

Playing With the Enemy: A Baseball Prodigy, a World at War, and a Field of Broken Dreams



In 1940, at just 15 years old, small-town baseball star Gene Moore was signed to the Brooklyn Dodgers, who saw in him the potential to become one of the great catchers of all time. Before that could happen, though, WWII intervened. Gene's story, a surprising paean to the power and humanity of a game, is told here by his son, a first-time author who exhibits the confidence and pacing of a pro. His gripping material certainly helps: after several years overseas in the Navys touring baseball team, Gene was brought back to Louisiana and assigned to guard secret German POWs, whose U-boat was captured just days before the storming of Normandy. There, Gene teaches his German captives how to play baseball, with a number of unintended and life-altering consequences. When Gene is finally able to return home to Sesser, Ill., he is on crutches, depressed and embarrassed, holing up in the local bar and prompting one bartender to lament, he has become one of us, when we were hoping he would make us like him. Gene's journey from promise to despair and back again, set against a long war and an even longer post-war recovery, retains every bit of its vitality and relevance, a 20th-century epic that demonstrates how, sometimes, letting go of a dream is the only way to discover one's great fortune.

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riveting journey from baseball prospect, to soldier, to broken, hopeless man