

# The Babe

by

CLYDE PARTIN

Emory University

The principal purpose of this paper was to offer an overview of the life of George Herman “Babe” Ruth.

George Herman Ruth was born on February 6, 1895, at 216 Emory Street, Baltimore, Maryland. Ruth was one of eight children, including two sets of twins. However, only George Herman and a sister, now Mrs. Mamie Moberly, lived to maturity. Ruth’s father owned a saloon in Baltimore. It was here that the youngster was brought up among the hard-drinking, tobacco chewing, dock workers. At age seven, Ruth was declared incorrigible by the courts of Maryland and placed by court order in St. Mary’s Industrial School for boys. He first entered the school in 1902 and was in and out of St. Mary’s seven different times before leaving it for the last time in 1914. It was at St. Mary’s that his interest in baseball was kindled and where he first started playing as a lefthanded catcher. In mid February of 1914, Jack Dunn, Baltimore Manager, offered Ruth a contract for \$600.00 to sign with the minor league Baltimore Orioles. Ruth signed, making 1914 his first year in professional baseball. He was sold later that year to the Boston Red Sox.

The Babe started his career as a left-handed pitcher and compiled a 94-46 lifetime pitching record. He had a lifetime earned run average of 2.28. In World Series play as a pitcher, the Babe had a 3-0 record, with an earned run average of 0.87. He also pitched 29 consecutive scoreless innings in World Series competition, a record that stood until 1961 when it was broken by “Whitey” Ford of the New York Yankees. Ruth still holds the record for pitching and winning the longest World Series game on record, defeating Brooklyn 2-1 in fourteen innings on October 9, 1916.

The Babe was sold to the New York Yankees by the Boston Red Sox in 1920, and it was at this time that he became a full time outfielder. While he had hit forty-nine home runs as a pitcher and part-time outfielder with Boston, it was with the New York Yankees that the Babe became known as a home run hitter. He hit 708 home runs in the American League and an additional six with the Boston Braves of the National League.

Off the baseball diamond, the Babe was known as a happy-go-lucky, free wheeling soul. Yet, at the same time he was compassionate with his fellow man and a sincere lover of children. He did everything possible to be of service to youth, whether it was signing autographs, visiting children in hospitals, or donating to causes that would aid youth.

Ruth was first married in 1914 when he was a rookie pitcher with the Boston Red Sox. This marriage did not work out, and after a long separation his wife was burned to death in a fire in Boston, Massachusetts. Shortly after his first wife’s death, Ruth married the former Claire Merritt Hodgson, who was originally from Athens, Georgia, but living in New York City at the time of her marriage to the Babe in 1929.

It was his second wife who proved a real source of strength to the Babe. She wisely took charge of his financial affairs and with her help and that of his financial manager, Christy Walsh, the Babe was able to save considerable money and to make some wise investments. It was mainly because of her efforts that the Babe was able to live his remaining years financially secure.

After retiring from baseball in June, 1935, the Babe was out of baseball officially until 1938. At that time he was offered a position as a coach with the Brooklyn Dodgers. He very happily accepted this position and stayed with Brooklyn one year. While the Babe had hoped to become a major league manager, this dream was never realized.

In November, 1946, Ruth entered French Hospital in New York City where surgery indicated he had cancer. After staying in the hospital eighty-two days, he was released and went to Florida to rest.

In the spring of 1947, the Ford Motor Company, who was sponsoring the American Legion Baseball League for youngsters, asked the Babe to be titular head of the league. The Babe accepted and travelled extensively with his wife, a doctor, and a nurse in an airplane furnished by the Ford Motor Company. However, the travel soon proved to be too much for the Babe and he returned to his home in New York.

On June 13, 1948, the Yankees held a Silver Anniversary Celebration in honor of "the house that Ruth built." This was the Babe's last appearance in his Yankee uniform with the familiar number 3 on his back. The highlight of the ceremony was the retiring of that famous number 3.

On August 16, 1948, at 8:01 p.m. The Babe passed away at the Memorial Hospital Center for Cancer and Allied Diseases in New York City. Ruth was dead of cancer at age fifty-three.

The Babe's funeral was held on August 19, in St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City. An estimated six thousand persons crowded inside the Cathedral while another 75,000 stood outside in the rain to pay their last respects.