



**Henry "Hank"
Greenberg**
Army Air Corps

Henry "Hank" Greenberg

Jan 1, 1911 - Sep 4, 1986

BIRTHPLACE: New York, NY

SOLDIER DETAILS

HIGHEST RANK: 1st Lt

DIVISION: Army Air Corps, 58th Bomber Wing

THEATER OF OPERATION: European

SERVED: Oct 6, 1940 - 1946

HONORED BY: The Eisenhower Foundation

BIOGRAPHY

Henry "Hank" Greenberg was the first Major League Baseball player to enlist. In 1940, outfielder, "Hank" Greenberg had won his second MVP award, leading the Detroit Tigers to the American League pennant. He registered with the Selective Service after the season and said, "I have no intention of trying to get out of military training." At age 29, on Oct. 6, 1940 Greenberg enlisted in the country's peace time draft. In the spring of 1941 the Detroit draft board tried to give him an out. They classified him as having "flat feet" after his first physical, which would have relegated him to light duty at home. Greenberg demanded to be reexamined. on April 18 1941, he was found fit and was reclassified. The 1941 Tigers season had begun by this point, and on May 7 after playing 19 games, Greenberg reported for the US Army. Hank trained as a tank gunner that Spring/summer. On December 5, Hank was discharged at the age of 30, two days later Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. On Feb 1, 1942, Greenberg reenlisted, was inducted at Fort Dix, NJ and volunteered for service in the US Army Air Corps. "We are in trouble" he told the Sporting News, " and there is only one thing for me to do ' return to the service. This doubtless means I am finished with baseball and it would be silly for me to say I do not leave it without a pang. But all of us are confronted with a terrible task - the defense of our country and the fight of our lives". Greenberg graduated from Officer Candidate School at Miami Beach, FL. and was commissioned a First Lieutenant and assigned to the Army Air Force. Hank served for the next three and a half years. His last position was in the China/India/Burma theater of operations where he scouted bombing targets for B-29s and served as the Physical Training Officer for the 58th Bomber Wing. All in all Greenberg served 47 months in the service, the lonest tenure of any ball player. He missed 4 full seasons of his professional career. His first full year back, he paced the league with 44 home runs and 128 RBIs. Hank Greenberg was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1956. "Courtesy of Baseball Wartime and the Detroit News Archive"