Guide to the Papers of Morris “Moe” Berg

National Baseball Hall of Fame Library

National Baseball Hall of Fame
25 Main Street
Cooperstown, NY 13326

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This guide to the collection was prepared by Jenny McMillen and reviewed by Andrew Newman and Anne McFarland in August 2005.
Collection Number
BA MSS 32

Title
Papers of Morris “Moe” Berg

Inclusive Dates
1921-1973

Extent
.5 linear foot (1 manuscript box)

Repository
National Baseball Hall of Fame Library
25 Main Street
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Abstract
This collection contains the papers of Morris “Moe” Berg, who was a professional baseball player, linguist, lawyer, and international spy. Berg’s papers are in the form of correspondence, contracts, telegrams, memorabilia, and clippings. Although Berg was a mediocre baseball player, he is remembered as an emissary for the United States government and as baseball’s premiere intellect.

Acquisition Information
This collection was a gift of Ethel Berg in 1974.

Preferred Citation

Access
By appointment during regular business hours, email research@baseballhall.org.

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Separations
The following contracts have been separated to the Contracts Collection:
Brooklyn, National League, 6/27/1923, BL-988.74, 3/03/1924, BL-989.74
Chicago, American League, 2/14/1930, BL-990.74
Cleveland, American League, 4/13/1931, BL-991.74 and 8/01/1934, BL-993.74
Washington, American League, 3/07/1933, BL-992.74, 1/10/1934, BL-994.74
Other Repositories

**History**
Morris “Moe” Berg was born on March 2, 1902 in New York City to Russian immigrants. A private and erudite man, Berg is known as a ballplayer, linguist, lawyer, and international spy.

While attending Princeton University, Berg was a shortstop on the baseball team. He graduated with a degree in modern languages and then attended classes at the Sorbonne in Paris. Later, Berg received his law degree from Columbia University in 1930.

Berg started his career in professional baseball as a shortstop, but spent most of his career behind the plate as a catcher. He played for the Brooklyn Robins of the National League (1923), Chicago White Sox (1926-1930), Cleveland Indians (1931, 1934), Washington Nationals of the American League (1932-1934), and the Boston Red Sox (1935-1939). After his playing career, Berg coached for the Red Sox.

Because of his connection with baseball and his linguistic skills, Berg was invited to tour Japan on two different occasions. In 1932, Berg visited Japan with Lefty O’Doul and Ted Lyons on a trip arranged by Herb Hunter to teach baseball at various universities throughout the country. Hunter arranged a second trip for a group of All-Stars to tour and play exhibition games against a Japanese All-Star team in 1934. Although Berg was a mediocre catcher, he was invited on the trip and took photographs of Tokyo that were later allegedly used by the United States government to help plan the Doolittle Raid.

After his baseball career, Berg worked for the United States government in civilian positions. First, he worked for Nelson A. Rockefeller at the Office of Inter-American Affairs in South America. Then, he worked with the Office of Strategic Services where his assignment was to gain access to European scientists to determine their country’s atomic capabilities. One mission required Berg to determine whether or not Germany’s top physicist, Werner Heisenberg, was close to developing the atomic bomb. If so, Berg was ordered to assassinate the scientist. For his services, Berg was awarded the Medal of Freedom that he rejected.

In his later years, Berg lived off his friends and family. He lived with his sister Ethel until his death on May 29, 1972 in Belleville, New Jersey.

**Scope and Content**
This collection is organized into 3 series, each representing a facet of Berg’s life. Series I contains information on Berg’s career and association with baseball. The series contains contracts, correspondence, telegrams, memorabilia, and fan mail. Series II contains information on Berg’s work with the United States government. The series mainly contains correspondence, memos, and telegrams pertaining to
specific missions and Berg’s job performance. Series III contains information on Berg’s personal life including numerous clippings and articles written on Berg, personal correspondence, and letters of sympathy written to Berg’s sister Ethel after his death.

Controlled Access Terms
These records are indexed under the following terms in the National Baseball Hall of Fame’s Library catalog. Researchers wishing to find related materials may wish to search under these terms.

Subjects
• Baseball Players – Biography.
• World War II, 1939-1945
• Spies

Corporate Names
• Brooklyn Dodgers (Baseball team)
• Chicago White Sox (Baseball team)
• Cleveland Indians (Baseball team)
• Boston Red Sox (Baseball team)

Personal Names
• Berg, Morris, 1902-1972
• Comiskey, Charles A.
• Rockefeller, Nelson A. (Nelson Aldrich), 1908-1979

Content List
Series I. Baseball, 1921-1965

Scope note:
Series I contains correspondence with team managers, presidents and owners such as Charles H. Ebbets and Charles A. Comiskey, contracts, and telegrams from the various professional ball clubs Berg played. The series also includes information on Berg’s trips to Japan, correspondence with sportswriters, and fan mail. The records are arranged alphabetically.

Box 1

Folder 1  All-Star Jewish Baseball Team, 1965
Folder 2  American League Service Bureau Report, 1938
Folder 3  Association of Professional Baseball Players of America, n.d.
Folder 4  Baseball Memorabilia, 1951, 1969
Folder 5  Baseball Tour of Japan, 1932
Folder 6  Baseball Tour of Japan, 1934
Folder 7  Berg on Sports, n.d.
Folder 8  Boston/AL, 1935, 1938-1940
           1936 AL season schedule, signed by Berg
Folder 9  Brooklyn/NL, 1921, 1924
Folder 10 Centennial Celebration/AL, 1939
Folder 11 Chicago/AL, 1925-1931
Folder 12 Cleveland/NL, 1934-1935
Folder 13 Columbia University School of Law, 1928
Folder 14 Fan Mail, 1932-1972
Folder 15 Japanese Baseball, 1936-1937
Folder 16 Office of the Commissioner, 1972
Folder 17 Princeton University, 1921-1968
Folder 18 Sportswriters and Publishers, 1934-1965
Folder 19 Washington/AL, 1930, 1932-1934
Folder 20 World Series, 1950 Scorecard

Series II. Government, 1941-1946

Scope note:
Series II contains records concerning Berg’s career and involvement with different departments of the United States government including the Inter-American Affairs and the Office of Strategic Services. The records are organized alphabetically.

Folder 21  Artucio, Hugo Fernandez, 1942-1943
Folder 22  F.C.C. Report-Official Radio Broadcasts
Folder 23  Foreign Service, 1942
Folder 24  Groves, General Leslie R. (Holiday cards), 1968
Folder 25  Inter-American Affairs Work in Guatemala, 1941-1942
Folder 26  Medal of Freedom Award, 1946
Folder 27  Notes on Pearl Harbor taken December 7, 1941
Folder 28  Office of Strategic Services (O.S.S.), 1943-1944
Folder 29  Rockefeller, Nelson A., Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs, 1942-1943
Folder 30  Roosevelt, Franklin D. (Invitation to the White House), 1941

Series III. Personal, 1923-1973

Scope note:
Series III contains records concerning Berg’s personal life including numerous clippings and articles in various newspapers such as The New York Times and the The Washington Post, personal correspondence, letters of sympathy sent to his sister Ethel after Berg’s death, and a New York Public Library press release for the Moe Berg collection acquisition and exhibit. The records are arranged alphabetically.

Folder 31  Clippings and Articles, 1923-1973
Folder 32  “Information Please” Radio Quiz Show, 1939
Folder 33  Speaking Engagements, 1938-1956
Folder 34  New York Public Library, 1973
Folder 35  Personal Letters, 1923-1971
Folder 36  Sympathy Letters, 1972-1973
Folder 37  Letters to Ethel Berg, 1973-1978