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# Sports and Intrigue; The Story of Moe Berg

Presenting: A Brief History of the Mystery Life  
of an Athlete, Spy and Scholar

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Assisted by Robert Parzek

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# Moe Berg

Who was this man, who was a professional Baseball player and so-called master spy?

Not just a catcher and coach in the Major Leagues; Moe Berg later served as a spy for the Office of Strategic Services (OSS).

Berg played 15 seasons in the Major Leagues, for 5 different teams.

Never more than an average player, he was usually used as a backup catcher.

He was better known for his intelligence!



Morris "Moe" Berg  
March 2, 1902 - May 29, 1972

# Morris “Moe” Berg

Early life...

Moe was born March 2, 1902 to a Jewish couple that immigrated to the United States from the Ukraine.

Rose Tasker Berg and Bernard Berg settled in the Harlem section of New York City.

Moe's Parents



Moe's father, Bernard, as he looked shortly after his arrival in America.



Rose Tasker Berg, Moe's mother, soon after she came to the United States.

# Morris “Moe” Berg

Early life Continued...

Rose and Bernard had 3 children.

( Moe was the youngest. )

His older brother Samuel became a medical doctor, while his sister Ethel became a school teacher.

Rose Tashker Berg, Moe's mother, soon after she came to the United States.





# Morris “Moe” Berg

Early life Continued...

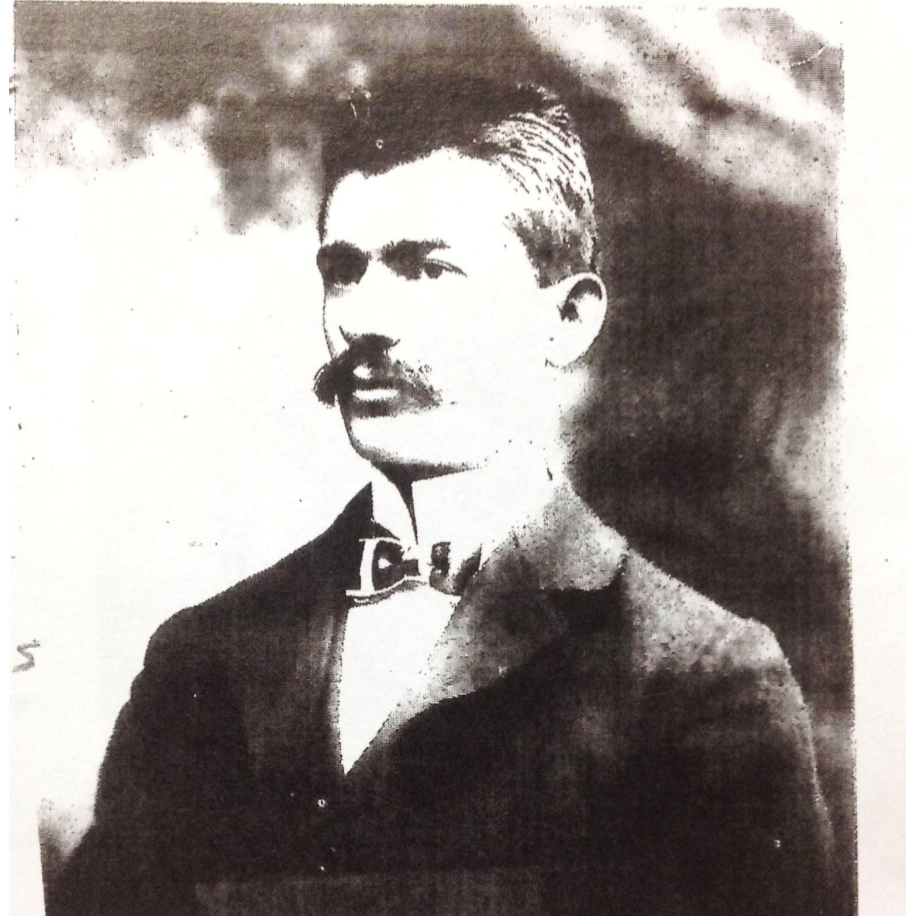
Bernard had hoped Moe would become a Lawyer.

Bernard himself was a hard worker and took evening classes at the New York College of Pharmacy.

Moe's father, Bernard, as he looked shortly after his arrival in America.

In 1906 Bernard purchased a Pharmacy in West Newark, NJ

Then in 1910 he purchased a Pharmacy in the Roseville section of Newark.



# Morris “Moe” Berg

Early life Continued...

Bernard Berg at the Roseville Pharmacy.  
(The family lived in the apartment  
above.)

Bernard chose this location because  
Roseville offered him everything he  
wanted in a neighborhood;

Good Schools

Middle Class Residents

And very few Jews! (at the time they  
wanted to “Just Be Americans” ).





# Morris “Moe” Berg

## Early Life Continued...

Shortly after moving to Roseville, Moe began playing baseball at age 7 for the Roseville Methodist Episcopal Church Baseball Team. As he was Jewish, he played under the name “Runt Wolf”.

Moe attended Barringer High School which was the nation's third-oldest Free Public High School



Barringer High School baseball team. Moe is in the last row, fourth from left.

# Moe Berg

Barringer High School was considered Newark's' Best.

Moe was the only Jewish student, but didn't experience much anti-semitism.

By the time he graduated high school in 1918 at the age of sixteen, Berg had been awarded a stack of certificates and awards for attendance, and "diligent attention to study". He was awarded the Distinguished Alumnus Bowl by Barringer High School.

Yet, despite all his accomplishments he was not a sensation at Barringer; likely in part to his low-key, quiet, personality.



Hall of Fame  
Distinguished Alumnus Bowl



# Morris “Moe” Berg

## Early Life Continued...

During Moe’s senior year, the Newark Star Eagle selected a nine-man “Dream Team” for 1918 from the City’s best prep and public high school players.

Moe was named as the Third Baseman.

In the three years that Berg played for Barringer he never made a single throwing error!



. Moe is in the last row, fourth from left.

# Moe Berg

## At Princeton

Following his four years at Barringer, Berg sought to further his education at New York University where his older brother was enrolled in the pre-med program.

After only two semesters at NYU Moe decided to quit and applied for admission to Princeton.

In order to get into Princeton, especially in those days an applicant had to be either very smart, or very rich!



# Moe Berg

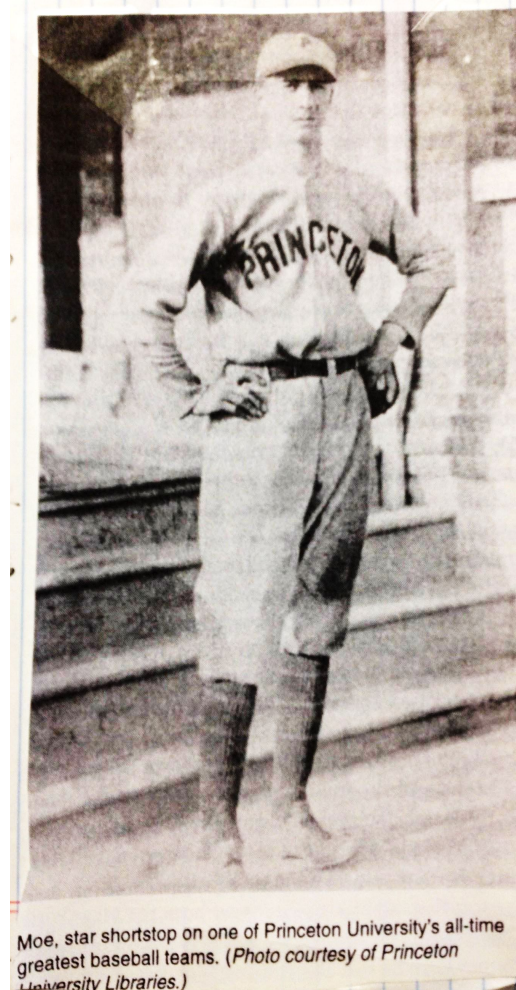
## At Princeton (Continued)

During his freshman year, Berg played first base on an undefeated team.

He was not a great hitter and was a slow runner, but he had a strong, accurate throwing arm and sound baseball instincts.

In his senior year he was captain of the team and the starting shortstop.

The team won 18 straight games and was the best baseball team Princeton had ever had, up till then.



# Moe Berg

## Baseball Team Participation History

- Brooklyn Robins (1923)
- Chicago White Sox (1926–1930)
- Cleveland Indians (1931)
- Washington Senators (1932–1934)
- Cleveland Indians (1934)
- Boston Red Sox (1935–1939)



# Moe Berg

Berg received a \$5,000 signing bonus for joining the Brooklyn Robbins. For the season, Berg batted 187 and made 21 errors in 47 games.

By April 1925, Berg was starting to show promise as hitter, having started playing for the Reading Keystones of the International League.

(See supplement for additional details)



Playing for the Brooklyn Robins

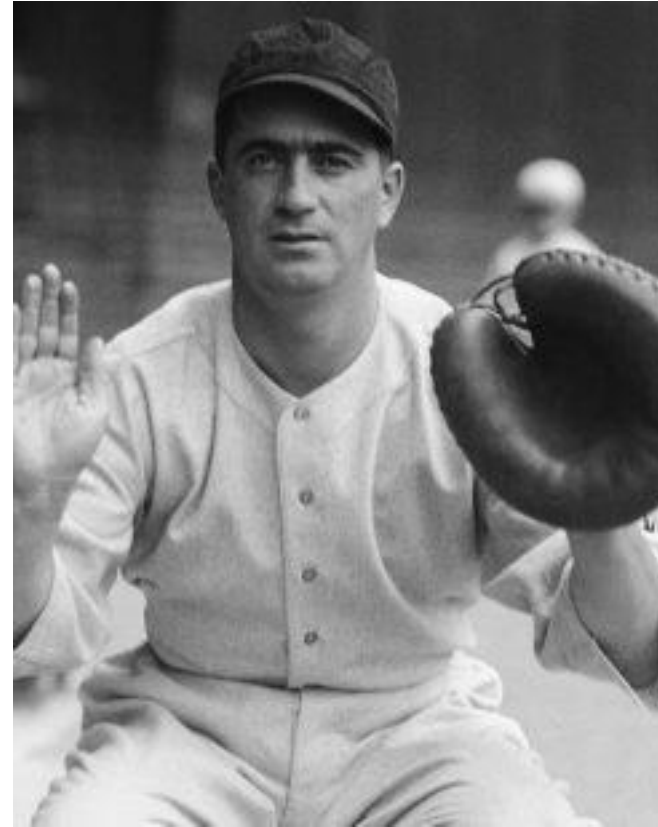
# Moe Berg

(1923-1925)

Because of his .311 batting average and 124 runs batted in, the Chicago White Sox Exercised the “Option” the had with Reading.

Chicago paid \$6000 (\$82,000 today!) for him and moved Berg up to the big league the following year.

(See supplement for additional details)



Catchers mitt at the ready.  
Berg played 15 seasons in the Major  
Leagues for 5 different teams.  
(See supplement for reference)

# Moe Berg

(1926-1934 )



In 1927 with the White Sox, Moe inadvertently became a catcher as the teams' 3 catchers were all injured.

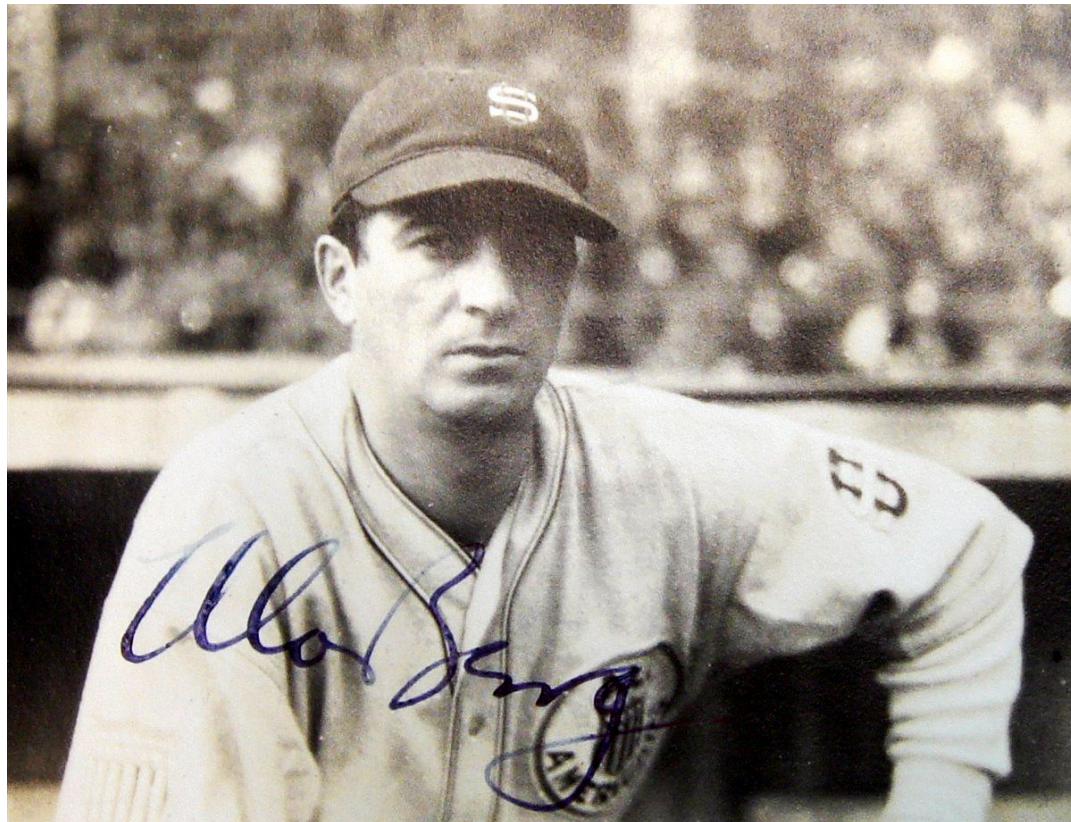
The Manager said "Can anyone catch?".

Moe ended up catching!



# Moe Berg

(1935-1939)  
Playing for the Red Sox  
(Autographed)





# Moe Berg

(1932)

Coaching in Japan

The Japanese knew very little about the subtleties that move this superficially simple game of endless complexity.

They needed someone to teach them the finer points of Baseball.

Berg was hired to teach catchers, Lefty O'Doul the art of hitting, fielding and base running and Ted Lyons to work with the Pitchers.



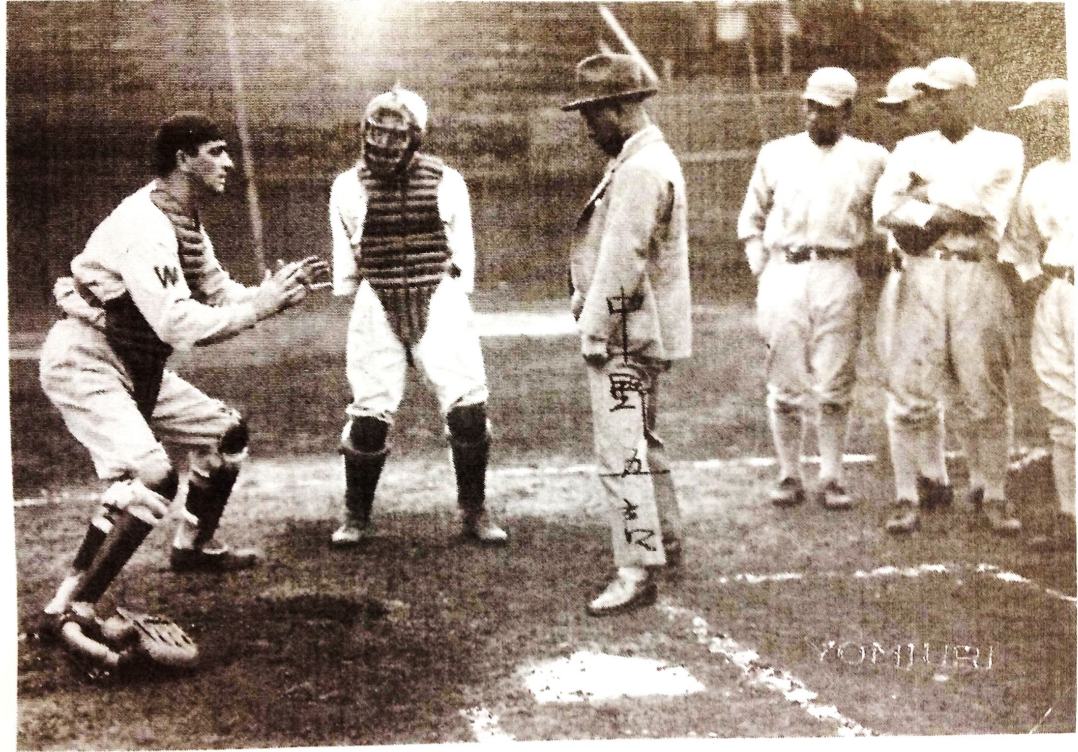
# Moe Berg

(1932)

Coaching in Japan (Continued)

The Yomiuri Shimbun sought to cash in on the growing Japanese Baseball craze.

In 1934 Herb Hunter was asked to assemble an American All-star team for an exhibition game tour against Japanese college teams.



Moe Berg explains the use of the hands in catching during an instructional session at Waseda University, Tokyo, in 1932.



# Moe Berg

(1934)

2nd Trip to Japan

The All Stars included Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, Earl Averill, Charlie Gehringer, Jimmy Foxy, Lefty Gomez and Moe Berg!



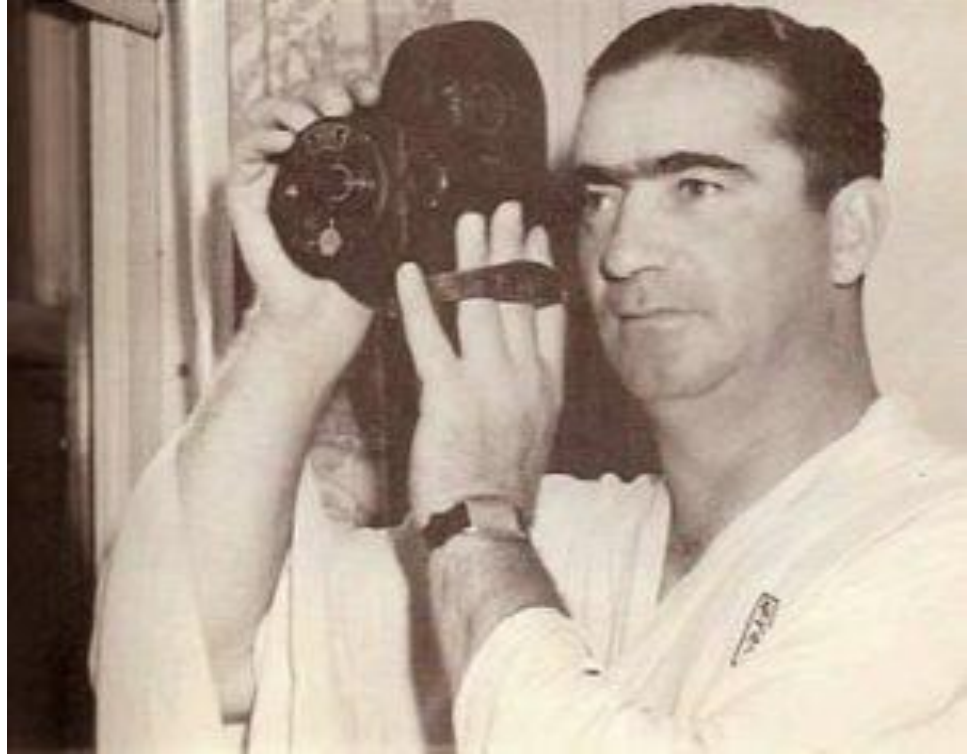
Babe Ruth, Moe Berg, and Lefty O'Doul with unidentified Japanese hosts in 1934.

# Moe Berg

(1934)

2nd Trip to Japan (Continued)

Among the items Berg took with him to Japan were a 16mm Bell and Howell movie camera and a letter from Moviestone News, a New York City newsreel production company with which Berg had contracted to film the sights of his trip!





# Moe Berg

## Coaching in Japan (Continued)

While the rest of the team was playing in Omiya, Berg went to Saint Luke's Hospital in Tokyo, ostensibly to “visit the daughter of the American Ambassador”.

Instead, Berg snuck onto the roof of the hospital, (one of the tallest buildings in Tokyo) and filmed the skyline of the city, the harbour, and other strategically important areas.



# Moe Berg

In 1942, General Jimmy Doolittle's pilots viewed Bergs photos, although it has never been confirmed if they were used in the planning of the famous air raid itself.

Casey Stengel (the great NY Yankees Manager pictured at right) once described Berg as "The strangest man ever to play Major League Baseball"



# Moe Berg

Moe Berg and New  
York Times sports  
columnist John Kieran



# Moe Berg

Moe Berg  
Classic Comic Strip





# Moe Berg

Continued

Moe Berg  
Classic Comic Strip



# Moe Berg

Continued

Moe Berg  
Classic Comic Strip



# Moe Berg

Continued

Moe Berg  
Classic Comic Strip



# Moe Berg on the Radio

Moe appeared on the Radio Show “Information Please” much to the amazement of the listeners.



Radio show “Information Please”  
being broadcast live.



# Moe Berg on the Radio

## Continued

Can you imagine the subject matter?

Among Moe's correct answers on the program:

- That "Loy" is an ancient French word for Law
- The Willie-Nicky Exchange were pre-World War I telegrams between the Czar and Kaiser
- That the Bordereau Letter convicted France's innocent Captain Alfred Dreyfus of espionage.
- Halley's Comet of 1910 is the brightest comet
- Venus is the brightest planet we see
- The Poi is the Hawaiian root substitute for bread
- He identified Teddy Roosevelt as a one time Boxer, Warren Harding as a famed sportswriter
- He noted that Woodrow Wilson played some baseball at Princeton

"Information Please"


Will not be broadcast next Tuesday night, November 12th.  
Instead, starting next Friday—November 15th—  
"Information Please" will be broadcast

**every Friday Night at 8:30**

Eastern Standard Time on the

**NBC Red Network**

under the sponsorship of



# Radio Making Waves

## Continued

They had to reach deep to stump the guy!

TweedleDee and TweedleDum are fictional characters in an English nursery rhyme and known in Lewis Carroll's "Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There" AKA "Alice in Wonderland".

*Common version of the Nursery Rhyme:*

*Tweedledum and Tweedledee  
Agreed to have a battle;  
For Tweedledum said Tweedledee  
Had spoiled his nice new rattle,*

*Just then flew down a monstrous crow  
As black as a Tar-barrel  
Which frightened both the heros so,  
They quite forgot their quarrel.*



# Radio Making Waves

As a result of Moe's success on the Information Please program, over 10,000 people called the station demanding to know more about Moe Berg!

The Detroit News' H.G. Salsinger attempted to rally a group of reporters to test Berg's knowledge.... They prepared a number of questions and Moe answered all of them correctly.

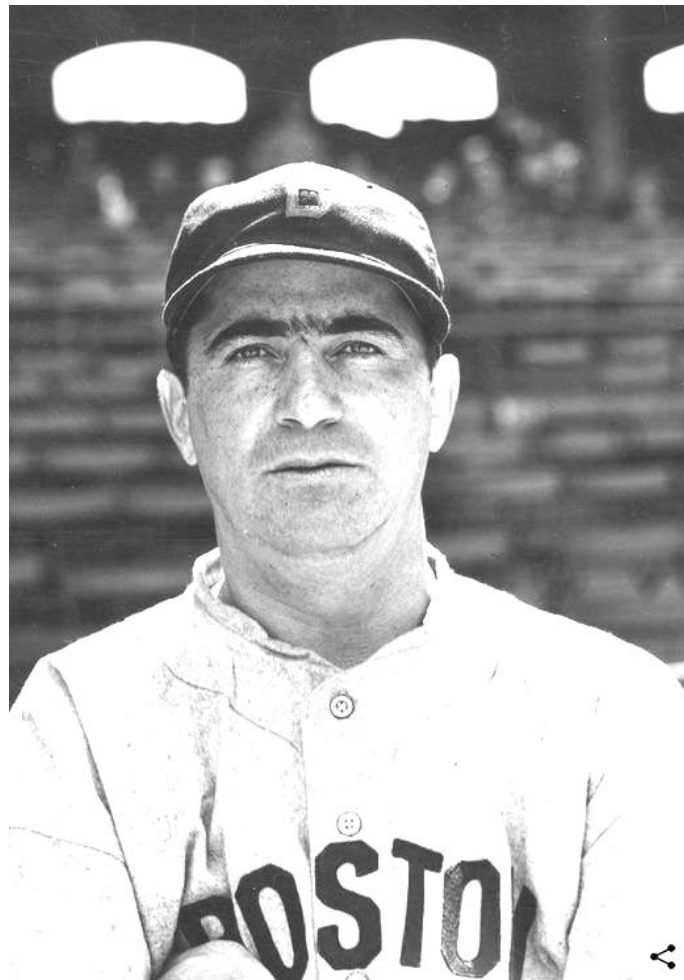
**(See the Presentation Supplement for the questions and Moe's answers)**

1958 Press Photo  
H. G. Salsinger  
Detroit News  
Editor -  
RRW72351



# Moe Berg

Coaching the Red Sox for a short time.





# Moe Berg

## Fun Facts

1933 Trading Card  
Goudey Chewing Gum No. 158

This card is one of a series of 240 baseball stars. The National Hall of Fame (HOF) does have a Goudey # 158 in their collection.

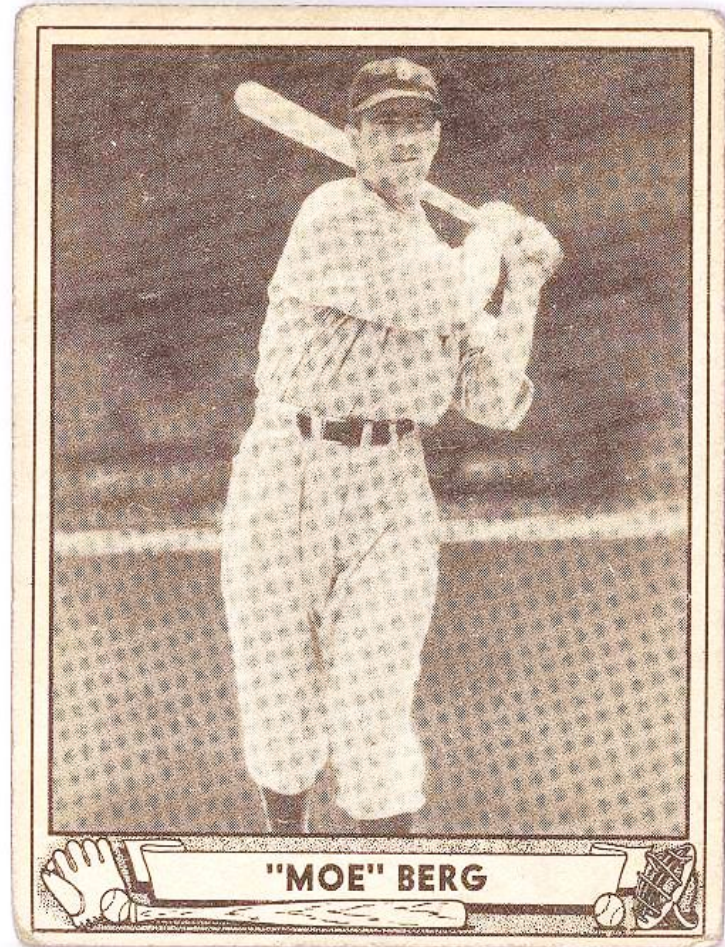
However, Berg was never elected to the National Hall of Fame!  
He did receive three votes in 1958 and then 5 votes in 1960 for election to the HOF, but this is well-short of the required number for election.



# Moe Berg

1940 Trading Card No. 30  
GUM Inc. Chewing Gum

This card is held in the CIA museum collection. Also included in the museum collection is the previously shown Goudey # 158.



# MOE BERG

184



Height: 6'1"    Weight: 185    Bats: Right    Throws: Right  
Born: Mar. 2, 1902, New York, NY  
Died: May 29, 1972, Belleville, NJ

Moe Berg played 3 seasons as an infielder before switching to catcher, a position he played for 12 seasons with 4 teams. His best season was 1929 with the White Sox when he hit .287. A mathematician and language expert who attended three different universities, Moe became a top American spy in WWII, gathering atomic information from German scientists.



# Moe Berg

When the United States entered World War II, William “Wild Bill” Donovan recruited Berg to join the Office of Strategic Services.

Moe parachuted behind enemy lines on a mission to evaluate which Yugoslavian resistance movement the United States should back. After meeting and evaluating Tito (Josip Broz)’s forces, Berg determined that Tito’s Communist partisans were the best bet.



Tito's Partisans

Heavy Water Facility being Bombed

# Moe Berg

Heavy Water is used (among other things) in Nuclear process as a moderator, to control a reaction.

At the time, without this essential material the development of an A-bomb was made all the more difficult.

Heavy water reactors have the advantage of being able to run on natural uranium without using graphite moderators (which pose radiological and dust explosion hazards in the decommissioning phase).

Most modern reactors use enriched uranium with ordinary water as the moderator.



# Moe Berg

When working for the OSS, Moe was sent to attend a lecture by renowned German physicist Werner Heisenberg. Carrying a pistol, he had orders to shoot Heisenberg if his lecture indicated that Germany was close to completing an atomic bomb!

Heisenberg did **not** give such an indication - and to Moe's relief, no drastic measures were needed - the rest is history!



Werner Heisenberg

# Moe Berg

## The Medal of Freedom

### CITATION FOR MEDAL OF FREEDOM

Mr. Morris Berg, United States Civilian, rendered exceptionally meritorious service of high value to the war effort from April 1944 to January 1946. In a position of responsibility in the European Theater, he exhibited analytical abilities and a keen planning mind. He inspired both respect and constant high level of endeavor on the part of his subordinates which enabled his section to produce studies and analyses vital to the mounting of American operations.





# Moe Berg

## Later Life (Continued)

In 1946 Moe was offered lucrative coaching jobs with both the Chicago White Sox and the Boston Red Sox.

He declined both offers.

Berg did not apply for a teaching position, nor join a law firm....

He went back to “work”!



Moe loved to tell stories about his adventures. (Photo courtesy of AP/Wide World Photos.)

# Moe Berg

Nobody knows where his ashes are interred



# Moe Berg

Important Events of His Life  
"Montage" by Dennis Lavorato



# Bibliography

This presentation does not include all information on Morris “Moe” Berg. Rather, this is a list of limited sources used to generate this specific presentation.

Davidoff, Nicholas - **The Catcher was a Spy: *The Mysterious Life of Moe Berg*** - New York, Pantheon, 1994

Kaufman, Lewis

Fitzgerald, Barbara - **Moe Berg: Athlete, Scholar, Spy** - Little, Brown & Co - Boston / Toronto 1974

Sewell, Tom

Grey, Vivian - **Moe Berg: The Spy Behind Home Plate** - The Jewish Publication Society - Philadelphia / Jerusalem 1996

Special Acknowledgement:

Cassidy Lent, Reference Librarian, National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum

Images reproduced from: Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum, The Jewish Baseball Hall of Fame, CIA Hall of Fame and various online resources.



# Supplement

Write Up on Q and A of the newspapers trying to stump him

Girlfriend

Newspapers “Dead and Alive”

Inducted into the Jewish Hall of Fame

Inducted into the Baseball Reliquary Shrine of the Eternals

International Spy Museum

Ladies Day

Movie coming out June 22



# The End



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