

WWII MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL PLAYERS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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Descriptive Summary

Title

World War II Major League Baseball Players

Date(s)

1999

Creator

Scott Dillow

Extent

Three (3) oral histories

Repository

Center for Oral and Public History
California State University, Fullerton

Project Abstract

"Over the course of America's involvement in World War II, more than 500 major leaguers--including 35 future Hall of Famers--served in the United States military".¹

This project is a compilation of oral histories from three major league baseball players whose careers were impacted by the United States participation in World War II (1941 – 1945).

Baseball maintained its position as the most popular U.S. sport during WWII. It was so ingrained in the culture that it became known as America's pastime in the 1940's and 1950's. With the bombing of Pearl Harbor, there was much hesitation on the part of the baseball commissioner as to whether the game should continue to be played. A letter from President Roosevelt to the commissioner indicated that although many players would enlist or be drafted into the military, the country would be best served by continuing the sport.

At wars end some major league players returned home to resume their career, some suffered wounds that would end or curtail their baseball career, and some players lost their life in the war.

¹ http://www.ehow.com/about_5374117_history-baseball-during-wwii.html

World War II Major League Baseball Players Oral History Project Abstracts

OH 2808

Narrator	Stringer, Lou (b. 1917)
Interviewer	Scott Dillow
Date	December 14, 1999
Language	English
Project	WWII Major League Baseball Players
Format(s)	Audio
Other	Tape Log

Abstract

An oral history with Lou Stringer, one of many major leaguers who saw his baseball career interrupted by a stint in the army during World War II. The purpose of this interview was to gather information regarding Mr. Stringer's baseball career during his service in WWII. Specifically, this interview gives an account of the start of his baseball career; military career; baseball in the military; service spent on US soil; how WWII affected his career; regrets; spring training locations. He also answers questions on the best ball players of the 1940's and what baseball means to him.

OH 2809

Narrator	Shepard, Bert (b. 1920)
Interviewer	Scott Dillow
Date	March 6, 1999
Language	English
Project	WWII Major League Baseball Players
Format(s)	Audio
Other	Tape Log

Abstract

An oral history with Bert Shepard, the first and only major league baseball player to play with an artificial leg. The purpose of this interview was to gather information regarding Mr. Shepard's baseball career during his service in WWII. Specifically, this interview gives an account of his love of baseball; the start of his baseball career; military pilot career; baseball in the military; being shot down in Germany; rescue by German doctor; major and minor league career after WWII; life and outlook after baseball.

OH 2810

Narrator	Handley, Gene
Interviewer	Scott Dillow
Date	September 18, 1999
Language	English
Project	WWII Major League Baseball Players
Format(s)	Audio
Other	Tape Log

Abstract

An oral history with Gene Handley, one of many major league player during World War II. The purpose of this interview was to gather information regarding Mr. Handley's baseball career during the war. Specifically, this interview gives an account of the start of his baseball career; drafted into the military but given 4F draft status; Pacific Coast League and baseball during WWII; job at Lockheed; patriotism, rationing, bond drives, and baseball equipment during the war; playing for the Philadelphia Athletics and Connie Mack; best ball players of the 1940s; black players and people's attitudes; team travel modes; career as a scout for the Chicago Cubs. He concludes by answering questions on his thoughts about WWII and what baseball has meant to him.