

Baseball in Wartime Launches Blog



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Baseball in Wartime

This blog is dedicated to baseball players who served with the armed forces during World War II.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 02, 2009

Hall of Famers at War - Joe DiMaggio

This article is the first in a series that takes a look at Baseball Hall of Famers who served with the armed forces during World War II. We start things off today with perhaps the most famous ballplayer to wear military fatigues during the war years - Joe DiMaggio.



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About Me



Gary Bedingfield

Hi! Welcome to my blog - I hope you like what you've seen so far. Baseball during World War II has fascinated me for a long time - so much so that I've written a

Internet

Baseball in Wartime - ...

On October 5, 2009, Baseball in Wartime launched the Baseball in Wartime Blog at www.baseballinwartime.blogspot.com. The blog is an extension of the Baseball in Wartime website . . . a way of reaching more people that want to learn about ballplayers who served with the armed forces during World War II. My intention with the blog is to create an interactive platform for discussion on players, teams and events associated with wartime baseball. So I would love you to visit the Baseball in Wartime blog. Tell me what you're interested in and why. I may well have the information stashed away in my archives and can use it to form an informative article.

Gary Bedingfield—November 2009 gary@baseballinwartime.com



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Service All-Stars take on American League All-Stars

62,094 See American Leaguers Win Easily from Rusty Service Rivals

On July 7, 1942, one day after defeating the National League all-stars, 3-1, at the Polo Grounds, the American League all-stars proved by all tests that they were the mightiest in baseball. Before a patriotic throng of 62,094 spectators in Cleveland's Municipal Stadium, the triumphant American Leaguers also proved their pitching was too sharp by eyes dulled by months of devotion to military service and their bats too potent for pitching arms grown a bit rusty in the armed services of their country.

The American Leaguers routed proud Bob Feller of the Navy, Cleveland's own fireballer, with a three-run outburst at the start, then went on to trounce Lieutenant Mickey Cochrane's soldiers and sailors, 5 to 0.

RUNS OFF FELLER AND HARRIS

For six innings the American Leaguers clung to a 3-to-0 lead collected at Feller's expense in the first two, and then sewed up the game in the seventh with a two-run attack on Mickey Harris, former Boston Red Sox lefty. Cochrane, once manager of the Detroit Tigers, and one of the greatest catchers in baseball history, took the defeat calmly. "We lost in the first inning," Cochrane explained. "We had the bases loaded and a single would have changed the whole story. We just muffed a big opportunity, that's all. You don't get a chance to beat a team like those American leaguers every day in the week. Poor Feller didn't have a thing. I've never seen him get belted like that. It proves that he wasn't there – that his duties in the navy have robbed him of his timing, his control."

JOHNNY RIGNEY LOOKED GOOD

Best-looking pitcher of the night was Johnny Rigney, formerly of the Chicago White Sox, who was with the Navy stationed at the Great Lakes Naval training station. The 21-year-old Rigney went to Feller's rescue with no one out in the second, and pitched five scoreless innings, allowing the mighty American Leaguers only three hits, one an infield grounder that Rigney was unable to field. Rigney left the game in the sixth to make way for a pinch hitter, Johnny Lucadello, formerly of the St. Louis Browns.

The service all-stars threatened chiefly in the first inning when Jim Bagby Jr., of the Cleveland Indians was on the mound. Bagby, whose father made pitching history with Cleveland in the 1920s, got the bases loaded, with one out, chiefly through his wildness, which he blamed against "poor umpiring." He walked Benny McCoy of the Philadelphia Athletics and then Don Padgett of the St. Louis Cardinals sent a single screeching into left field. Cecil Travis of the Washington Senators also was passed, filling the bases. Up stepped Joe Grace of the St. Louis Browns. He waited for three balls and then looked at three strikes. Johnny Sturm, Yankees' first-baseman, ended it by grounding out.

ROUGH WELCOME FOR FELLER

The homecoming of Feller, making his first appearance in Cleveland's ball field since September 1941, was a disappointment. When he strolled to the mound, cheers greeted him. After Lou Boudreau, 24-year-old Cleveland manager, had fled out, Tommy Henrich of the Yankees rolled a scratch single towards the box, which Feller was unable to reach. Ted Williams was passed and Joe DiMaggio blasted a single to center, scoring Henrich. Then Rudy York, Tiger first-baseman lifted a high fly to right, with Williams scoring. In the second. Ken Keltner, Cleveland's sparkling third-baseman, slammed a triple into deep center and Buddy Rosar, Yankees catcher, drove a single into the left field grass, with Keltner scoring. That finished Feller. Rigney came in to stop the proceedings. When Harris started in the seventh, Phil Rizzuto slammed a double, stole third and scored on a triple by Williams, who previously had been passed three times. DiMaggio fled to Cecil Travis of Washington at third base, and George McQuinn of the St. Louis Browns, who had replaced York, at first, ripped off another three-bagger to right and Williams scored with the final tally. In all, the American leaguers collected 10 hits; the soldiers and sailors six.

SERVICE ALL-STARS

	AB	H	O	A	E
Mullin (A) cf	3	0	2	0	0
Chapman (N) cf	1	0	1	0	0
McCoy (N) 2b	2	0	2	2	0
Mueller (A) 2b	1	1	0	0	0
Padgett (N) lf	4	1	2	0	0
Travis (A) ss	3	1	0	2	0
Grace (N) rf	3	0	1	0	0
x Arnovich (A)	1	0	0	0	0
Sturm (A) 1b	2	1	6	0	0
Hajduk (N) 1b	1	0	3	0	0
Andres (N) 3b	4	2	2	3	0
V. Smith (N) c	1	0	0	0	0
Pytlak (N) c	2	0	5	1	0
Feller (N) p	1	0	0	0	0
Rigney (N) p	1	0	0	1	0
xx Lucadello (N)	1	0	0	0	0
Harris (A) p	0	0	0	0	0
Grodzicki (A) p	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	32	10	27	15	0

x Batted for Grace in ninth.

xx Batted for Rigney in seventh.

AMERICAN LEAGUE ALL-STARS

	AB	H	O	A	E
Boudreau (Cl) ss	2	0	0	1	0
Rizzuto (NY) ss	2	1	1	4	0
Henrich (NY) rf	1	1	0	0	0
Spence (Wash) rf	2	1	0	0	0
Williams (Bost) lf	1	1	2	0	0
DiMaggio (NY) cf	4	1	2	0	0
York (Det) 1b	3	0	9	0	0
McQuinn (St L) 1b	1	1	5	0	0
Doerr (Bost) 2b	4	0	1	4	0
Keltner (Cl) 3b	4	2	3	3	0
Rosar (NY) c	4	2	4	0	0
Bagby (Cl) p	1	0	0	1	0
Hudson (Wash) p	2	0	0	2	0
Hughson (Bost) p	1	0	0	0	0
Totals	32	10	27	15	0



Service All-Stars - 000 000 000 - 0

American League - 210 000 20x - 5

1942 Service All-Stars

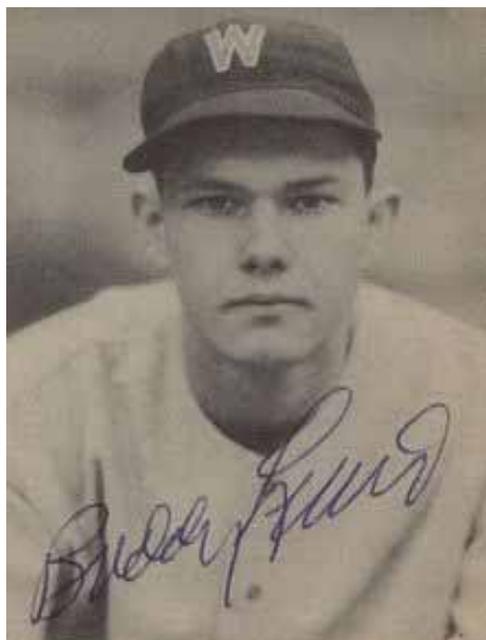


Back row, from left to right: Ken Silvestri, Pat Mullin, Johnny Sturm, Sam Harshany, Chester Hajduk, Bob Peterson, Johnny Grodzicki, Mush Esler, Benny McCoy, Emmett Mueller and Morrie Arnovich. Middle row: Don Dunker, O.V. Mulkey, Fred Hutchinson, Sam Chapman, Bob Feller, George Earnshaw, Mickey Cochrane, Hank Gowdy, Joe Grace, Cecil Travis, Mickey Harris and John Rigney. Front row: Vinnie Smith, Don Padgett, Ernie Andres, Herm Fishman, Fred Schaffer, Frank Pytlak, Russ Meers and John Lucadello



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Buddy Lewis



John K "Buddy" Lewis was born in Gastonia, North Carolina on August 10, 1916. He played for Wake Forest University and signed with the Senators after his freshman year. The 6-foot-1-inch third baseman played for Chattanooga in 1934 and was called up to Washington in 1935 at the age of just 18. He played just eight games with the Senators that year but was back to stay in 1936, appearing in 143 games and batting .291 with 67 RBIs.

In 1937, at just 20 years of age, Buddy Lewis hit .341 with 79 RBIs and 10 home runs, and led the league with 162 singles. Lewis was an all-star selection in 1938 and continued to be one of the top hitters in the American League year after year.

Lewis was drafted early in 1941 but given a deferment to finish the season. He batted .297 for the year with 72 RBIs.

"When I found out I was going to be drafted," said Lewis, "I enlisted in the Air Corps because I wanted to fly. I took basic training at Fort Knox, and the day I was to ship out for North Africa, my orders came through for flight school in Texas. That was the best thing to happen to me."

Lewis was later based at Lawson Field, Georgia, and before going overseas he returned to Washington to say goodbye to his teammates. After leaving Griffith Stadium, Lewis flew his airplane low over the field.

A C-47 transport pilot, Captain Lewis served in the China-Burma-India Theater and flew over the Burma jungle. He was told that if he crashes to come out of the plane with a baseball in his hand because the Japanese loved baseball and it might just save his life. He was also told to carry a cake of cocaine in his pocket because if he crashed, the natives loved the stuff and would get him out of the jungle to safety. Lewis amassed 1,799 flying hours of which 611 were in combat during 392 missions.

He spent 18 months in the CBI Theater where he occasionally ran into Hank Greenberg. Upon his return in 1945, with the Distinguished

Flying Cross and Air Medal pinned to his chest, he commented, "I've been away so long, I've practically forgotten baseball."

My good friend, Buddy Lewis," recalled George Case, "left for war and missed four years of baseball. He left a dark-haired man and came back to us at the end of 1945 with a full head of white hair and some hair-raising stories."

Lewis was back with the Senators in 1945 and played in 69 games. Being away from the game for so long didn't seem to affect his batting eye as he hit .333

By 1947, Lewis back in his all-star stride but he quit baseball after the 1949 season and bought a Ford dealership in Gastonia, North Carolina.

Lewis later said, "When I came back from the war, my philosophy of life was completely different. I had changed so much that baseball didn't mean as much to me as it did before the war."





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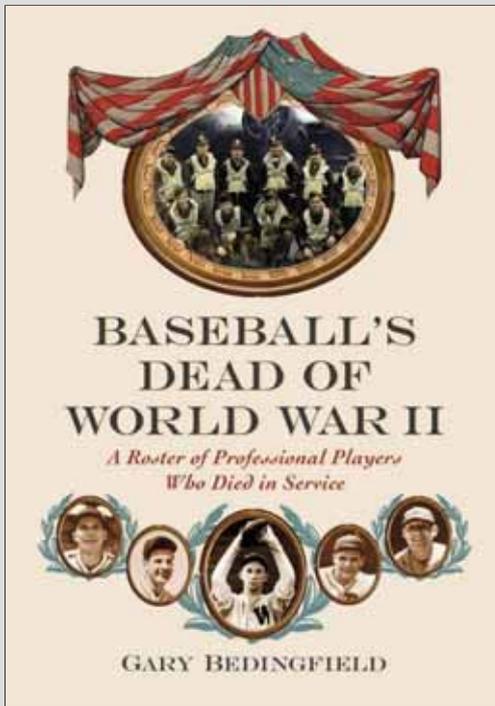
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Baseball's Dead of World War II
A Roster of Professional Players Who Died in Service

Gary Bedingfield

\$39.95 softcover (7 x 10)
 35 photos, appendices, notes, bibliography, index
 ISBN 978-0-7864-4454-0
 Fall 2009

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While most fans know that baseball stars Ted Williams, Hank Greenberg, and Bob Feller served in the military during World War II, few can name the two major leaguers who died in action (they were catcher Harry O'Neill and outfielder Elmer Gedeon). Far fewer still are aware that at least another 125 minor league players also lost their lives during the war. *Baseball's Dead of World War II* draws on many years of extensive research and interviews with surviving family members to give the first published insight into the personal lives, baseball careers and tragic sacrifices made by all these men.

Some players, like pitcher Joe Pinder and shortstop Ed Schohl, had enjoyed long careers in the minor leagues; others like second baseman Chuck Bowers and pitcher Elmer Wachtler, were starting their steady climb through the lower leagues; while some like catcher Harlan Larsen and pitcher Jim Trimble, had signed contracts but had not yet thrown a ball in a professional game. Whatever their background in professional baseball they all shared one thing in common . . . they made the ultimate sacrifice for their country and their stories are in *Baseball's Dead of World War II*. I urge you to read about these heroes of our game and not let their sacrifice be forgotten by this and future generations. *Baseball's Dead of World War II* by Baseball in Wartime founder Gary Bedingfield is soon to be released by McFarland - leading publishers of scholarly and reference books in the United States.



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