of hostilities.

## Walt Lanfranconi (Boston Braves and Chicago Cubs)



Lanfranconi served with the 12th Armored Division and was overseas with the unit in Europe, earning two battle stars. In May 1945, following the German surrender Lanfranconi, along with fellow big leaguer Eddie Yount, conducted a highly successful four-day athletic school for troops. Each of the four days of the school was divided into a lecture period in the

morning and a period of practical work in teaching and playing games in the afternoon. Athletic certificates were awarded to 50 officers and enlisted men. Lanfranconi continued to play for the 12th Armored Division ball team until he broke his leg sliding into second base in July 1945.

## Buddy Lively (Cincinnati Reds)

As part of the 597th Anti-Aircraft (Automatic Weapons) Battalion, Lively advanced through France, Belgium and Holland with General Patton's Third Army. His three-gun battery was subsequently assigned to the British 2nd Army and as a result he missed the Battle of the Bulge. "I figure being attached to the British might've saved my life," he told John Pruet of the Huntsville Times in 1997. Lively was in Munich when the war in Europe ended. He and his GI buddies played baseball in Berchtesgaden, the site of Hitler's "Eagles Nest" fortress in the Bavarian mountains. "We had fresh eggs," he told Pruet, "a nice hotel, clean sheets, good food and a brewery nearby."

## Stan Lopata (Philadelphia Phillies and Milwaukee Braves)

Serving with the 14th Armored Division in Europe, Lopata was awarded the Bronze Star and Purple Heart.

## Turk Lown (Cubs, White Sox and Reds)

Lown served as a sergeant with an infantry division of General Patton's Third Army. He was at the Battle of the Bulge and suffered a shrapnel wound to his

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right thigh while serving in Germany in March. He was evacuated to a hospital in France and received the Purple Heart.

## Clarence Maddern (Chicago Cubs and Cleveland Indians)

Maddern served with the military police of the 76th Infantry Division in Europe. He suffered frostbite in his toes during the Battle of the Bulge and had the traumatic experience of having a comrade die in his arms. Maddern played baseball with the 76th Infantry Division team after the cease of hostilities.

## Tony Malinosky (Brooklyn Dodgers)

Malinosky served with the 106th Infantry Division in Europe, and told writer Ed Attanasio, "I sure didn't like getting my fanny shot at, be certain of that.

"I ended up at the Battle of the Bulge. We were the outfit that the Germans hit first. We had just gotten over there, and they put us in what they call a 'soft spot' or a 'quiet zone.' Patton and his 3rd Army were down south - that's where they were. But, our 'quiet zone' wasn't exactly quiet. The Germans evidently knew about it, because they came right through our outfit. I pretty much lost all my friends over there."

## Phil Marchildon (Philadelphia Athletics and Boston Red Sox)



Flying Officer Marchildon of the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) was stationed at the southcoast town of Bournemouth, when he first arrived in England in August 1943, awaiting to be assigned to active duty. While walking along the main street on a Sunday afternoon, a German fighter plane appeared in the clear blue sky above

and proceeded to strafe the street. Marchildon scrambled for cover in a doorway as bullets tore through the sidewalk. It was his first of numerous life-threatening close encounters with the enemy.

Marchildon soon reported to 433 Squadron. As a tail-gunner in a Halifax bomber, he flew night time missions in conditions that were so cold his guns would often freeze. On one occasion, his plane returned from an operation with 30 shrapnel holes made by enemy anti-aircraft guns. "Some Americans went over with us one night," Marchildon recalled in *The Sporting News* in July 1945, "and after that they said, 'Never again at night' [all American

bomber missions were flown during the day]. In the daytime you can't see the stuff shooting up at you. But at night, wow! It's tracers and rockets all around that scare you to death."

Active duty offered little time for Marchildon to play baseball, but he was persuaded to make a handful of appearances. In his first outing against an unsuspecting American army team, he threw three strikes right by the first batter. The strikeouts continued, and one by one the American batters returned to the bench in bewilderment, wondering who this guy was. It was eventually revealed he was Phil Marchildon of the Philadelphia Athletics.

During the night of August 16, 1944, Marchildon flew his 26th mission laying mines in Kiel Bay - he was four missions away from going home and hoped to be back with the Athletics for the 1945 season. But, as the bomber flew through the darkness above the Baltic Sea on the way to its target, it was attacked and set ablaze by a German night fighter. The pilot immediately gave orders for the crew to bail out but only the navigator and Marchildon escaped. Stranded in the icy water of the Baltic Sea, both crew members faced death from hyperthermia before they were eventually picked up by a Danish fishing boat and handed over to the German authorities.

Marchildon spent the following year at Stalag Luft III, where he was a heavy-hitting outfielder in the camp softball league. "Looks like I'll be missing another baseball season," he wrote his wife in December 1944. "We can only hope for the best now. I, for one, am praying for the day it ends and hope it will be soon. We seem kind of useless here and feel it deeply. We feel the people at home do not realize our predicament as fully as they might."

By mid-January 1945, the advancing Russian forces were only 150 miles from the prison camp which was hastily evacuated and the prisoners marched to Bremen. Then, as the Anglo-American forces closed in, they were moved again. Suffering from exhaustion and frost bite, many died along the way. On May 2, 1945, Marchildon and his fellow prisoners were finally liberated. "We were sleeping in a field when I woke up suddenly and heard troops passing," he recalled. "I thought they were Germans, but learned next day that the British had us surrounded. Our guards stacked their guns in a building and locked the door then surrendered to the British." By this time, Marchildon was severely malnourished and had lost 30 pounds in weight. He was flown back to England to recuperate.

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## **Morrie Martin (Dodgers, Athletics, White Sox, Orioles, Cardinals and Indians)**



Martin served with the 49th Engineer Combat Battalion and was involved in amphibious landings at North Africa and Sicily, prior to landing at Omaha Beach. He suffered shrapnel wounds twice and was buried alive in Germany when the house he was in was shelled. Left for dead, he and two other soldiers clawed their

way out and rejoined their battalion. At the Battle of the Bulge, he suffered a bullet wound to the thigh and nearly lost the leg after gangrene set in. It took more than 150 shots of penicillin to spare him from an amputation.

## **Ray Martin (Boston Braves)**

Martin arrived in Europe in January 1945 with the 9th Infantry Division. In March of that year he was involved in the battle for control of the Ludendorff railroad bridge (Battle of Remagen) over the Rhine River. "We were under heavy artillery fire and only had about a minute and a half between shelling to get our troops across the bridge," he recalled. "We could only send about a dozen across at a time. Ten days later the bridge collapsed from the effects of the battle. The towers at either end still stand as a memorial."

After the cease of hostilities, Martin pitched for the Division ball team, including a 13-inning, 1-0 loss to Ewell Blackwell. He may well have been selected to play for the 71st Infantry Division Red Circlers in the ETO World Series but was hospitalized in Munich in September with complications from food poisoning.

## **Maje McDonnell (Philadelphia Phillies coach)**

McDonnell landed at Omaha Beach, Normandy in September 1944, with the 95th Infantry Division and went on to fight battles in Northern France, Rhineland, Ardennes, Alsace and Central Europe, earning a Bronze Star, five battle stars and a Purple Heart.

## **Ralph McLeod (Boston Braves)**

McLeod arrived in Europe with the 75th Infantry Division in late 1944, and went into action on Christmas Eve during the Battle of the Bulge. "When we had long marches, we started off with an overcoat," he told Dick Thompson in 1995. "Of course, to carry an overcoat with an M1 [rifle] is pretty heavy. The first thing you discarded was the overcoat, no matter how cold it was. All we had

was a Red Cross sweater underneath our GI jacket. Come night time you cut off a few fir branches and put them on top of the snow, get your roll out, get inside, put your shoes in there so they wouldn't freeze, and sleep away. It's an experience I wouldn't want to go through again."

His division also saw action with the French in the Colmar area and the British in Holland. "We got bounced around to different places," he later said. "We ended up in Dortmund, Germany. We saw a lot of action. I lost a lot of good friends." After the war ended in Europe, McLeod played baseball service baseball.

## **Bill Moisan (Chicago Cubs)**



Moisan served with the 100th Infantry Division in France in 1944, and was part of the Allied advance into Germany in early 1945, earning the Silver Star at Jagstfeld, Germany. He also received the Bronze Star and Purple Heart. He was later captured by the Germans and as a Prisoner of War endured a 32-day forced

march across Germany into Austria. Moisan suffered frozen feet and his weight dropped from 185 pounds to just 95 pounds.

## **Alex Monchak (Philadelphia Phillies)**

Monchak served with the 11th Armored Division throughout Europe. "We were pushing our way through Czechoslovakia and were to join a Russian force that was coming in from the north," he explained in the Elmira Star-Gazette in January 1946. "The one radio for our group of some 600 men went 'on the blink' shortly after we started this trip, but we gave it little thought because we believed we would meet the Russians within a half-day's travel.

"But no Russians did we see, so we kept pushing farther ahead. We weren't meeting with much opposition, other than a few Storm Trooper snipers, but we figured that maybe the Russians might have run into trouble. We thought that, when we met up with the allies we would use their radio to inform our own forces where we were. The towns were spotted with white flags, but that was customary where there was no opposition.

"After two days of rapid travel through the country, though, still puzzled because we had been unable to contact the Russians, we stopped, figuring we best had repair our radio and learn what had happened to them. It was only then that we learned

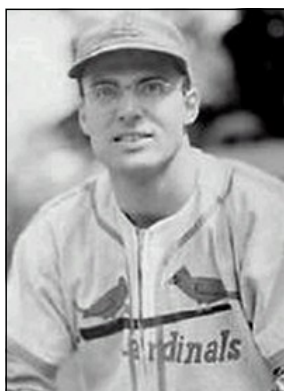
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that the Russians had got on the wrong road, and that the war had ended - two days earlier!"

## Red Munger (St. Louis Cardinals and Pittsburgh Pirates)

Second-Lieutenant Munger arrived in Europe with the Army in 1945, and stationed in Germany. "I spent my entire seven months in ... Heidelberg," Munger told *The Sporting News* in September 1946. "I was ... in charge of the athletic program of the Third Army. Nearly all the GIs over there are kids between 18 and 20, who never had it so good in their lives. We had four leagues of six clubs each, and I played 38 games this summer. But I pitched in only half a dozen. The reason was this: We had no standout ball players. Just high school boys, some sandlotters. It would have been unfair, and certainly no fun for me, to have pitched against that type of hitter. The class of ball which we dished up in those four leagues, which were about on a par, may be appreciated from the fact that I hit .640. There was no real pitching. Just fast stuff, no curves, little pro hurling. Had I kept to pitching, there would have been no competition. As it was, my club, Third Army Headquarters, had won 30 straight when I left. It had taken 36 out of 38."

## Sam Nahem (Phillies, Cardinals and Dodgers)



Nahem was sent overseas in late 1944, and served with anti-aircraft artillery. After the cease of hostilities in May 1945, he was promoted to sergeant and was running two baseball leagues for servicemen in Rheims, France. He was also managing and pitching for his own team – the OISE All-Stars, a team made up of mainly ex-minor league players

supplemented by Negro League stars (and future Hall of Famers) Leon Day and Willard Brown.

The OISE All-Stars proved a formidable team in France and went on to the ETO World Series in September 1945. Their opponents – the 71st Division Red Circlers, who represented the Third Army - had a lineup featuring major leaguers Harry Walker, Johnny Wyrostek, Benny Zientara, Bob Ramazzotti, Ewell Blackwell, Al Brazle and Ken Heintzelman.

With the series tied at one game apiece, Nahem took the mound and was locked in a pitching duel with Blackwell, winning 2-1. The Red Circlers came back to tie the series in the fourth game, and Nahem was on the mound again for the fifth and deciding game. He ran into trouble in the fourth

inning and had to be relieved but the OISE All-Stars held on to win the game 2-1 and clinch the ETO World Series crown.

## Harry Perkowski (Cincinnati Reds and Chicago Cubs)

Perkowski served with the Navy in the amphibious force and helped escort troops and tanks during invasions on Landing Craft Tanks (LCTs). He served 19 months in the Atlantic. As well as the landings at Normandy, he was in North Africa, Sicily and Italy. "I was all over the place just about," he later recalled.

## Earl Rapp (Browns, Senators, White Sox, Giants and Tigers)



Rapp served 556 days in Europe with the 83rd Chemical (Motorized) Battalion. In early 1945, he earned the Silver Star for his part in the battle of the Colmar Pocket. Rapp's platoon of 48 men had been cutoff near the French town of Riquewihr. The lieutenant in command ordered them to dig fox holes and lie low until early dawn to make a break for their

own lines but almost immediately a German sniper killed the officer with a bullet through the temple. That put Sergeant Rapp in command.

"The only way we had a chance was to jump out of our holes, one man at a time, run like mad for ten yards, then hit the ground before the SS sharpshooters got the range," he told *The Sporting News* in August 1946. One by one the young American soldiers made a run for safety as his mates offered covering fire. "Strange what thoughts run through your mind when you're hugging the ground and just waiting for the hour. I thought about baseball, and how hard I'd work and go all-out if I ever had the opportunity to go to spring training again."

The last GI to leave his foxhole was Rapp. No one covered him. "I never ran so hard in my life. You never know how hard you can run until your life is at stake. I thought that night that I'd never play baseball again... and that's what I thought mostly about ... I said 'Rapper, if you ever get through this, you'll play baseball like you never played it ... hustle ... and fight every pitcher ... and learn to hit lefthanders.'" Only seven men made it back to safety.



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In addition to the Silver Star, Rapp also earned the Purple Heart when he was wounded in the tendons behind the knee, which would hamper his running ability and affect his baseball career.

## Al Richter (Boston Red Sox)

Richter was assigned Special Services work in Wiesbaden, Germany after the war, and was given charge as coach of a baseball team to travel around the area to play ball and help entertain the troops. "Among other scheduled duties, I picked up movie film in Frankfurt, Germany, about 40 miles from Wiesbaden," he told Bill Nowlin. "I would drive there two or three times a week. Frankfurt was flattened out by our Air Corps, but they still had offices there, and that's where I picked up movie film for our troops to see movies at night."

## Scotty Robb (National and American League umpire)

Robb spent 15 months as a special courier in England and France with the US Navy's Amphibious Forces, frequently flying between the two countries. While in England he found time to keep his umpiring skills fresh, and one of his requests to his wife was for her to mail his rule book to him. Robb was very aware of the significance of distinguishing an umpire from the ballplayers and because everyone on the ballfields of England were mostly wearing military fatigues he needed to find an alternative. He found an English woman who had a navy blue coat and she fashioned a jacket out of it for him. In June 1945, Robb umpired an all-professional game held at Stamford Bridge soccer stadium in London, England.

## Skippy Roberge (Boston Braves)



In May 1944, Roberge left the United States for England. He was stationed at the 10th Replacement Depot at Whittington Barracks, where he played baseball during the summer months alongside minor leaguers Harold Hinds, Marvin Crater and Leonard Frase. "While in England I was on a team which went all over

teaching the finer points of the game," he later recalled. Late in 1944, as Allied forces advanced in mainland Europe, Roberge was assigned to the 4th Infantry Division. He was wounded by a nearby exploding shell during the Roer River crossing at Linnich in Germany on February 14, 1945, and recuperated at a hospital in Belgium.

## Si Rosenthal (Boston Red Sox)

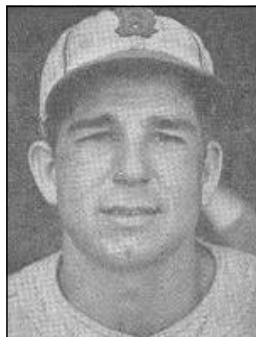
Si Rosenthal, whose son, Buddy, had been killed in action in the Pacific in December 1943, set sail for European waters in May 1944. "My minelayer - the USS Miantonomah - got around quite a bit," he told The Sporting News in September 1947. "On D-Day she was off Omaha Beach, performing a few minor services for the USS Texas. She seemed to be a pretty lucky minelayer, and September 25, 1944, she had just come out of Le Havre [France], heading for Plymouth, England. From there she was going to Boston.

"It was a raw day. It was around 2.30 in the afternoon. I was to go on watch in about 20 minutes and I was sitting on deck reading The Reader's Digest - the article, I think, was 'They Take The Wounded Off Normandy.'

"Next thing I knew, there was an explosion and I was pirouetting through the air. Then I was in the water. I couldn't swim, but my life-jacket was holding me up. Soon I felt a terrific heaviness from the waist down. After a while, I could see our chief pharmacist swimming over towards me. He grabbed me and pulled me over to a life-raft. He got me on it somehow, and I sort of half-landed, half-rolled onto a couple of other men. More time passed and a small British boat - a lot like one of our PT boats - came out and took me aboard. The men on the British boat looked at the two men on whom I was lying. Both were dead. I never have walked since then. For the past three years, my life has been in hospitals - in France, England and Massachusetts."

The USS Miantonomah had struck a mine. She sank about 20 minutes after the explosion with a loss of 58 officers and men.

## Bama Rowell (Boston Braves and Philadelphia Phillies)



In 1945, Rowell was sent overseas to Europe. "Besides playing second base on the outfit's team," wrote The Sporting News in January 1945, "Rowell has been handling athletic equipment, movies, radio programs, daily news bulletins and other morale builders."

After Germany surrendered in May 1945, Rowell served as player/manager with 76th Infantry Division Onaways baseball team.

## Mickey Rutner (Philadelphia Athletics)

Rutner served with the 45th Infantry Division through Italy, France and Germany, working as a translator in

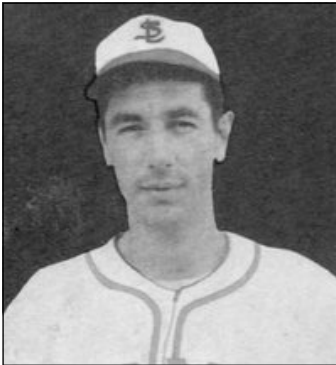
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France. The Division was the first to discover Dachau concentration camp in April 1945.

## Tom Saffell (Pittsburgh Pirates and Kansas City Athletics)

Saffell was a P-47 Thunderbolt pilot with the 371st Fighter Group. Between April 1944 and May 1945 he flew 61 combat missions without a scratch from bases in France and Germany.

## Bob Savage (Philadelphia Athletics and St. Louis Browns)



In August 1944, Savage, now a lieutenant who had already seen combat in Italy, was part of the Allied landings in southern France. "On my birthday, December 1, 1944," he explained. "I was waiting to cross a small stream that had a one-way temporary bridge along the Rhine River. While

waiting for traffic to go in my direction, I was standing next to my jeep, when an artillery shell landed close by. I hit the dirt but still was wounded on my leg, wrist, and face.

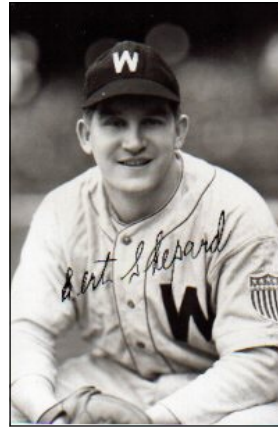
"When I got up, I realized I still had to get the jeep across the stream. I was able to drive to my destination, which I think was no more than a mile away. I was taken to an aid station nearby and then transported to a hospital by an ambulance that had to pass over the same bridge where I had been wounded. Fighting had settled down, so we had no trouble during our journey. I was on the mend fairly soon after surgery, but I remained in the hospital for about six to eight weeks."

Savage returned to his company after it had crossed the Rhine, and the war was winding down. "I got hit (again) shortly after I returned to action," he says. "This time, I was in a foxhole when a shell hit a tree and a flat piece of it hit me on the top of my head. This caused a pretty large bump. I went to a first-aid station and the medics gave me a pill and sent me back to my unit.

"A few days before the end of the war, our division liberated the Dachau Concentration Camp. This has to be my worst memory. I haven't spoken about this experience more than ten times in the last half century and probably will not speak about it again. Our unit ended the war in Salzburg, Austria."

With the war over, Savage pitched for the 3rd Infantry Division in Austria and Germany.

## Bert Shepard (Washington Senators)



Fighter pilot Bert Shepard joined the 55th Fighter Group in England in early 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 in his P-38 Lightning, and on May 21, opening day for the 55th Fighter Group baseball season, he volunteered for his 34th mission. While attacking an airfield near Ludwigslust, east of Hamburg, Germany, his plane was hit by enemy flak, with shells tearing through his right leg and foot. Shepard was knocked unconscious and at 380mph the fighter plane crashed into the ground. Shortly after the crash landing, 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.

"[Shepard] 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 flyer' as he called him, I telephoned the general on duty at the Reich's Air Ministry in Berlin and reported the case. Whereupon the general called the colonel and settled the matter. Lieutenant Shepard was admitted and operated on. A few days later I inquired about his condition and was told that he was doing fine."

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

In February 1945, Shepard returned to the United States on a prisoner exchange.

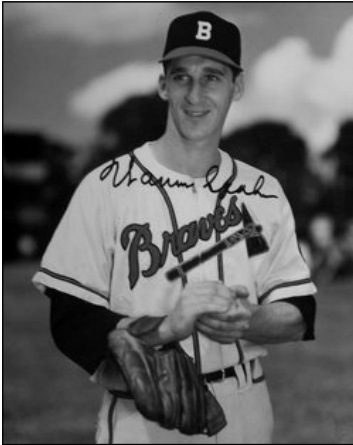
## Steve Souchock (Tigers, Yankees and White Sox)

Souchock served in Europe with the 691st Tank Destroyer Battalion. He spent 16 months in France, Luxembourg, Belgium and Germany, earning a

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Bronze Star as commander of the five-man crew in an M36 tank destroyer, knocking out a couple of German tanks with their 90mm gun. He returned home with five battle stars late in 1945. "The war cost me three important years," said Souchock, "as it did many ballplayers."

## Warren Spahn (Braves, Mets and Giants) Hall of Fame



Spahn arrived in Europe in December 1944 with the 276th Engineer Combat Battalion. "Let me tell you," Spahn said, "that was a tough bunch of guys. We had people that were let out of prison to go into the service. So those were the people I went overseas with, and they were tough and rough and I had to fit that mold."

Spahn soon found himself in combat. "We were surrounded in the Hertgen Forrest and had to fight our way out of there. Our feet were frozen when we went to sleep and they were frozen when we woke up. We didn't have a bath or change of clothes for weeks."

In March 1945, the 276th was responsible for maintaining the traffic flow across the Ludendorff Bridge at Remagen, the only remaining bridge to span the Rhine River. The bridge was under constant attack from the Germans who were desperate to stop the flow of Allied forces into Germany. At the same time they were to build a 140-foot Double Bailey bridge nearby. On March 16, Spahn was wounded in the foot by shrapnel while working on the Ludendorff. The following day he had just left the Ludendorff when the entire structure collapsed into the river with the loss of more than 30 US Army engineers. The 276th received the Distinguished Unit Emblem and for his efforts to keep the bridge operating, while under constant enemy fire, Staff Sergeant Spahn received a Purple Heart and a battlefield commission as a second-lieutenant.

After Germany's surrender in May 1945, Spahn pitched for the 115th Engineers Group at their base at the University of Heidelberg. In a four-game stretch, he allowed only one run and nine hits while striking out 73 batters.

Looking back on his military experience some years later, Spahn said, "After what I went through

overseas, I never thought of anything I was told to do in baseball as hard work. You get over feeling like that when you spend days on end sleeping in frozen tank tracks in enemy threatened territory. The Army taught me something about challenges and about what's important and what isn't. Everything I tackle in baseball and in life I take as a challenge rather than work."

## Dizzy Sutherland (Washington Senators)

Sutherland, a paratrooper who had been taken prisoner in Italy in September 1943, spent the remainder of the war in a POW camp in Germany. By the time he was liberated in 1945 he had lost 100 pounds in weight.

## Bert Thiel (Boston Braves)

Thiel fought in the Battle of the Bulge. After Germany surrendered, he played baseball and helped coach young German kids.

## Chuck Thompson (Orioles' Broadcaster) Hall of Fame

Hall of Fame broadcaster Thompson served with the 30th Infantry Division pursuing the enemy across Germany in the last months of the war.

## Jocko Thompson (Philadelphia Phillies)



On September 17, 1944, Lieutenant Thompson played a vital role in Operation Market Garden - the largest airborne operation in history. As platoon leader with the 82nd Airborne Division, he and his men landed only 600 hundred yards from the southwestern edge of the bridge at Grave that spanned the Maas River in Holland. He could hear erratic firing from the town itself but everything around the bridge was quiet. Thompson was unsure whether he should attack with the 16 men in his platoon or wait for the remainder of the company. "Since this was our primary mission, I decided to attack," he told author Cornelius Ryan.

Thompson led his platoon to cover in nearby drainage ditches, before wading in water up to their necks as they worked their way towards the bridge. They soon began receiving fire from a tower on the bridge and also noticed a lot of other activity around a building on the bridge that Thompson thought might be a powerplant. Thompson believed the Germans might be preparing to blow up the bridge so he deployed his men to attack the

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building. "We raked the area with machine guns, overran the power plant, found four dead Germans and one wounded," recalled Thompson. Shortly afterwards, Thompson heard two trucks approaching from the town. The driver of the lead vehicle was killed and the other vehicle quickly came to a halt. German soldiers poured out of the back of both vehicles and were met with a hail of fire from Thompson's platoon. The Germans quickly retreated back towards the town.

Thompson's bazooka man then dealt with the machine-gun fire coming from the tower on the bridge, and the platoon set up a road block, securing the bridge until the arrival of further elements of the 82nd Airborne.

Thompson was wounded in action twice during the war and in addition to being awarded the Silver Star and Bronze Star, he also received decorations from the French, Dutch and Belgians. He saw action during the Battle of the Bulge and at the end of the war he served as an aide to General James Gavin in the occupation of Berlin.

## Lou Thuman (Washington Senators)



Thuman served with the 29th Infantry Division, and arrived in England in February 1943. He played very little baseball in the Army but, while in England, he did appear in one game - an Army-Airforce all-star game that was staged at Wembley Stadium, London, before a crowd of 21,500 in August 1943. Thuman

pitched two innings in relief against the victorious Air Force team and allowed two hits but no runs.

In 1944, shortly after D-Day, Thuman was sent France and during action in the St. Lo area, he was hit in the right shoulder by a sniper's bullet. It was the end of Thuman's war and the end of his baseball career. He was spent the remainder of the year in a military hospital in Europe and was shipped back to the United States in December 1944.

## Cecil Travis (Washington Senators)

Travis served in Europe with the 76th Infantry Division during the final stage of the Battle of the Bulge. He suffered a bad case of frostbite that necessitated an operation. "Heck, you was in that snow," he recalled some years later, "and you was out in that weather, and you was lucky you got to stay in an old barn at night. The thing about it, you'd sit there in those boots, and you might not get 'em off for days

at a time. And cold! You'd just shake at night. Your feet would start swelling, and that's how you'd find out there was something really wrong - you'd pull your boots off, and your feet is swelling."

Travis received a Bronze Star and four battle stars during his time in Europe. He briefly played baseball with the Division team before returning to the United States.

## Ken Trinkle (New York Giants and Philadelphia Phillies)

Trinkle served in Europe with the 9th Armored Division. He saw action at the Battle of the Bulge and was awarded a Bronze Star. "I was a scout in a reconnaissance outfit," he told *The Sporting News* in June 1947. "We would go out in front of the infantry to report if anything was there. If you didn't come back, they knew there was something out there."

Following the German surrender in May 1945, Trinkle played for the 9th Armored Division team and he also played for the 71st Infantry Division Red Circlers in the ETO World Series.

## Harry "The Hat" Walker (Cardinals, Phillies, Reds and Cubs)



Walker was sent overseas to Europe with the 65th Infantry Division, where he earned a Bronze Star for "meritorious service in connection with military operations" and a Purple Heart for wounds received in March 1945. At one time Walker's unit was ordered to hold a bridge and stop German troops trying to get across. Manning a machine gun on a Jeep,

Walker was faced with an enemy that refused to stop. "So that's when I had to start shooting," he told author Frederick Turner, "and I just cut through the whole mess, and they were scattered everywhere, firing back and forth at you, and you're just out there on point like a sitting duck."

On another occasion he was on patrol when he ran into three German guards. "They came within ten feet of us," he recalled. "The only thing that saved us was they thought we were Germans retreating from fighting. Those three guards walked up to us, and one of them asked me, in German, where the Americans were. I asked them, in English, to surrender. Instead, he threw his rifle up in my face. I had a .45 caliber revolver, one that I'd bought myself ... I shot all three Germans. Five shots, and all five hit them. But it was close. That rifle was only



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about four feet from me when I started shooting. What saved me was that he was trying to get his safety bolt off. He couldn't get it off before I was able to get him."

With the war in Europe at an end, Walker's next assignment was to organize baseball games for the troops. He located earthmoving equipment in Czechoslovakia and built a ballfield in Linz, Austria. The 65th Infantry Division baseball team clinched the II Corps championship title before being defeated in the Third Army play-offs. But for Walker, the baseball season was not over. He joined the 71st Infantry Division Red Circlers in the ETO World Series.

## Neal Watlington (Philadelphia Athletics)

Watlington served with the Army in Europe. "I put in six months on the front lines in France, Belgium and Germany," he recalled in December 2103. Watlington earned a Purple Heart for a hand injury. After the German surrender, he played baseball with the 19th Replacement Depot.

## Montie Weaver (Washington Senators and Boston Red Sox)



Weaver trained as an air traffic controller and was sent to England with the Eight Army Air Force in July 1943. Stationed at Fighter Command headquarters in Saffron Walden, his duties included organizing ball games for the servicemen. In August 1943, the 37-year-old coached an Eighth Air Force team of former professional players that

played an all-professional Army team at London's Wembley Stadium. The Air Force team defeated the Army 1-0 and then embarked on a 30-day tour of military camps throughout Great Britain. Finishing the tour with a 29-1 record, Lieutenant-General Ira C. Eaker called them "the best baseball team I have ever seen."

## Ernie White (St. Louis Cardinals and Boston Braves)

In late-1944, White was shipped overseas with the 78th Infantry Division. He saw combat in the Battle of the Bulge, during which he was pinned down in icy water for a day. In March 1945, White was one of two American soldiers who presented arms and fired a volley over the grave of a Russian slave laborer, in Germany.

## Dick Whitman (Brooklyn Dodgers and Philadelphia Phillies)

Whitman saw action at the Battle of the Bulge, where he was seriously wounded when a shrapnel fragment pierced his back, came out through his shoulder and grazed his head. Whitman, who earned the Bronze Star, Purple Heart and three battle stars, also suffered frostbite to his toes.

## Hoyt Wilhelm (Giants, Cardinals, Indians, Orioles, White Sox, Angels, Braves, Cubs and Dodgers) Hall of Famer

Hall of Famer, Hoyt Wilhelm, was in combat with the 99th Infantry Division in Europe and was awarded the Purple Heart for wounds received during the Battle of the Bulge.

## Lefty Wilkie (Pittsburgh Pirates)

Wilkie was sent overseas with the 36th Infantry Division in 1945. He was in Mannheim, Germany at the end of the war and compiled a 23-3 record pitching with Army teams.

## Jim Willis (Chicago Cubs)

Willis served in France and Germany for the Army of Occupation. His post was guarding a bridge all through the night with blanks in his gun. He also played baseball, mostly to get out of guarding bridges.

## George Wilson (Giants, Yankees and White Sox)

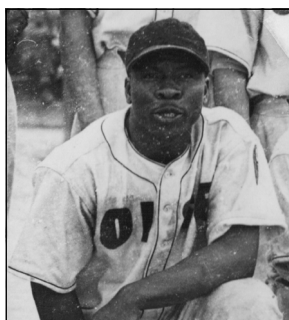
Wilson spent 14 months in Europe and saw combat in France and Germany.

## Bob Zick (Chicago Cubs)

Zick enlisted with the Army and was sent to Europe with the American Graves Administration, charged with the responsibility of recovering the bodies of all branches of service during WWII, Zick searched for downed planes, burned out tanks and common graves, looking for dog tags, bones and any other means of identification. He used a portable morgue to take care of bodies, which were sent back home for proper burial.

## Negro Leaguers in the ETO

## Willard Brown (Kansas City Monarchs: also St. Louis Browns) Hall of Famer



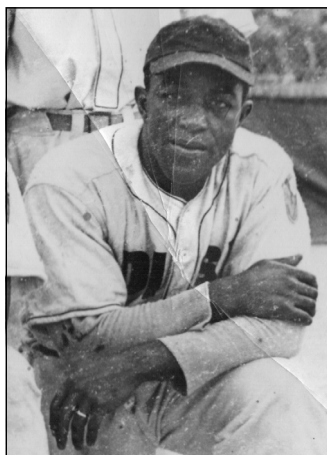
Hall of Famer Willard Brown was a member of the Army's Quartermaster Corps, engaged in hauling ammunition and guarding prisoners. While in France, he - together with fellow Negro Leaguer and future Hall of Famer Leon Day - was

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recruited by former Phillies' pitcher, Sam Nahem, to play for the OISE All-Stars, in the 1945 ETO World Series.

The OISE All-Stars were beaten by Ewell Blackwell and the 71st Infantry Division Red Circlers, 9-2, in the first game of the series. Brown was "the only man who had much luck hitting Blackwell," reported The Stars and Stripes in September 1945. Game two was a pitching duel with Leon Day, claiming a 2-1 victory for the All-Stars. Brown's sixth inning single drove in the go-ahead run. The third game of the series was another 2-1 win for the All-Stars with Brown scoring the first run.

## **Leon Day (Baltimore Black Sox, Brooklyn Eagles, Newark Eagles, and Baltimore Elite Giants) Hall of Fame**



Hall of Famer Leon Day served with the 818th Amphibian Battalion in Europe and was at Utah Beach on D-Day. When the war in Europe ended, Day was in France and was recruited to play in the ETO World Series with the integrated OISE All-Stars baseball team run by Phillies' pitcher Sam Nahem.

On the mound for game two of the series, Day allowed just four hits and struck out ten to lead the All-Stars to a 2-1 victory and even the series at one game apiece. Although he was beaten, 5-0, in game four, the All-Stars clinched the series in the fifth and final game.

## **Monte Irvin (Newark Eagles: also New York Giants and Chicago Cubs) Hall of Fame**

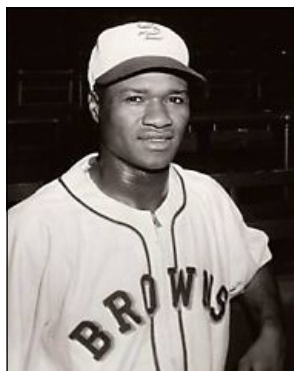
Hall of Famer Monte Irvin served with the 1313th Engineer General Service Regiment. The battalion was first sent to England, then after D-Day to France and Belgium, where they built bridges and repaired roads. In late 1944, his unit was deployed in Reims, France, as a secondary line in case the Germans broke through at Bastogne during the Battle of the Bulge. He developed tinnitus, a ringing in the ears, while in service.

## **Herb Simpson (Seattle Steelheads)**

Simpson served with the 2057<sup>th</sup> Quartermaster Truck Company and was in England as part of the Allied buildup prior to the Normandy landings. During this time he played as the only black player on an all-white Army team.

Simpson's company reached France shortly after D-Day and served as a dispatcher for the "Red Ball Express", the round-the-clock convoys that delivered vital supplies to the frontline. Following the German surrender, the 2057<sup>th</sup> provided logistic support in Munich, Frankfurt and Nuremberg.

## **Hank Thompson (Kansas City Monarchs: also St. Louis Browns and New York Giants)**



Thompson manned a machine gun with the 1695th Engineer Combat Battalion in Europe. "The main theater for me was the forest at Ardennes, better known as the Battle of the Bulge," he recalled to author Theodore Hamm. "I had never shivered right down to my bones before. Next to savin' my ass, baseball was the thing I

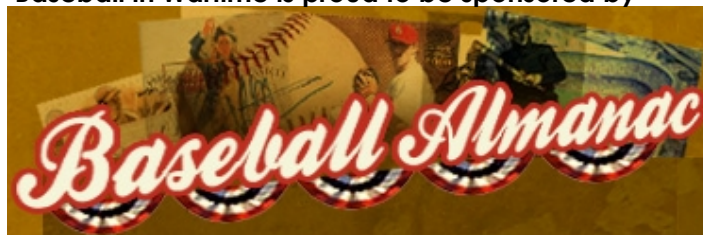
thought about most. I kept myself warm on those cold winter nights thinkin' about gettin' back to the Monarchs."

Thompson was involved in the taking of the Belgian town of Prummern in November 1944. "After Prummern, we geared up for the showdown at Marche, which happened near Christmas. This was not only my first white Christmas, but also the first time I ever encountered snow.

"At Marche, a pivotal battle, I must have nailed about 15, 20 German[s]. They was the SS troopers who wore white camouflage ski suits - pretty craft fellows. I spotted 'em 'cause they couldn't hide their footprints in the snow. "I remember round after round of machine fire, smoke fillin' the sky, dead soldiers on the ground. Nothin' quite matches the adrenalin rush of fightin' for your life with bombs goin' off all around you."

By the end of February 1945, the 1695th was advancing into Germany and was in Mainz when the war ended in May. Thompson's next job was to put together a battalion baseball team. "We put on exhibition games in towns like Mannheim and Ulm, where the locals turned out less to see baseball than to see a gathering of more colored folks in one place than they'd ever seen before."

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## A Complete List of Major League and Negro League Players, Managers, Coaches and Umpires Who Served in the ETO

Aberson Cliff	Kenney Art	Souchock Steve
Ambler Wayne	Kerns Russ	Spahn Warren
Anderson Andy	Kleinhans Ted	Stuffel Paul
Archie George	Knoff Jack	Suder Pete
Ayers Bill	Kolloway Don	Sutherland Dizzy
Aylward Dick	Koslo Dave	Thiel Bert
Bamberger George	Krakauskas Joe	Thompson Hank
Barney Rex	Krist Howie	Thompson Jocko
Bauers Russ	Lanfranco Walt	Thuman Lou
Behrman Hank	LaPalme Paul	Torgeson Earl
Berg Moe	Lapihuska Andy	Travis Cecil
Berra Yogi	Lawing Garland	Trinkle Ken
Blackburn Jim	Lenhardt Don	Van Robays Maurice
Blackwell Ewell	Lively Buddy	Walker Harry
Bowers Grover "Billy"	Lopata Stan	Wattlington Neal
Brazle Al	Lown Turk	Weaver Montie
Bremer Herb	Lynn Jerry	White Ernie
Brown Hal	Maddern Clarence	Whitman Dick
Brown Willard	Malinosky Tony	Wilhelm Hoyt
Bruner Roy	Marchildon Phil	Wilkie Aldon
Caligiuri Fred	Marshall Charles	Willis Jim
Campbell Paul	Martin Ray	Wilson George
Connors Merv	Martin Morrie	Wyrostek Johnny
Cox Billy	McLeod Ralph	Yount Eddie
Delsing Jim	McLish Cal	Yuhas Eddie
Dickson Murry	Miggins Larry	Zick Bob
Dropo Walt	Moisan Bill	Zientara Benny
Early Jake	Monchak Alex	
Edwards Bruce	Moore Whitey	<b>Managers</b>
Eschen Larry	Moore Anse	Adair Bill
Evans Bill	Morgan Bobby	
Fahr Jerry	Munger Red	<b>Coaches</b>
Fanning Jim	Nagy Steve	Carnevale Dan
Fanovich Frank	Nahem Sam	Lobe Bill
Feinberg Eddie	Oufen Chink	McDonnell Maje
Fitz Gerald Ed	Peden Les	
Flanigan Ray	Peek Steve	<b>Umpires</b>
Fletcher Van	Perkovich John	Chylak Nestor
Fondy Dee	Perkowski Harry	Donatelli Augie
Freitas Tony	Peters Russ	Honochick Jim
French Larry	Porterfield Bob	Robb Scotty
Garcia Mike	Prendergast Jim	
Gedeon Elmer	Rachunok Steve	<b>Broadcasters</b>
Gladd Jim	Ramazzotti Bob	Thompson Chuck
Grantenbein Joe	Rapp Earl	
Grasso Mickey	Reis Tommy	<b>Negro League Players</b>
Grimsley Ross	Richter Al	Awkard Russell
Grodzicki Johnny	Riebe Hank	Brown James
Heintzelman Ken	Roberge Skippy	Carter Elmer
Hilcher Whitey	Rosenthal Si	Duncan, Jr. Frank
Hofman Bobby	Rowell Bama	Flowers Jake
Houk Ralph	Rush Bob	Griffith Bob
Howell Homer "Dixie"	Rufner Mickey	Hayes Johnny
Howell Millard "Dixie"	Saffell Tommy	Johnson Byron
Irvin Monte	Savage Bob	Johnson Josh
Johnson Earl "Lefty"	Scharein George	Manning Max
Johnson Billy	Schieb Carl	Moore James "Red"
Karpel Herb	Shepard Bert	Parks Charlie
Kazak Eddie	Shoffner Mill	Redd Ulyses
Kearse Eddie		Ritchey John "Hoss"
Kenedy Bill		Scott Joe
		Simpson Herb
		Summers Lonnie
		Wynn Sidney



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## Further reading:

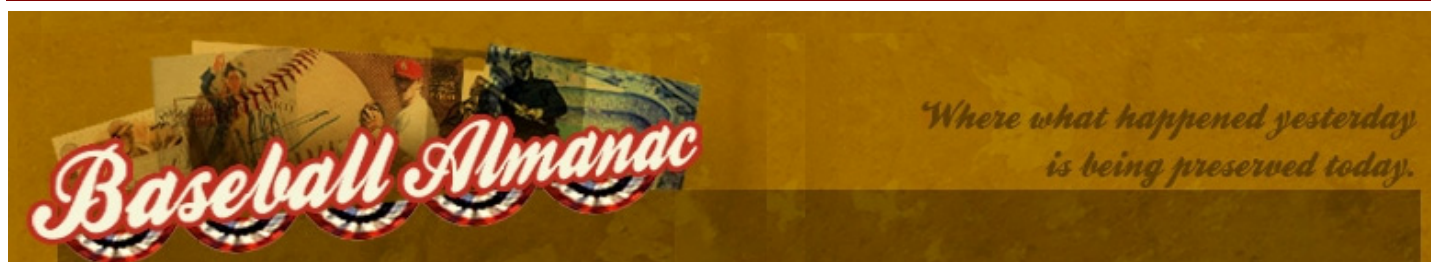
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