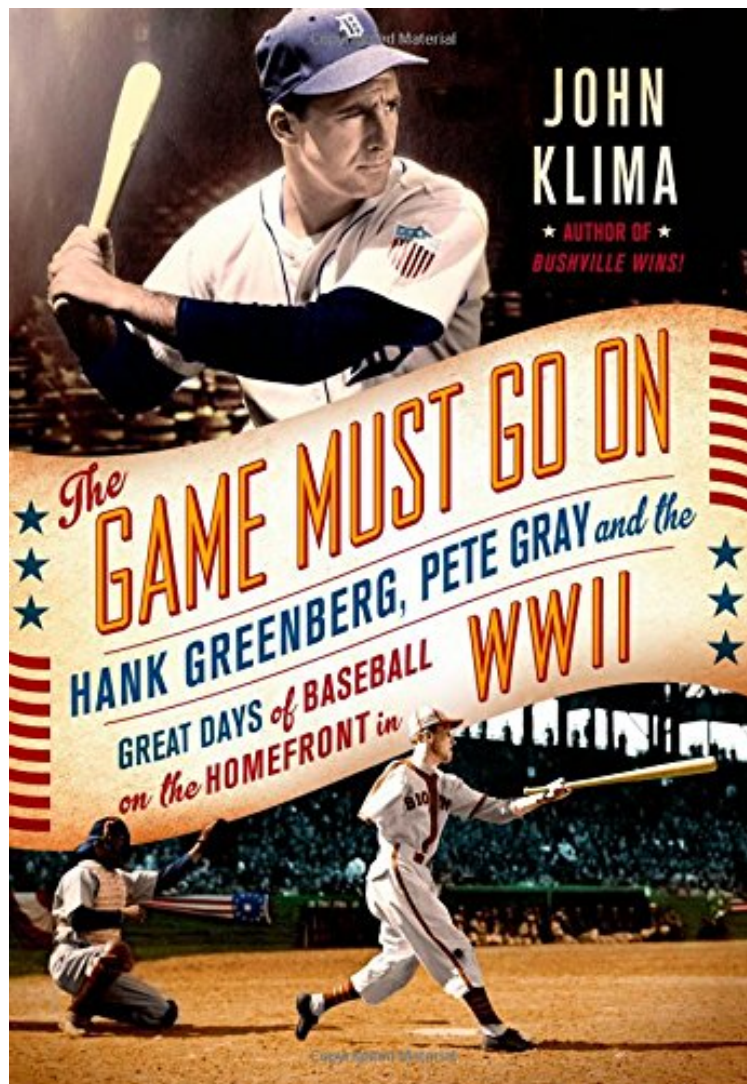


## The Game Must Go On: Hank Greenberg, Pete Gray, and the Great Days of Baseball on the Home Front in WWII

John Klima

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**John Klima : The Game Must Go On: Hank Greenberg, Pete Gray, and the Great Days of Baseball on the Home Front in WWII** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Game Must Go On: Hank Greenberg, Pete Gray, and the Great Days of Baseball on the Home Front in WWII:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. One of the Very Best Baseball Books I Have Ever Read By Bill Emblom There have been other books written about baseball during World War II but this one tops them all. Having been born in 1943 I found it especially interesting to learn about what was taking place in baseball and America during this time period prior to my becoming a baseball fan. Author John Klima has done an absolutely magnificent job in intertwining the game and the war together throughout the book. We learn of Pete Gray, the one-armed outfielder of the St. Louis Browns, struggling to gain acceptance among his teammates one of which was outright hostile to him. Gray merely wanted a chance to prove what he could do and finally got the chance at the major leagues during the 1945 season. This is also the story of Detroit Tigers' superstar Hank Greenberg leaving the Tigers to join the army and wanting to make a significant contribution to the war effort. He also shows his decency to Pete Gray as they share a few moments prior to the last game of the 1945 season. Cardinals' manager Billy Southworth worrying about his son piloting his airplane over Germany. Crusty arch-conservative baseball Commissioner Judge Landis writing a letter to a man he hated, President FDR, asking if baseball should continue during the war. Washington Senators' owner Clark Griffith, despised by his players, wanting to eek out as much money as he could for his team. To the owners these war-returning players were not heroes; they were liabilities since most were coming back deprived of their skills. Players like Greenberg, Bob Feller, and Warren Spahn went on to Hall of Fame careers while others were consigned to oblivion. Changes were coming to baseball after the death of Landis in 1944 with "Happy" Chandler taking over and having a liberal attitude regarding African-Americans in the game. He was followed by Ford "It's a league matter" Frick following Chandler as commissioner. Additional changes came during the 1950s with franchises moving, new ball parks, and television among others. This book has 398 pages of text and I can truly say this is one of the very best baseball books that I have read this or any other year. You're a baseball fan you say? Then you need to read this book and give it an honored place in your library.

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. he brings up lesser known players like Jake Jones By WAYNE B TIETZ I've read numerous World War 2 books that focused on baseball during the war years. But this book was much different. Rather than just talk about the actual World War 2 baseball seasons of 1942-1945, this book talks about some of the players who put their careers on hold to fight for the USA. The author not only points out the contributions Hank Greenberg and Bob Feller made to their country, he brings up lesser known players like Jake Jones. Being a lifetime White Sox fan I never realized until I read this book that former White Sox player Jake Jones was a World War 2 hero. I couldn't put the book down and finished it in a few days. I'm sure anybody who is interested in World War 2 history and who is interested in baseball history will enjoy reading this book.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Klima brings baseball's greatest crisis to life By Barry Sparks Author John Klima tells the story of baseball during World War II through three main characters: Hank Greenberg, the Detroit Tigers slugger who spent May 7, 1941, through June 13, 1945, in the military; Pete Gray, a one-armed outfielder who played 77 games for the St. Louis Browns in 1945; and Billy Southworth, Jr., the son of St. Louis Cardinals manager Billy Southworth Sr. Junior gave up baseball (he never reached the majors) to become a pilot in the military. He died in a plane crash. According to Klima, "World War II created modern baseball, and from that came the evolution of modern professional sports today." Baseball's manpower shortage in World War II was the greatest crisis the game has ever faced, added Klima. Dealing with that crisis, led to a host of developments that would forever change the game. A's manager Connie Mack said, "The war changed everything; it reinvented the game." In 1945, Mack said the quality of players was the poorest in 50 years. In that year, there were 247 former American Leaguers and 244 former National Leaguers in the military. Major league baseball had experienced an 80 percent turnover from the 1941 Opening Day rosters. The rosters consisted of 22 players, instead of the usual 25. Players were either too old, too young, too tall or too short. In addition to Greenberg, other major leagues who served in the military included Bob Feller, Ted Williams, Joe DiMaggio, Buddy Lewis, Cecil Travis, Warren Spahn, Hank Bauer, Pee Wee Reese, Pete Reiser and many others. Klima points out that the war affected three generations of baseball players: Those who actively served in the military; those who would have replaced them; and those who would have played in the low minors. At the end of the 1942 season, there were more than 1,000 minor leaguers in the military. How did World War II change baseball? It changed the way amateur players were scouted and signed; it opened the doors for integration and unionization (the owners abused the players during the war with a grueling schedule and pay cuts); it made Latin players a vital part of baseball and the post-war demand for baseball spurred more corporate involvement and media deals. Klima says that one of the reasons he wrote this book was because most people who had written about World War II didn't know much about baseball, and those who wrote about baseball didn't know much about World War II. Klima rectifies the situation with his account, which reflects the developments and context of World War II, as well as baseball, on and off the field. And, it's obvious he knows a lot about both subjects. Klima states that one of his goals was to put the reader in the shoes of Greenberg, Gray, Southworth Jr. and Sr., as well as all the baseball players who served during the war. On this front, he succeeds tremendously. The reader can feel the emotion, the pride, the sacrifice and the angst. The result is a fine historical account of era that comes to life through the individuals involved.

On December 7, 1941, as the battleships in Pearl Harbor smoldered, one of the most powerful athletes in America, Detroit Tigers MVP Hank Greenberg, made a tumultuous decision - to leave the baseball field for the field of war. His

decision left baseball's place during the war uncertain as more and more ballplayers, famous and unknown alike, put off their careers to go into the fight. President Roosevelt was faced with a difficult decision: stop all professional baseball for the good of the victory, but in doing so, risk losing a vital part of morale. He decided that, whatever it took, The Game Must Go On. This is the story of American baseball during World War II - of both the players who left to join the war and the ones who struggled to keep the game alive on the home front. Taking the place of the big shots turned soldiers, sailors and combat pilots were misfit replacement players. While Greenberg represented the player who served, Pete Gray symbolized the player who stayed. He was a one-armed outfielder who overcame insurmountable odds to become a professional. John Klima drops us straight into 1941 to 1945. Culminating in the 1945 pennant race, where Greenberg and Gray's paths memorably crossed, Klima's story shows us how World War II made the country come of age and took baseball with it. This is the story of how the games we play changed because of the battles we fought.

"Zips along and offers great descriptions. Enthusiastically brings to life Hank Greenberg, Pete Gray and Billy Southworth Jr...clearly illustrates that much of baseball as we know it today took shape between 1941 and 1945." - Publisher's Weekly