

On This Date

December 2, 1998

On December 2, 1998, former major leaguer Ben Guintini passes away in Roseville, California. The US Army veteran was 79 years old.

A sturdy 6-foot-1, 190-pound outfielder, Guintini hails from Los Banos, California, a mid-sized town located in the San Joaquin Valley of central California.

Signed by the Pittsburgh Pirates in February after being drafted from the San Francisco Seals of the Pacific Coast League the previous November, Guintini makes his major league debut on April 21, 1946, against the Cincinnati Reds. Pinch-hitting for pitcher Jim Hooper (also making his major league debut) in the bottom of the third inning, Guintini flies out to centerfielder Dain Clay.



One of many Italian-Americans of California birth to play for the Pirate organization, Guintini is released from the Army, (following a two-year tour) just in time to make the team's pre-season camp where he and another rookie named Ralph Kiner impress manager Frankie Frisch enough to make the team's opening day roster. Hitless in three at bats, Guintini is optioned to the PCL's Hollywood Stars on May 6.

Four years later, a now 31-year-old Guintini, who according to *The Hartford Courant*, "seems to have missed the boat," makes his second opening-day roster when the Philadelphia Athletics assign him jersey No. 55. Making his final major league appearance on April 30, 1950, Guintini's contract is bought by the International League's Baltimore Orioles on May 6.