

Keep the Spirit of '45 Alive!

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For Immediate Release

Major League Baseball Teams Honor Greatest Generation in August And Celebrate Their WWII Heritage with Tributes to Legendary Players

Major League Baseball teams are inviting WWII veterans to be honored during their games played during the month of August as part of a nationwide celebration of Spirit of '45 Day – the national day of remembrance celebrating the achievements of America's Greatest Generation that Congress unanimously voted for in 2010.

Teams are also taking this opportunity to remind their fans of the role that professional baseball played during WWII.

“The national pastime played a key role in the American war effort during World War II and it is a story that has not been fully told,” said Jim Roberts, president of the American Veterans Center, which has organized symposia to tell the story of the contributions of professional baseball and individual players during the war.

Given the loss of professional players to the services, there was much speculation that professional baseball would be suspended for the duration of the war. However, in his famous “green light” letter, to Major League Baseball Commissioner Kennesaw Mountain Landis, President Franklin D. Roosevelt expressed his personal hope that baseball would continue during the war because of its impact on the citizenry.

More than 500 major league and over 2,000 minor league baseball players went into the armed forces. Among the first to join up was **Bob Feller**, the former right-handed star pitcher for the Cleveland Indians.

Feller was the sole support for his family because his father, an Iowa farmer, was dying of cancer, and because of this he could have easily gotten a deferment. Instead, upon hearing of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, he drove to Chicago and reported to a Navy recruiting office. Feller subsequently served as a gun captain on board the battleship Alabama and saw action in the Atlantic and then in the Pacific theater, participating in numerous battles.



Bob Feller

Jerry Coleman flew more than 50 missions as a Marine pilot in the Pacific during WWII and then went on to help the New York Yankees win 7 pennants and 5 world championships as their star second baseman, before having his career put on hold to serve again in combat during the Korean War, the only Major League player to do so. Coleman continues to work as an announcer for the San Diego Padres, and is a Spirit of '45 Day spokesman.



Jerry Coleman

“August 14, 1945 gave us all a sense of national unity and of international peace,” said Coleman. “Spirit of '45 Day reminds us of how much was done by so many to preserve freedom in the world, and how everyone pitched in to do what they could to assure a better future.”

Among the many other baseball stars who served in WWII were St Louis Cardinal **Stan Musial**, New York Yankees **Joe DiMaggio**, **Yogi Berra**, and **Phil Rizzuto**, **Ted Williams** of the Boston Red Sox, Milwaukee (now Atlanta) **Braves** left handed pitching standout **Warren Spahn** (who fought at the Battle of the Bulge and received a Purple Heart), Brooklyn Dodgers **Jackie Robinson** and **Pee-wee Reese**, and the great “**Hammerin’ Hank**” **Greenberg** of the Detroit Tigers.

Several of their teams will be honoring these heroes during their Spirit of '45 Day observances this year during the month of August and inviting WWII veterans from their community to be recognized. The Milwaukee Braves will be honoring two brothers who served in WWII during their August 11 game. The Cincinnati Reds will be hosting the Tuskegee Airmen at their August 11 game, and the Los Angeles Angels have invited the oldest surviving Airman, Col Bob Friend to be honored during their August 18 game. Other expansion era clubs will be having special appearances by WWII veterans at their games.

Minor League clubs are also having observances this year. The San Jose Giants will be honoring the WWII generation during their August 11 game with a wreath laying ceremony during the 7th inning stretch and fireworks.

- August 11 Cleveland Indians, Cincinnati Reds, Atlanta Braves, Kansas City Royals, Houston Astros, St. Louis Cardinal, San Francisco Giants, Seattle Mariners, Colorado Rockies, Los Angeles Dodgers
- August 13 Tampa Bay Rays
- August 15 Milwaukee Brewers
- August 16 Detroit Tigers
- August 18 Los Angeles Angels
- August 19 Miami Marlins