



The Spy Behind Home Plate

HE PLAYED FOR FIVE TEAMS. HE SPIED FOR ONE COUNTRY.
A FILM ABOUT MOE BERG BY AVIVA KEMPNER.

NEW DOCUMENTARY

THE SPY BEHIND HOME PLATE

**TELLS THE REAL STORY OF MOE BERG,
MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL PLAYER
TURNED WWII SPY**

Latest Biopic

From the Maker of *The Life and Times of Hank Greenberg*

Award-Winning Filmmaker Aviva Kempner

Sets Opening Day for **May 24, 2019,**

National Theatrical Release

WASHINGTON, D.C. (February 23, 2019) – As Spring Training begins so does the countdown to Opening Day for the 2019 Major League Baseball season and the release of ***The Spy Behind Home Plate***, the newest film about an unknown Jewish hero from award-winning documentary filmmaker **Aviva Kempner**. *The Spy Behind Home Plate*, set for national release on **Friday, May 24**, is the first feature-length documentary about **Moe Berg**, the enigmatic and brilliant baseball player who turned spy for the U.S. Office of Strategic Services (OSS) during World War II. The film will play film festivals and theaters across the U.S. and internationally.



Courtesy of the National Baseball Hall of Fame

Berg not only played for the last Washington Senators team to play in a World Series (1933), but he also trained with the OSS not far from the D.C. team's home, Griffith Stadium. *The Spy Behind Home Plate* features rare historical footage as well as revealing interviews with an All-Star roster of celebrities and other individuals from the worlds of sports, spycraft and history. Interviewees include Berg's relatives, fellow baseball players, biographer Nicholas Dawidoff, authors David Ignatius and Thomas Powers, MLB historian John Thorn, film professor Dr. Annette Insdorf, playwright Michael Frayn, sports commentator Larry Merchant, sports columnist Ira Berkow, OSS Society president Charles Pinck, Los Angeles Angels manager Brad Ausmus, U.S. Senator Ed Markey and baseball executives Jerry Reinsdorf and Bud Selig.

Kempner, who produced, wrote and directed the film, describes it by saying, "Moe Berg is finally achieving the recognition he so deserves as a World War II hero. This full-length feature documentary explores the broader landscape of his immigrant Jewish upbringing, why he was called the brainiest man in baseball, and his many courageous OSS missions geared towards preventing the Nazis from developing the atomic bomb. Berg is the American hero we all need to know more about!"

Born in New York, Berg grew up in Newark, New Jersey. The erudite Major League catcher played on five different baseball teams in the '20s and '30s, spoke a multitude of

languages, earned degrees from Princeton University and Columbia University Law School, and attended the Sorbonne. In 2018, Berg and the 13,000 heroic men and women of the OSS finally received a well-deserved Congressional Gold Medal during a moving ceremony where Berg's heroism was cited.

Berg played for the Brooklyn Robins (which became the Dodgers), the Chicago White Sox, the Cleveland Indians, the Washington Senators, and the Boston Red Sox during baseball's Golden Age. In 1934, Berg joined the All American Baseball Team for an All-Star exhibition tour in Japan with Hall of Famers Babe Ruth, Jimmie Foxx, Lefty Gomez, Charlie Gehringer, and Lou Gehrig.



Courtesy of the National Baseball Hall of Fame

Berg may have had only a .243 batting average during his 15-year Major League career, but it was the stats he collected for the OSS that made him a most valuable player to his country during World War II. He was selected by the OSS for a mission to interview top Italian physicists to assess their knowledge of the German bomb program. In 1944, the OSS assigned him to attend a lecture by German physicist Werner Heisenberg in Zurich. For the Swiss trip, Berg was given a gun and a cyanide pill to take with him and was instructed to shoot Heisenberg if he was constructing an atomic

bomb for the Nazis. He later worked for the OSS in a prominent role in US efforts to undermine the German atomic bomb program. After WWII, Berg remained elusive and later became reclusive.

Based in Washington, D.C., Kempner, a director-writer-producer dynamo, boasts a resume of critically acclaimed and award-winning documentaries, including *Rosenwald*; *Yoo-Hoo, Mrs. Goldberg*, and Peabody winner *The Life and Times of Hank Greenberg*. She also produced another WWII documentary, *Partisans of Vilna*. Child of U.S. Army officer Harold Kempner and Polish Holocaust survivor Helen Ciesla, Kempner was born in post-World War II Berlin, Germany. Her family history inspired her to make films about under-known Jewish heroes-- television pioneer Gertrude Berg, Hall of Fame baseball superstar Hank Greenberg, philanthropist Julius Rosenwald, and the Jewish resistance to the Nazis. Her films have received top honors from The National Society of Film Critics, the New York Film Critics Circle, the Broadcast Film Critics Association and CINE Golden Eagle and Peabody Awards.

Kempner is a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and is an avid voting rights advocate for the District of Columbia.

For more information on *The Spy Behind Home Plate*, including events and speaker programs related to the film, please visit www.spybehindhomeplate.org.

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