



JAMES M. BATTISTE
AUGUST 20, 1920 — SEPTEMBER 24, 2011

James Battiste of Mobile, Alabama, was the organizer of the first Babe Ruth league in Mobile.

He served in the Army Air Signal Corps during World War II, spending his service time in the Panama Canal Zone. He was employed by the Gulf Mobile and Ohio Railroad as a teletype and telephone maintainer and rose to the rank of communications microwave tower survey engineer, retiring in 1982 after 36 years of service.

But it was his work in establishing youth baseball programs in Mobile that endeared him to thousands of families. Battiste, a baseball player himself during his Army service, established the first league in Mobile with 60 boys on four teams on a field with no lights, fences or concession stands. The league needed sponsors to cover the initial costs of uniforms and player insurance. Battiste would haul soft drinks out there and had his own concession stand in the back of his station wagon.

Not long after Battiste and other citizens formed the baseball program, participation quickly expanded citywide. Battiste saw the Babe Ruth program grow from 60 boys in 1965 to 18,000 by 1993.

Battiste served as Southeast Regional Commissioner for more than 10 years. He was inducted into the Mobile Youth Baseball Hall of Fame in 1971 and the Babe Ruth League International Hall of Fame in 1993.

