



Chautauqua Sports Hall of Fame

15 West Third Street - Jamestown, NY 14701

November 2019



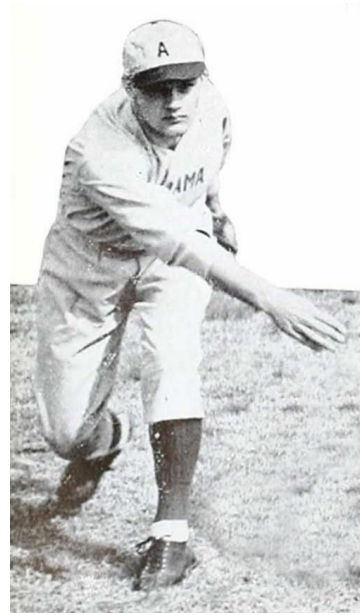
Hugh Carpenter Bedient was inducted into the Chautauqua Sports Hall of Fame in 1983 based on his outstanding baseball career as a pitcher, which included winning the 1912 World Series championship with the Boston Red Sox. However, this month's newsletter will focus not on him, but rather his son, Palmer, who died tragically in 1940 while serving his country. On Veteran's Day, November 11th, as we give thanks to all who have answered the call of our

*nation, let us particularly remember **Hugh Palmer Bedient** (above).*

In 1908, Hugh C. Bedient struck out 42 batters in a 23-inning semi-pro game in Corry, Pennsylvania. This unparalleled iron-man feat attracted the attention of professional scouts and he signed with the Boston Red Sox organization in 1910. In his rookie season at Fenway Park in 1912, Bedient won 20 games against just nine losses and remained in the major leagues until developing a sore arm following the 1915 season.

Bedient was pitching for Buffalo Blues of the Federal League when his son, Hugh Palmer Bedient, was born in 1915. A tall, hard-throwing right-hander, Palmer, starred in baseball and basketball at Falconer High School, New York, pitching five no-hitters before graduating in 1933. He also played three years with the Jamestown nine in the American Legion series, with his team winning the state championship two of the three years.

He first enrolled at St. Lawrence University in Canton, New York, and then attracted much attention from baseball scouts after he transferred to the University of Alabama. Bedient had three wins without a defeat for the Crimson Tide freshmen in 1935, and became the varsity team's most dominant pitcher over the next three seasons. During the summer months, he also pitched in the Dixie Amateur League as he eyed a career in the professional game.



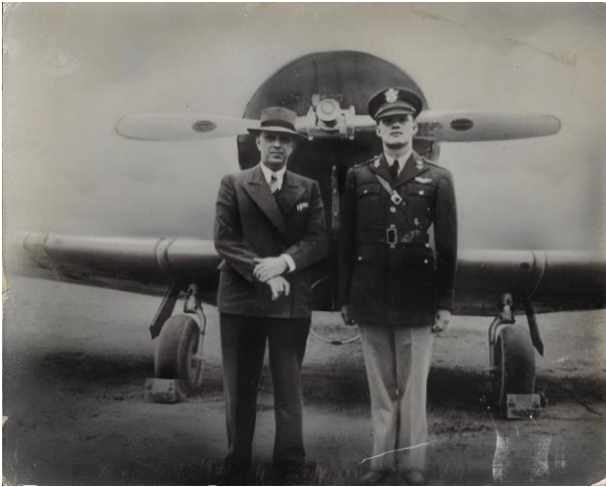
"The strong right arm of sophomore Palmer Bedient may someday hurl a baseball over the plate with the speed and deception his dad used back in 1912 to whip Christy Mathewson in two games and win the World Series for the Boston Red Sox," declared an Associated Press article on March 15, 1936.

"He shows signs of developing into professional timber," Alabama coach Tilden 'Happy' Chandler told the Associated Press. "He certainly has the physical qualifications."



Bedient gave his father credit for his success as a college hurler. "He used to give me tips on delivery and form," he recalled in 1937. "He wants me to be a big league pitcher. Bedient wanted to be one too, but he wasn't building up his hopes. "I know what it takes to get you there," he said, "and if I've got it then everything will be fine. If I haven't . . . then I'm going to try to be a sports writer."

Following graduation in June 1938, Bedient signed with the Boston Braves and joined the Evansville Bees of the Class B Three-I League in July. On July 6, he made his professional debut against the Clinton Owls at Evansville's Bosse Field, allowing just four hits and one run before being relieved by Charlie Frye in the eighth. He also contributed a single and a double to his first professional win. But it was to be a short-lived career. Bedient made just two further unsuccessful appearances for the Bees before injuries brought his playing career to an end.



Left: Hugh & Palmer Bedient @ flight school

On June 28, 1939, the 23-year-old turned his back on any hopes of making a return to baseball and enlisted with the Army Air Corps; the decision was possibly influenced by the University of Alabama's extremely popular aeronautical engineering department. He first attended elementary flying

school at Randolph Field, Texas, and then earned a commission as a second lieutenant at Kelly Field, Texas. Shortly afterwards, he was assigned to the Air Defense Command at Mitchel Field, Long Island, New York, with his living quarters at Madison Barracks, Sackets Harbor, New York. On May 4, 1940, Bedient married his college sweetheart, Jimmy Lee Malone of Anniston, Alabama, at Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

Six weeks later, on Sunday, June 16, 1940, Bedient sent his parents a telegram stating that he was spending the day with his wife at Great Neck. The following day, at around 9:00 A.M. on Monday, June 17, two twin-engine Douglas B-18 Bolo bombers, escorted by two fighter planes, left Mitchel Field on a routine training flight. The two bombers carried a crew of 11, including Second Lieutenant



Bedient. Just 15 miles from Mitchel Field, above the densely populated area of Bellerose Manor on the eastern edge of Queens, New York, the two bombers were executing a maneuver at 2,500 feet. One plane had to pass under the other and there was not enough clearance. The two planes collided and crashed in flames. One landed within a block of a school and the second smashed into a one-story residence that instantly went up in flames. All 11 crewmen — two of whom unsuccessfully attempted to escape by parachute — perished in the wreckage.

F.W. Watkins, whose home was within 50 yards of the scene of the crash, was sitting in his living room when the planes came down. "I ran outside immediately, and two houses directly across the street, which were hit by wreckage, were already blazing fiercely. It seemed only a few minutes before rescue squads arrived and the bodies were being dragged from the wreckage. At short intervals there were explosions which sounded as though small bombs were going off."



The loss of life on the ground was miraculously low. The only civilian fatality was 35-year-old Emily Kraft, who suffered severe burns when her home was set on fire. She died at the Queens General Hospital the following day.



Funeral services were held for Hugh Palmer Bedient at Falconer Funeral Home and at Levant Cemetery in Poland, New York. Members of the Henry Mosher post, American Legion of Falconer, formed the guard of honor, while Reverend Harold L. Knappenberger officiated at the funeral home and Reverend R.W. Neathery was the graveside chaplain.

Story credit to Gary Bedingfield – www.baseballsgreatestsacrifice.com

