

The Babe Thought Well of Lima

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In 1927, Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig made Lima their only stop between New York and Kansas City as they headed out to a barnstorming tour along the Pacific coast.

Miller City native Ray Kern was a teammate of Ruth's on the Lima team. The outfielder was a regular on the semi-pro club 'The Independents' with his friend, first baseman, Bud Leis.

"We played with them all season," said the 85-year old Kern. "I think we got about \$1 a game, just enough to cover our expenses back and forth from Miler City."

Ruth, reportedly being paid \$5,000 by Halloran and The Lima News, hit two home runs and played outfield and pitched for Lima. He was the game's winning pitcher, throwing five innings of shutout ball and striking out seven batters.

Kern recalls seeing the Hall of Famer call a shot: "All I really remember is Babe went up there to bat and he pointed out there toward the railroad tracks behind right-

center field. And then he hit it out there a long, long way. He got a pretty big applause."

The Independents scored a 9-6 victory.

Gehrig played first base and pitched for Celina, but didn't fare as well as Ruth. He had three singles and allowed Lima to score the game-winning runs when he was on the mound.

Although Gehrig didn't get to show off his power during the game that day, Kern showed the ultimate respect for him in the outfield. "I backed up as far as I could go," he said. Kern remembers the two baseball stars as being pretty friendly.

"I just listened - I didn't do too much talking," he said, adding that he was the youngest player on the Lima Team.

Ray Kern is the father of Dan Kern, Miller City's baseball coach from 1975-2003. Dan is also the writer of this book.