

Herb Plews, "Big Sky Shortstop"

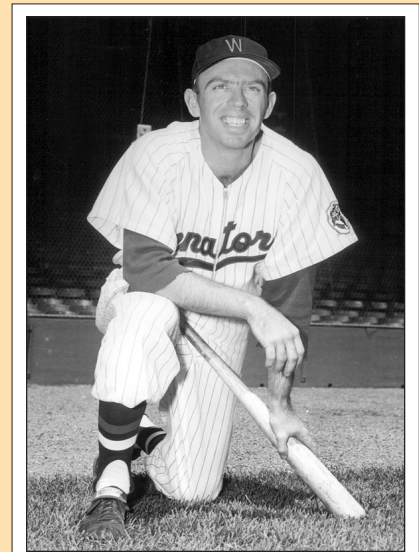
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Herb Plews didn't play a lot of shortstop in his brief major league career – just nine games total with the Washington Senators.

Yet, that brief appearance is enough to earn the Helena native the shortstop spot on Montana's all-time major league team ... in his book, *Baseball State by State*, author Chris Jensen selects a team from each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia ... Jensen notes that the average square mile in Montana contains 1.4 elk, 1.4 pronghorn deer and 0.0001 baseball players ... that explains why Plews is the only player from the Big Sky state to have played shortstop (nine games) in the major leagues.

Graduating from the University of Illinois in 1950 with a degree in physical education, Plews, a two-time Illini MVP, signs with the New York Yankees and along with Nebraska's Bob Cerv, is assigned to the Kansas City Blues of the American Association ... plays in only two games for the Blues before he is sent to Quincy of the Three-I (B) League where he hits .295 (13-for-44) in 13 games.

His first season in professional baseball comes to an unexpected end on June 4,



Herb Plews
1958 Washington Senators

Herb Plews Year by Year:

Year	Team	League	Lev	AB	HT	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SB	AVG
1948	University of Illinois.....	Western	NCAA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.404
1949	University of Illinois.....	Western	NCAA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.373
1949	South Side AC.....	Butte Copper	S-Pro	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	---
1950	University of Illinois.....	Western	NCAA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	---
1950	2 Teams	2 Leagues	B-AAA	44	13	1	0	0	-	-	.295
1950	Kansas City Blues.....	American Assoc.	AAA	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	.000
1950	Quincy Gems.....	Ill League	B	44	13	1	0	0	-	-	.295
1951	Camp Drake.....	All-Soldier	Military	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	---
1952	Camp Drake.....	All-Soldier	Military	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	.467
1953	2 Teams	2 Leagues	B-A	472	134	22	6	3	-	-	.284
1953	Norfolk Tars	Piedmont	B	365	111	19	6	2	32	-	.304
1953	Binghamton Triplets.....	Eastern	A	107	23	3	0	1	-	-	.215
1954	Birmingham Barons	Southern	AA	525	157	25	16	9	58	17	.299
1955	Denver Bears.....	American Assoc.	AAA	530	160	30	11	0	44	9	.302
1956	Washington Senators.....	AMERICAN	ML	256	69	10	7	1	25	1	.270
1957	Washington Senators.....	AMERICAN	ML	329	89	19	4	1	26	0	.271
1957	Indios de Mayagüez	Puerto Rico	Winter	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	---
1958	Washington Senators.....	AMERICAN	ML	380	98	12	6	2	29	2	.258
1959	2 Teams	AMERICAN	ML	52	10	1	0	0	2	0	.192
1959	Washington Senators.....	AMERICAN	ML	40	9	0	0	0	2	0	.225
1959	Boston Red Sox.....	AMERICAN	ML	12	1	1	0	0	0	0	.083
1959	Minneapolis Millers.....	American Aoc.	AAA	163	41	4	1	0	10	4	.252
1960	Toronto Maple Leafs	International	AAA	214	27	54	9	2	19	2	.278
1961	2 Teams	2 Leagues	AA-AAA	332	117	15	2	0	43	0	.352
1961	Toronto Maple Leafs	International	AAA	31	5	0	1	0	0	0	.161
1961	Birmingham Barons	Southern	AA	301	55	112	15	1	43	0	.372
1962	Hawaii Islanders.....	Pacific Coast	AAA	519	127	20	4	7	41	1	.245
1963	Hawaii Islanders.....	Pacific Coast	AAA	357	124	22	2	2	52	3	.271
1964	Hawaii Islanders.....	Pacific Coast	AAA	410	120	18	3	8	39	4	.293
1965	2 Teams	Pacific Coast	AAA	234	36	10	1	1	10	1	.154
1965	Tacoma Giants	Pacific Coast	AAA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	---
1965	Arkansas Travelers.....	Pacific Coast	AAA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	---
Major League Totals	4 Years			1017	266	42	17	5	82	3	.262
Minor League Totals	11 Years			3880	1083	176	48	30	342	42	.279

All-Star Team: 1954-Southern Association; 1963-Pacific Coast League

when

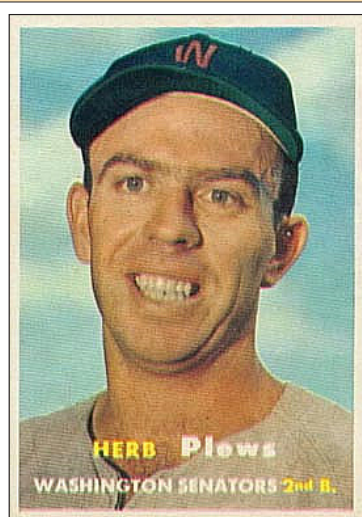
he is hit by a pitch thrown by Evansville's Ed Lenthe and suffers a fractured skull ... after a two-year stint in the Army (1951-52), Plews returns to hit a solid .304 in 99 games in 1953 with the Norfolk Tars of the Piedmont (B) League.

The left-handed hitting infielder is assigned to the Southern Association's Birmingham Barons in 1954 where he earns All-Star honors, hitting .299 with 25 doubles and a league-high 16 triples ... on March 15, Plews and teammate Jim Ludtka both hit inside-the-park home runs in a 6-5 win over Little Rock.

In 1955, the bespectacled second baseman hits .302 for the Denver Bears of the American (AAA) Association, finishing tied with Woody Held for the team lead in doubles with 30 ... in the off-season, Plews is traded by the New York Yankees (5 World Series titles in the last seven years) to the Washington Senators (one upper division finish in the last 10 seasons) in a seven-player trade.

"I didn't know that much about Washington," Plews said. "I never looked that far down in the standings. I felt no bitterness."

Herb Plews [2 of 4]:



Plews' 1957 Topps rookie card, No. 169 of a 421-card set can be bought for \$6 in near-mint condition.

The 27-year-old Plews makes his major league debut with the Senators in a 9-5 loss to the New York Yankees on April 18, 1956 ... pinch hitting for pitcher Bob Chakales in the eighth inning, he singles off the leg of Yankees' reliever Jim Konstanty and drives in the first of his 82 career RBIs.

Plews has a solid rookie season, hitting .270 with 10 doubles, seven triples, one home run and 25 RBIs ... his seven triples ties teammate Whitey Herzog for the most by a rookie in the American League.

Primarily a second baseman for the Senators, Plews hits .264 with 42 doubles, 17 triples and four home runs in his four seasons (1956-1959) in the nation's capital ... Plews is hitting .225 when on June 11, 1959, just three days before his 31st birthday, he and pitcher Dick Hyde are traded to the Boston Red Sox for shortstop Billy Consolo and pitcher Murray Wall.

On July 28, after only one hit in 12 at bats with the Red Sox, Plews is demoted to Minneapolis of the American Association and Wall, who was returned to Boston after Hyde revealed that he had a "lame arm", is released outright ... in their place, the Red Sox call up

pitcher Earl Wilson and shortstop Jim Mahoney.

In 346 major league games, Plews hits four home runs (all solo) including two off of Detroit Tiger Hall of Famer Jim Bunning ... he has 11 three-hit games and four four-hit games during his career.

Plews plays his last four seasons in the Pacific Coast League (1962-65) winding up his 14-year career hitting a meager .154 in 1965 as a 37-year-old splitting time between the Tacoma Giants and the Arkansas Travelers.

Plews Chronology

June 10, 1948

As a sophomore at Illinois, Plews leads the West-

ern Conference in hitting (.404) and is named the Western Conference Player of the Year.

Herb Plews Reported As Recovering In Quincy Hospital

Quincy, Ill., July 5.—(AP)—Herb Plews, professional baseball player who suffered a fractured skull when hit by a beanball Sunday, was reported recovering today in a hospital.

Doctors said his condition is fair and that he suffered a slight fracture." Barring complications, he should recover fully, they said.

Plews, former University of Illinois baseball captain, was playing second base for Quincy of the Three Eye league. He was struck by a pitch thrown by Ed Lenthe of the Evansville, Ind., Three Eye team.

Plews, of East Helena, Mont., is with Quincy on option from Kansas City of the American Association.

June 9, 1950

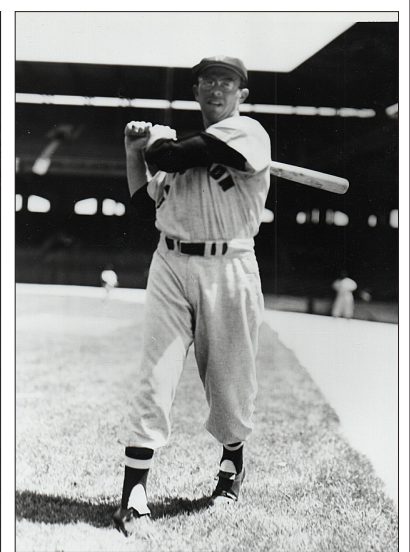
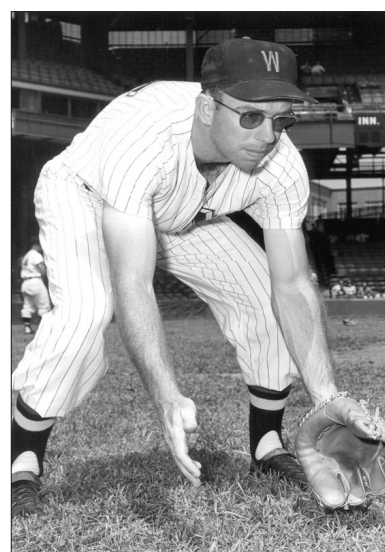
The Kansas City Blues announce the signing of two college stars, Nebraska's Bob Cerv and Illinois' Herb Plews, to minor league contracts.

June 17, 1950

Plews makes his professional baseball debut with the Blues as a third base replacement in the last two innings of a 3-3, extra inning tie with the Indianapolis Indians ... the game is called at the end of the 10th inning to allow Kansas City to catch a train to Toledo ... Plews also steals a base in his first attempt.

◀ July 2, 1950

Playing second base for the Quincy Gems, Plews is struck by a pitch thrown by Evansville's Ed Lenthe and suffers a fractured skull ... the 21-year-old Lenthe, in the fifth season of a nine-year minor league career, finishes the 1950 season 3-9 with a 4.45 ERA for the Braves.

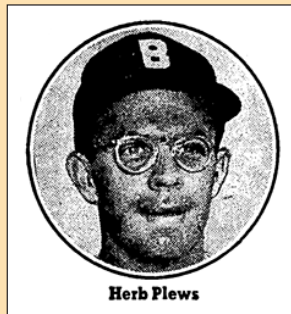


Herb Plews [3 of 4]:

Doctors later report that his condition is "fair" and say that barring complications, he should fully recover ... following the accident, doctors advise him to wear glasses.

October 1952

While serving in the Military, Plews leads Camp Drake to the 1952 Pacific All-Soldier championship ... Plews hits .467 as Camp Drake goes 95-7 in a very successful season ... Camp Drake is an army replacement depot which processes soldiers for assignments in Japan and Korea.



March 15, 1954

Plews and teammate Jim Ludtka both hit inside-the-park home runs for Birmingham in a 6-to-5 victory over Little Rock ... former Baron pitcher Roger Higgins is the victim both times.

April 4, 1954

Plews loses a tooth and has facial bruises when an errant throw by Baron shortstop Phil Micelotta hits him during warm ups.

April 1955

Mickey Cochrane, New York Yankees scout, says of Plews, "He's the best infielder I saw in the minors last season. Plews not only made all the plays, he was the hustlingest kid I saw. He has the same kind of energy Enos Slaughter shows a team. Plews never walks anywhere if he can gallop."

February 8, 1956

After four years in the Yankee minor league system, Plews, along with catcher Lou Berberet, outfielder Dick Tettelbach, pitcher Bob Wiesler and the proverbial "player to be named later" is traded to the Washington Senators for shortstop Bobby Kline and pitcher Mickey McDermott ... on April 2, the Yankees send outfielder Whitey Herzog to the Nats to complete the trade.

Upon hearing of the trade, Denver Bears manager Ralph Houk says of Plews, "In all the years I have been in baseball, Herb stands out as the greatest hustler I have ever observed. More than Enos Slaughter, long reputed to be the hustlingest of them all. Slaughter, of course, is a great star and Plews has yet to prove himself. How Herbie fares in Washington depends upon how much opportunity he gets."

April 18, 1956

Plews goes 1-for-1 with an RBI in major league debut with the Senators in a 9-5 loss to the New York Yankees ... pinch hitting for pitcher Bob Chakales in the eighth inning, he singles off the leg of Yankees' reliever Jim Konstanty and drives in the first of his 82 career RBIs.

October 23, 1956

In a Puerto Rico Winter League game, Ponce defeats Mayagüez 2-0 on the strength of one-hitter by right hander Tom Cheney ... Plews' infield hit in the sixth inning in the lone safety for the Indios.

June 3, 1958 ▶

In the second game of a doubleheader with the Kansas City Athletics, Plews goes 2-for-5 with a double and two RBIs (raising his average to .297) but ties an American League record, committing four errors, including three in the seventh inning.

Over a six-year period (1955-1960), there were 16 trades involving 52 players (and cash) between the Kansas City Athletics and the New York Yankees ... in 1958, 11 of the 42 players that suit up for manager Harry Craft's Athletics will eventually play for the Bronx Bombers - Bob Cerv, Joe DeMasteri, Bud Daley, Murry Dickson, Kent Hadley, Ken Johnson, Hector Lopez, Duke Maas, Roger Maris, Ralph Terry and Virgil Trucks.

June 3, 1958
Kansas City at Washington
Herb Plews 4 errors

KANSAS CITY		WASHINGTON	
	ab r h bi		ab r h bi
Baxes 2b	5 1 1 0	Plews 3b	5 2 2 2
Martyn lf	5 2 2 2	Pearson cf	5 2 1 0
Lopez 3b	5 2 3 3	Sievers lf	5 1 2 1
Cerv lf	4 1 0 0	Courtney c	4 0 2 1
Held cf	1 0 0 0	Lemon rf	5 1 2 2
Tuttle rf	3 0 1 0	Bridges ss	5 2 2 1
Power 1b	5 1 3 1	Aspr'nte 2b	4 0 2 1
Smith c	4 0 0 1	Becquer 1b	3 1 1 0
DeM'stri ss	4 1 1 0	Ramos p	2 0 1 1
Garver p	3 1 1 1	aAlvarez	1 0 0 0
bMelton	0 0 0 0	Byerly p	0 0 0 0
Maas p	1 0 0 0	Clevenger p	0 0 0 0
		cChrisley	0 1 0 0
		Hyde p	0 0 0 0
Totals	40 9 12 8	Totals	39 10 15 9

a—Grounded out for Ramos in 5th; b—Ran for Garver in 6th; c—Walked for Clevenger in 8th.

Kansas City 002 041 200—9
Washington 301 020 04x—10

E—Lopez. Plews 4. Baxes.
2B — Ramos. Baxes. Lopez. Power.
Plews. 3B — Martyn. Bridges. (Lopez scored on wild pitch in 5th. Pearson scored on error in 8th).

Toronto Buys Herb Plews From Millers

Herb Plews, the popular Helena ball player who reached the major leagues as a member of the Washington Senators and then spent a brief time last season with the Boston Red Sox, will play next season with Toronto in the International League.

Sale of his contract from Minneapolis of the American Association to the Leafs was announced this week. Plews said by telephone he expects he'll be notified formally soon.

Both the American Association and International are Triple A, a step below the majors. Plews, released by the Red Sox to the Millers last June, helped Minneapolis win the Shaughnessy playoff championship of his league, after which the Millers lost the Junior World Series to the Havana Cubans of the International, four games to three.

◀ December 18, 1959

Minneapolis sells Plews' contract to the Toronto Maple Leafs of the International (AAA) League ... Plews, who has worked the last two off-seasons in the Helena post office, bats .252 for the Millers in 1958.

June 6, 1963

Playing with the Hawaii Islanders, Plews is named to the Pacific Coast all-star team, replacing Jim Hart, who was promoted to San Francisco ... after a slow start, Plews is hitting .318 with one home run and 27 RBIs.

February 25, 1965

Plews is sold by the Hawaii Islanders to the Tacoma Giants.

May 16, 1965▶

Plews is sold to Little Rock, the AAA affiliate of the Philadelphia Phillies.

* * *

Herb Plews Sold To Little Rock

Herb Plews, a Helena native, has been sold to Little Rock, a AAA minor league farm team of the Philadelphia Phillies in the Eastern Division of the Pacific Coast.

Plews started the season for Tacoma, a San Francisco Giant farm team in the Pacific Coast League. He is an infielder.

Plews, 36, signed with the New York Yankees in 1950 and broke into the major league with the Washington Senators several years later. He makes his home in Helena during the off-season.