

# A Contest of Heroes

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**"It is foolish and wrong to mourn the men who died. Rather we should thank God that such men lived."  
- General George S. Patton**

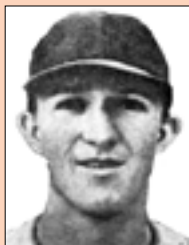
## June 21, 1938, Francis Field, St. Augustine, Florida

It's 10:25 pm Eastern, give or take a minute, when St. Augustine's 19-year-old right-fielder Pete Schwiegerath, an erstwhile soccer player out of Baltimore, steps on home plate with the winning run on a walk-off base on balls to left fielder Archie Heim, ending a two-hour, 10-minute contest. In a Florida State (D) League battle of two Washington Senators' farm teams, the game is billed as a much-anticipated pitching matchup between St. Augustine rookie "Lefty" Brewer and Sanford veteran Joe Pinder, the Tuesday evening Florida State League contest sends the fans home happy, if not a little bit sleepy.



Prior to the game, the 1,100 fans in attendance are treated to a two-inning "classic" between the city's undefeated Senior Chamber of Commerce team and the "cocky" Business and Professional Association outfit. Flags inside brand-new Francis Field (above), named after Fred Francis, a man the local paper dubbed, "a leading baseball fan and civic-minded citizen," are at half mast in tribute to former state senator and recently-deceased Lewis W. Zim.

Monday's first game between the two teams is postponed because of 2.3 inches of rain that falls on Francis Field. With the rainout, St. Augustine manager Lyle Judy (right) considers holding Brewer over for the opening game of the upcoming series with the first-place Greenville G-Men. In 1935, the 24-year-old Judy playing for the Springfield Cardinals, reportedly sets baseball's modern day base-stealing record with 107 stolen bases, eclipsing the existing record of 96 set by Detroit's Ty Cobb in 1915. The actual record, unbeknownst at the time, was 124 stolen bases by James Johnston of the San Francisco Seals in 1913.



Joe Pinder



Lefty Brewer

SANFORD	Ab	R	H	O
Ruggerio, 2b	4	0	0	3
Brown, cf	5	0	1	1
Pitman, 3b	4	0	1	2
Langston, rf	4	0	1	1
Davis, 1b	2	0	0	11
Deramos, ss	4	0	0	1
Walker, lf	3	0	0	1
Contreras, c	3	1	2	6
Pinder, p	4	1	0	0

TOTALS	Ab	R	H	O
TOTALS	33	2	5	26
ST. AUGUSTINE	Ab	R	H	O
Judy, 2b	5	0	1	3
Otero, 1b	3	0	1	13
Helm, lf	3	0	0	4
Batan, cf	4	0	1	2
Retenski, 3b	2	1	1	0
Kirkland, ss	2	1	0	0
Schwegerath, rf	2	1	1	0
Wrenn, c	2	0	0	5
Brewer, p	4	0	0	0

TOTALS 27 3 5 27  
x-2 out when winning run scored.  
Sanford 002 000 000-2  
St. Augustine 020 000 001-3  
Assists, Ruggerio 3, Pitman 6,  
Judy 3, Retenski 3, Kirkland 3, Davis, Deramos 2, Contreras, Wrenn, Brewer 3. Errors, Judy, Brewer, Kirkland, Deramos. Runs batted in, Schwiegerath 2, Brown 2, Helm. Two-base hits, Retenski, Pitman to Ruggerio. Double play, Pitman to Ruggerio. Left on bases, Sanford 9, St. Augustine 9. Base on balls off Brewer 3, Pinder 7. Struck out by Brewer 5, Pinder 5. Hit by pitcher, by Pinder (Schwiegerath). Passed ball, Contreras. Umpires, Harvin and Vaughn. Time, 2:10.

For the 6-1, 148-pound Brewer, the 3-2 victory is his 11th-in-a-row in the middle of a 25-win rookie season while the loss is the fifth-straight for the right-handed Pinder. The 5-10, 170-pound Pennsylvanian will end his career-long losing streak four days later with a seven-hit shutout of Palatka. With the victory, St. Augustine (32-33) moves into a fourth-place tie with Palatka and as the Saints' players celebrate their win over the last-place Lookouts (20-44), little thought is given to the future of two opposing pitchers. One can only imagine what the two Washington Senators' farmhands are thinking as they make their way back to the locker rooms down the left field line.



A Sign of the Times

Forrest Vernon "Lefty" Brewer and John Joseph "Joe" Pinder will never play a single inning in the Major Leagues, although Brewer, a personal favorite of Senators' owner Clark Griffith, has his contract purchased by the parent club and is invited to the capital city for the final weeks of the 1938 season. Pinder, five years Brewer's elder, has a six-year minor league career spanning from 1935-1941. Brewer's career lasts just three seasons from 1938-1940, all spent in the minors. Brewer has a 48-35 career mark while Pinder has a 50-50 career record, with two 17-win seasons. Brewer is considered a somewhat wild portsider while Pinder also suffers from occasional control problems. Pinder has three one-hitters in his career while Brewer has a no-hitter against the Orlando Senators 15 days earlier on June 6 to his credit (remember that date).

Sadly, some six years later on June 6, 1944, and 4,300 miles to the East, both Brewer and Pinder are killed along with an estimated 4,400 allied troops, including more than 2,500 Americans on D-Day in Operation Overlord, one of the most significant and defining events of our American narrative. On his 32nd birthday, 16th Infantry Regiment Technician 5th Grade **John Joseph Pinder** is killed while successfully establishing radio communications

## A Contest of Heroes [1 of 2]:

during the American landings on the Easy Red sector of Omaha Beach. Despite sustaining several wounds, under direct fire he continues to go back into the water to retrieve the much-needed radio equipment. Second Lieutenant Leeward Stockwell says, "He was hit several times and the worst wound was the left side of his face. Holding his flesh with one hand he carried the set to shore." Despite his multiple injuries, he continued to work on the radio set until passing out from a loss of blood. He dies later that morning. For his actions, Pinder is posthumously awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor (left), the nation's highest award for military valor in action. Pinder is one of only two baseball players awarded the Medal of Honor.



**Forrest Vernon Brewer**, a member of the elite 82nd Airborne, enters the D-Day fray jumping out of a Douglas C-47 Skytrain into occupied France around 1:00 am. One of eight Jacksonville residents to be killed during D-Day, Brewer's unit, because of heavy anti-aircraft fire, misses its intended drop zone by two miles, but it's still able to secure a bridge over the Merderet River. A squad leader, Brewer's unit is counterattacked by a strong German force of tanks and infantry. Trapped in a hail of gunfire, Brewer makes for the river. His friend Bill Dean is running as well. "As I ran for the river," recalls Dean, "I was aware someone was running hard just behind me, and in my panic I took a quick look and saw Lefty, at port arms, running like he was going to stretch a triple into a home run." A second later, there is a burst of machine gun fire and Brewer falls face down into the river. **Exactly six years after pitching a no-hitter with the St. Augustine Saints, Lefty Brewer's life ends.**

Lefty Brewer's older brother, Bill, also a Jacksonville resident and a World War II veteran, says that shortly after his brother left for his military training, a contract comes in the mail with a major league contract bearing his name from the Washington Senators for \$240 a month. Bill also recounts that on June 5, less than 16 hours before being dropped into France, 82nd Airborne personnel stage a baseball game in the rain to confuse possible spies. According to his brother, the paratroopers play the game in their uniforms and boots.

Lefty Brewer is buried at the Riverside Memorial Park, Jacksonville, while Pinder, initially interred in Normandy, returns home in September, 1947, and is buried in the Pinder family plot in the Grandview Cemetery in Florence, Pennsylvania.



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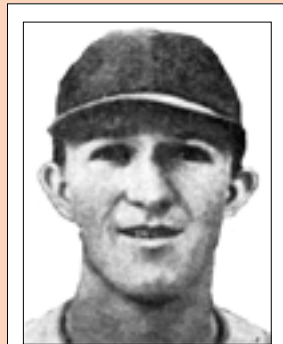
A Sign of the Times



Lefty Brewer



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