
HEROES of AMERICA™

Babe RUTH

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Chapter 1

Baltimore's Bad Boy

George was holding back the tears, trying to look brave. A policeman had a firm grip on the seven-year-old boy as he pulled him along the cobblestone streets in the ramshackle waterfront section of 1902 Baltimore, Maryland.

“George Ruth, I’ve looked the other way before,” scolded the officer, “but this time we’re going to have a little talk with your father.” George didn’t even look up as they arrived at the somber row house on West Camden Street. Two railroad men, walking



“Isn’t That Little George with the Law?”

BABE RUTH

arm in arm, burst out into the street from the saloon that was owned by the Ruth family. They were dirty and smelled of the sea.

“Hey! Isn’t that little George with the law?” one man exclaimed. “What did you do, kid, steal an apple or break a window?” The men laughed. “Be on your way before you get the same. My business is with Mr. Ruth, not with the likes of you.” The officer tapped his nightstick. The smiles vanished from the men’s faces, and they quickly shuffled down the block.

George’s family lived above the bar that his dad tended. The Ruths worked long, hard hours, as the saloon was open all day and most of the night. Grizzled longshoremen, who worked all night loading ships in the harbor, and merchant marines just back from long ocean voyages came in and out at all hours to drink, gamble, and swap stories about their adventures.

BABE RUTH

George was no stranger to the regular customers who watched him play under the barstools on the sawdust-covered floor. Out of his father's sight, the customers would sometimes slip George a puff of a cigar and then roar with laughter. Big George, as Mr. Ruth was known, was too busy working to notice these pranks that so delighted the crowd.

When George was only five years old, he began to slip out and roam the streets. Before long he had met most of the toughest kids along the waterfront, living the life of the streets, fighting and sometimes even stealing. By the time he was seven, he had been in more trouble than most kids could ever imagine.

The gang George ran with learned always to keep one step ahead of the local police. One of their favorite antics was to steal some fruit from an outdoor stand, throw it at an unsuspecting wagon



The Gang George Ran With