

# BASEBALL DURING WORLD WAR II



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# RESEARCH QUESTION:

- What effect did WWII have on baseball?
- How did baseball effect WWII?
  - Baseball stars sent overseas
  - Military baseball overseas
  - Prisoner of War baseball

# GREEN LIGHT LETTER

- Baseball was in “golden years” , attendance and popularity at an all-time high
- WWII threatened to destroy baseball in America
- President Roosevelt wrote a letter to the baseball commissioner
- The American morale needed baseball

# BASEBALL STARS TURNED SOLDIERS

- 500 Major League players including:
- Minor Leagues went from 40 leagues to 12
- I gained the utmost respect for the “greatest generation”

# MILITARY BASEBALL



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- Over 100 official military games and countless pick-up games
- Morale booster
- Kept soldiers out of trouble
- Training



# POW BASEBALL

- 130,000 soldiers and 19,000 civilians held prisoner during WWII
- Baseball prevented learned helplessness, gave hope
- YMCA and Red Cross collected and distributed commercial-quality gear to prisoners
- Softball-style game
- Make-shift fields
- Stalag Luft I
- Stalag Luft III- Pinnacle of POW Baseball

# UNDERCOVER BASEBALL

- MIS-X division provided escape and evade equipment disguised as baseball equipment
  - Baseball cards with maps
  - Baseballs with radios
  - Buttons with compasses
- Baseball was diversion for digging
- Provided a different form of hope



# CONCLUSION

- Germans targeted baseball diamonds with bombs
- Japanese mocked the heroes of baseball
- Private John E. Stevens: “Baseball is a part of the American way of life. Remove it and you remove something from the lives of American citizens, soldiers, and sailors
- Just as Superman embodies the sacrifice, strength and hope that Americans value, baseball did the same during the 1940’ s