

BEYOND THE SCOREBOOK - Bob Albertson & Les Mueller

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What do Bob Albertson and Les Mueller have in common?

To start with, both are right-handed pitchers during the talent-thinned years of World War II - Albertson with Southern Association's Chattanooga Lookouts in 1944, and Mueller with the American League's Detroit Tigers in 1945 - and both are integral characters in the narrative of one Pete Gray, who becomes a major league outfielder with the St. Louis Browns in 1945, despite the loss of his right arm in a childhood accident.

On May 28, 1944, Albertson is on the mound for the Lookouts, when Gray hits the first over-the fence home run of his professional career. On April 17, 1945, Mueller, in relief of starter Hal Newhouser in the Tigers' 1945 season opener yields Gray's first major league hit - an infield single to shortstop.

A native of Dearborn, Michigan, Albertson plays collegiately at Western Michigan and is one of three players signed from Detroit's semipro ranks by the Washington Senators in time for the 1944 spring training. Despite showing a "strong bat" in some intrasquad scrimmages, Albertson suffers from a reoccurring ankle injuries and is one of four players released to the Chattanooga Lookouts on April 9.

Following a couple of appearances with the Gadsen Pilots in 1947, Albertson will play two seasons in the semipro Southern Minnesota League with Austin (1948) and Owatonna (1949) before reemerging with Bangor in 1950.

Despite a 5-2 record with the Bangor Bangors, Albertson announces his retirement from baseball to become a jewelry salesman. Albertson is 23-26 in five minor league seasons.

Bob Albertson, a pitcher for Bangor of the North Atlantic league, has quit baseball after winning six of his eight starts to become a jewelry salesman. Would you say he's still in the diamond business?

In his two major league seasons, both with the Detroit Tigers (1941 & 1945), Mueller is 6-8 with six complete games, including two shutouts and an ERA of 3.78.

On July 21, 1945, Mueller starts and pitches 19 2/3 innings against the Philadelphia Athletics, giving up just a single run on 13 hits and five walks in a game that will eventually end up a 1-1 tie after 24 innings.



Bob Albertson

Les Mueller

May 28, 1944

As Allied bombers cross the English Channel to soften up German defenses in preparation for D-Day nine days hence, Memphis centerfielder Pete Gray hits a "waist-high" fastball from Chattanooga right-hander Bob Alberston over a 20-foot fence 330 feet down the right-field line in the ninth inning of a 10-2 Chicks' win. Gray's home run, before 2,667 fans in Engel Stadium, is his second of the season, but the first one over a fence. Earlier in the season (May 11) Gray is credited with an inside-the-park home run against Birmingham's Howie Fox in a 2-0 Memphis win.

April 17, 1945

Soviet troops close to within 18 miles of Berlin and George Patton's Third Army is reported to be within four miles of the Czechoslovakian border as 30-year-old St. Louis Browns' left-fielder Pete Gray makes his major league debut against the Detroit Tigers in the season opener for both teams. After going 0-for-3 against Tiger starter Hal Newhouser (a 29-game winner in 1944), Gray, facing sinker-ball specialist Les Mueller in the seventh inning, hits a ground ball to the left side of the infield and beats shortstop Skeeter Webb's throw to Rudy York for the first of his 51 big league hits.

HOME RUN HIT BY PETE GRAY

One-Armed Player Earns Praise, Chicks Cop 2

(The Associated Press) Chattanooga, Tenn., May 28.—Pete Gray, Memphis one-armed outfielder, won the ringing cheers of 2667 fans here today by hitting a homer over the right-field fence (230 feet away, 20 feet high) as Memphis swept a doubleheader from Chattanooga, 10-2, 5-3.

One man was on base. The blow came in the ninth inning of the opener.

FIRST GAME									
Memphis			Chattanooga						
AB	H	O	AB	H	O				
M'Cire 2b	4	0	3	4	Arago 2b	1	1	2	3
Gray cf	5	3	1	0	Smith cf	4	1	1	0
Bowers lf	4	3	3	0	Boas 1b	4	1	12	1
Nance 2b	4	1	1	4	Quinn 2b	4	2	0	1
Heina 2b	3	1	0	0	Matiga rf	4	0	4	0
Martin rf	3	1	3	0	Veasey rf	3	1	3	0
Thom ss	3	1	0	3	Rosovick ss	4	2	2	4
Bradley 1b	3	1	0	0	Barbery c	4	0	1	2
M'Grety c	4	0	7	1	Ortiz p	2	1	1	3
L'Brwa p	4	0	0	0	Albertson p	1	0	1	1
					Sheridan	1	0	0	0
Totals	36	13	27	32	Totals	35	9	27	17

A—Ban for Nance in eighth.
2—Batted for Albertson in ninth.
Score by innings:
Memphis 200 400 242—10
Chattanooga 100 000 010—2

Gray Robbed of 2-Bagger

Cramer Somersaults After Hot Catch

St. Louis, April 17.—(AP)—The American league champion St. Louis Browns tucked away their ninth successive opening day victory today by defeating the Detroit Tigers, their 1944 pennant runners-up, 7 to 1. Box score:

Detroit						St. Louis					
AB	R	H	P	A		AB	R	H	P	A	
Webb ss	4	0	1	3		Gut'dae 2b	5	0	0	5	5
Mayo 2b	4	0	3	0		Gray lf	4	1	1	0	0
Out'lw rf	4	0	0	0		Kreev'h cf	2	2	0	4	0
York 1b	4	0	0	0		Step'ns ss	4	2	2	0	2
Cramer cf	3	0	1	5	1	Byrnes rf	4	1	3	3	0
Mater lf	3	0	0	0		M'Qu'n 1b	4	1	2	11	0
Ross 3b	3	0	0	3	2	Schulte 3b	3	0	1	0	1
Rich'ds c	3	1	1	7	1	Manc'co c	3	0	1	4	0
Newh'er p	2	0	1	0	1	Jakucki p	4	0	1	0	4
Mu'ler p	0	0	0	0	0						
Host'ler x	1	0	0	0	0						
Wilson p	0	0	0	0	0						
Totals	31	1	6	24	8	Totals	33	7	11	27	12

x—Batted for Mueller in 8th.
Score By Innings
Detroit -----001 000 000—1
St. Louis -----200 003 20x—7