

# Count Henri S Bertrand de la Vigne

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Thirty-five years before the San Francisco Giants had John "The Count" Montefusco, the Salisbury (Md.) Indians of the Class D Eastern Shore League had their own royalty in Count Henri S. "Hank" Bertrand de la Vigne.

Known as "the only titled pitcher in baseball," the 25-year-old Bertrand could claim the title of Count Henri S. Bertrand de la Vigne should France ever revert to the monarchy it deposed in 1870. The tall (6'3") right-hander is a lineal descendant of a noble French house dating back to 1390.

Entering the military the following February, 1939 is the Count's lone season in professional baseball, finishing with a 14-9 record, 163 strikeouts in 206 innings and a 3.89 ERA. His 14 wins tie for fifth-best in the Eastern Shore League while his 206 innings are seventh.

Bertrand's great-great grandfather, Henri Gatien Bertrand, was aide de camp to Napoleon Bonaparte at the battle of Austerlitz in 1805. Bertrand is with Napoleon on his retreat from Russia in 1812 and his subsequent exile to Elba in 1814 and again to St. Helena in 1815.



Henri Gatien Bertrand Generale Napoleone

Following Napoleon's death in 1821, Bertrand is pardoned by Louis XVIII and title and rank restored. Later Bertrand's son is sent by the government to Montreal (then under French control) to campaign against various Native Canadian tribes. Bertrand's family soon follows, settling first in Montreal and then relocating to New York State.

Born March 18, 1912, in Tupper Lake, New York, our modern-day Bertrand is a three-sport (football, basketball, baseball) star at Riordan Prep Highland on the Hudson. Following high school, Bertrand attends Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., where he earns his B.A., while playing both basketball (1937-1938) and baseball (1937-1939).

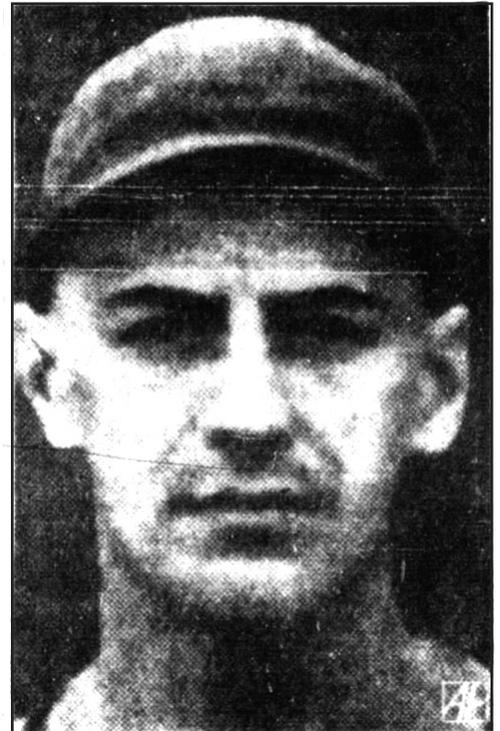
In his three years at Georgetown, Bertrand compiles a 23-2 mark for one of the best college programs on the East Coast.

Following his one year in Salisbury, Bertrand elects to pursue a Masters' Degree from St. Lawrence University in Canton, New York, where his thesis is titled "The Development of the East India Company in the 16th and 17th Centuries."

On May 1, 1941, Bertrand is inducted into the United States Army and is stationed at Vermont's Fort Ethan Allen, as a Private with the 187th Field Artillery unit. He serves for nearly five years, mustering out on March 22, 1946.

Bertrand is 82 years old when he passes away on November 10, 1994. The Count is buried in Fort Snelling National Cemetery in St. Paul, Minnesota.

## HE'S GRADE-A ROYALTY



Count Henri S Bertrand de la Vigne  
aka Henri Bertrand  
1939 Saisbury (Md.) Indians

## Count Some Account On Pitching Mound, Bertrand Shows

Hurler Nats Picked Up  
From Hoyas Real Noble,  
But Is Good Farmhand

## BERTRAND CHRONOLOGY

March 13, 1933

The future of Riordan Prep's baseball team is in doubt when Bertrand departs for his home in Tupper Lake leaving the team with only 10 players and no pitchers ... Bertrand has been doing post-graduate work at Riordan and is expected to enter Colgate University in the fall.

### Georgetown Stars Are Suspended

(Transradio Press)

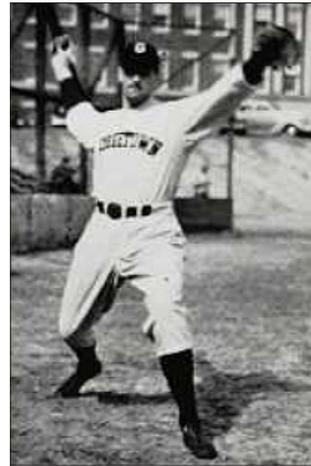
WASHINGTON, May 17.—Two star members of Georgetown University's outstanding baseball nine were under suspension today for the remainder of the season.

Pitcher Hank Bertrand and Shortstop Joe Mellendeck were suspended for an infraction of training rules on Georgetown's weekend invasion of New York. The Georgetown team which had lost only one game in the last two years dropped contests to Fordham and Army on the New York trip.

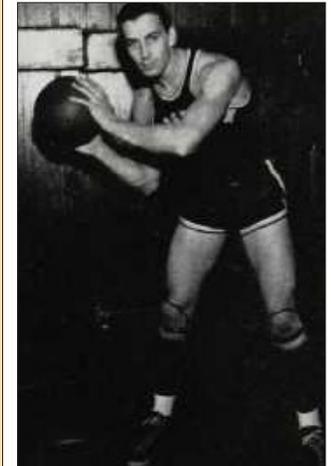
Mellendeck is Georgetown's outstanding football star as well as a baseball mainstay.

April 1936

Bertrand reportedly signs with the Washington Senators.



Hank Bertrand  
1938 Georgetown Hoyas



Hank Bertrand  
1938 Georgetown Hoyas

May 17, 1938

Georgetown University's baseball team receives some bad news when Bertrand and shortstop Joe Mellendeck are suspended for the remainder of the season for violating team rules while on a team trip to New York ... the Hoyas, who had lost only one game the previous two seasons, lose games to both Fordham and Army.

May 22, 1939

Bertrand strikes out six and walks four and allows 12 hits in a complete game win over first-place Federalsburg, snapping the Athletics' eight-game win streak ... the Indians total only five hits, but Bertrand strands 13 runners en route to improving to 3-0.

### RUSSO DENIED

In the seventh inning of Salisbury's May 22 game with Federalsburg, an unauthorized announcement is made over the P.A. system that the Oil Man & Cigar Store would give a free beefsteak dinner to any Salisbury player "producing a hit" when the bases are loaded ... 18-year-old second baseman Louis Russo comes through with a single and although the dinner wasn't authorized, it is eventually awarded.

May 24

Salisbury rallies for five runs in the bottom of the seventh to earn a 7-7 tie with the Dover Orioles in the first game of a Wednesday afternoon doubleheader ... in the second game, the Indians take advantage of nine Oriole errors (seven by infielders) for an 8-6 victory.

### TOUGH TIMES IN SIOUX CITY

The *Sioux City Journal* reports that the Sioux City Cowboys "have struck a new economy note" during their games ... the players are allowed a couple of old balls for infield practice and a new one for the pitcher warming up and batting practice has been eliminated ... after finishing third during the regular season with a 63-52 record, the Cowboys, a Detroit Tigers' minor league affiliate, will go on to capture the Western (D) League crown defeating the Lincoln Links four games to two in the championship series.

June 15, 1939

After missing a week with a sprained ankle, Bertand allows only three hits and one run, but Easton Yankees' right-handers **Conklyn Meriwether** (see page 3) does him one better allowing no runs on three hits in a 1-0 win and registering the first shutout against Salisbury in three seasons ... Meriwether (nicknamed "Doufos" by one writer because of his penchant of performing cartwheels when approaching the mound) improves to 6-3 while Bertrand drops to 5-2.

June 25, 1939

Bertrand strikes out 11 Milford Giants batters en route to an 8-0 shutout.

### GRADE A COUNT IN CLASS D



## Bertrand De La Vigne [3 of 3]:

June 27, 1939

A "tired" Bertrand turns to his "nothing ball" in the late innings in a 6-2 win over the Cambridge Cardinals.

June 30, 1939

Mired in sixth place in the Eastern Shore League with a 23-30 record, Salisbury makes a coaching change, replacing manager Vic Keene with "Spud" Nachand ... under Nachand, the Indians are 36-29 and finish fifth.

### MISS BROOKLYN FOUND



On the same day that Hank Bertrand shuts out the Milford Giants (July 25), **Elinore Bertrand** "Miss Brooklyn" who has been missing for two weeks is found selling lingerie in Philadelphia ... embarrassed after failing to win a beauty contest for "Miss New York," the 16-year-old tells police, "I couldn't swallow my pride enough to go home."

Later a highly-successful model, she is one of the first women to be sworn in as a member of the U.S. Marine Corps.



**Above** - Private Elinore Bertrand of the U.S. Marine Corps Women's Reserve is shown completing a simulated parachute jump at Marine Base Camp Lejeune, North Carolina (circa 1944).

July 4, 1939

Bertrand celebrates the Fourth of July with a one-hit 8-0 shutout win over the Pocomoke City (Orphans) Red Sox ... LF George LeGates has the Orphans' only hit.

July 25, 1939

Bertrand scatters four hits over nine innings in a 8-0 shutout over the Milford Giants at Salisbury's Gordy Park.

September 4, 1939

In the regular season finale for both teams, Salisbury sweeps a doubleheader from Pocomoke 8-0 and 3-2 enabling the two-time league champion Indians to finish with a .500 record (59-59) ... Bertrand allows only two hits and strikes out a season-high 10 in picking up his 14th win in the first game.

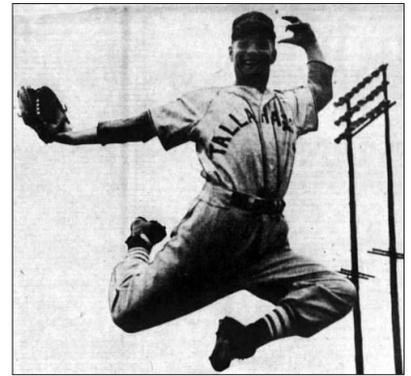
January 17, 1940

The Salisbury Indians' prospects for the 1940 season might be a trifle low as the front office releases a roster of players who have already signed contracts for the upcoming season ... in addition to Bertrand, the Indians' front office lists: the Cuban George Comellas; McIntyre, a left hander; Dave Hollidayoke; "a man named Smith," and a pseudo-Cuban named George Torise.

November 10, 1994

Bertrand passes away on November 10, 1994 at the age of 82 .. the Count is buried in Fort Snelling National Cemetery in St. Paul, Minnesota.

## CONKLYN MERIWETHER



On June 15, 1939, Easton Yankees rookie Conklyn "Conk" Meriwether out-duels Salisbury Indians' right-hander Hank Bertrand scattering three hits in a 1-0 win ... the win is one of seven for the 21-year-old Florida native that season ... starting his career as a pitcher, Meriwether will play 15 seasons in the minors, including four in the New York Yankees farm system ... in 1946, he is listed on the roster of the St. Louis Cardinals, but does not appear in a game ... switching over to first base, Meriwether will hit .307 in his lengthy career with 1,463 hits and 280 home runs, including a career-high 44 in 1951 and 42 in 1953.

On November 20, 1955, a year after leaving baseball, Meriwether murders his paralyzed mother-in-law and her husband with a hatchet and seriously wounds his brother-in-law in Tavernier, Florida ... the World War II veteran avoids a possible death sentence when he is declared insane and sentenced to State Mental Institution at Chattahoochee ... paroled in 1978, Meriwether dies on August 11, 1996, at the age of 78.

