

Bob Albertson & Les Mueller "BEYOND THE SCOREBOOK"

©DiamondsintheDusk.com

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, while Mueller, in relief of starter Hal Hethouser in the Tigers' 1945 season opener against the Browns on April 17, yields Gray's first major league hit - an infield single to shortstop.

May 28, 1944

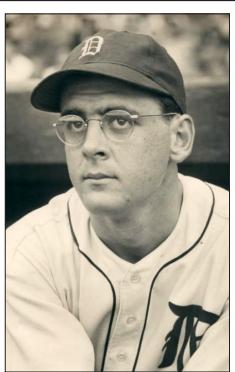
As Allied bombers cross the English channel to soften up German defenses in preparation for D-Day nine days hence, Memphis centerfielder Pete Gray hits a "waist-high" fastball from Chattanooga right-hander **Bob Albertson** over a 20-foot fence 330 feet down the right-field line in the ninth inning of 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 0-3 against Tiger starter Hal Neuhouser (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.



Bob Albertson



Les Mueller

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 recurring ankle injury 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.

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 2,667 fans here today by hitting a homer over the right-field fence 330 feet away, 20 feet higher as Memphis swept a doubleheader from Chattanooga, 10-2, 5-2.

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

FIRST GAME										
	AB	H	O	A	AB	H	O	A		
McGire	2b	4	0	3	4	1	2	3		
Gray	cf	5	3	1	0	8	7	0		
Bowers	lf	4	3	3	1	1	1	1		
Nance	2b	4	1	1	4	1	0	1		
xHeina	2b	2	1	0	0	0	0	0		
Martin	rf	3	1	1	0	0	0	0		
Thompson	ss	5	1	0	0	0	0	0		
Bradley	1b	2	1	0	0	0	0	0		
M'Grety	c	4	0	1	0	0	0	0		
L.Brown	p	4	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Memphis					Chattanooga					
McCire	2b	6	3	4	4	2	2	3		
Gray	cf	5	3	1	0	8	7	0		
Bowers	lf	4	3	3	1	1	1	1		
Nance	2b	4	1	1	4	1	0	1		
xHeina	2b	2	1	0	0	0	0	0		
Martin	rf	3	1	1	0	0	0	0		
Thompson	ss	5	1	0	0	0	0	0		
Bradley	1b	2	1	0	0	0	0	0		
M'Grety	c	4	0	1	0	0	0	0		
L.Brown	p	4	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Totals		36	13	27	32	Totals	35	9	27	17
x—Can for Nance in eighth.										
z—Batted for Albertson in ninth.										
Score by Innings:										
Memphis		200	400	242	18	Charlottesville	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	AB	R	H	P	A		ST. LOUIS	AB	R	H	P	A
Webb	ss	4	0	0	1	3	Gut'dag	2b	5	5	0	5	5
Mayo	2b	4	0	3	0	0	Gray	lf	1	1	1	0	0
Out'l'w	rf	4	0	0	0	0	Kreev'b	cf	2	2	0	4	0
York	1b	4	0	0	0	8	Step'n's	ss	4	2	2	0	2
Cramer	cf	3	0	1	5	1	Byrnes	rf	4	1	3	3	0
Maier	lf	3	0	0	0	6	M'Quin	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	Scant	so	3	0	1	4	0
Newh'er	c	2	0	1	0	1	Jakucki	p	4	0	1	0	4
Mu'ler	p	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	000	000	000	000	000	000	000	000	1
St. Louis		200	003	20x	7								

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?

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

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.