



## David Meadow "Boo" Ferriss Sr

David Meadow "Boo" Ferriss, a baseball legend and one of Mississippi's most beloved citizens, died November 24 at home. Ferriss was 94.

Ferriss was born on Dec. 5, 1921, to Delta farmer William Douglas Ferriss and Lellie Meadow Ferriss of Shaw. Young David pretty much nicknamed himself. As a toddler he tried to get the attention of his older brother, Will D. He tried to say "brother" and it came out "Boo." The name stuck.

At Shaw High School, from where he graduated in 1939, Ferriss played and excelled in all sports, especially baseball. He attracted the interest — and contract offers — of several Major League teams but instead signed a baseball scholarship at Mississippi State. The legendary coach and athletic director Dudy Noble awarded Ferriss the first

full baseball scholarship in school history.

Ferriss became an All-Southeastern Conference pitcher and also played basketball two years. He was a member of Kappa Sigma fraternity, president of his junior class and was active in student government affairs. After his junior year, he signed a contract with the Boston Red Sox and in June of 1942 he broke into professional baseball with the Greensboro, N.C. Team of the Class B Piedmont League. At age 20, he led Greensboro to the league championship.

Ferriss' baseball career was interrupted by World War II. He served in the Army Air Corps until severe asthma forced a medical discharge in February of 1945.

Ferriss returned to baseball and the Red Sox organization, remarkably earning rapid promotion to the Major League team. In his first Major League game on April 29, 1945, he pitched a 2-0 shutout victory over the Philadelphia A's. His second start was a 5-0 blanking of the New York Yankees at Fenway Park. He set a Major League record by winning his first eight games, all complete games and four shutouts. During those first eight starts, he defeated every other American League team. He received Rookie of the Year honors for his 21-10 record.

Ferriss was even better in 1946 with a 25-6 record, a 3.25 earned run average and 26 complete games, leading pitcher of the American League. He established several Major League records, including most consecutive victories in a home park (13). He tied Wes Ferrell's Major League record of winning 46 games in his first two seasons.

Ferriss made the 1946 American League All-Star team and then pitched a 4-0 shutout victory over the St. Louis Cardinals in the third game of the 1946 World Series at Fenway Park. He joined Babe Ruth and Bill Dinneen as the only pitchers in Red Sox history to throw a World Series shutout.

Ferriss had one of the most promising pitching careers in baseball history ended by a freak shoulder injury in 1947. Even so, he finished his Major League career with a 65-30 record. After injury-plagued comeback attempts at the minor league level, Ferriss became the Red Sox pitching coach in 1955.

The Major League travel schedule was not conducive to raising a family, so in late 1959 Ferriss accepted the position of athletic director and head baseball coach at Delta State. There, he built one of the most successful college baseball programs in the U.S., producing many championship teams as well as future baseball coaches.

In all, he coached 26 years, achieving a record of 639 victories, 387 losses and eight ties. His teams won four Gulf South Conference championships and advanced to the Division II World Series three times, finishing second once and third twice. Ferriss produced several Major League players, 20 All-Americans and more than 60 future baseball coaches. He was most proud of the fact 92 percent of players who came through his program earned their college degrees. Ferriss is beloved among his former players for his care and attention to their families long after their playing days.

In addition to coaching duties, Ferriss served 19 years as Executive Director of the Delta State University Foundation. Upon his coaching retirement, the Delta State baseball field was named Ferriss Field. It is the centerpiece of one of the nation's most complete college baseball facilities, including a Boo Ferriss Museum, and an indoor workout facility. In 2015, a statue of Ferriss was dedicated in his honor at the ballpark.

His honors include induction into the Mississippi Sports Hall of Fame in 1964 and the Boston Red Sox Hall of Fame in 2002. In all, he is a member of seven sports halls of fame that include Mississippi State, Delta State, Gulf South Conference and the American Baseball Coaches Association. His Mississippi State jersey was retired in 2003, the same year the C Spire Ferriss Trophy was awarded for the first time. The Ferriss Trophy is awarded to the most outstanding college baseball player in Mississippi each season. In 2012, Ferriss was selected for the Mississippi Sports Hall of Fame's Rube Award for his lifetime contributions to Mississippi sports.

During and after his coaching career Ferriss served at numerous baseball clinics around the state, the nation and the globe. The U.S. State Department sent Ferriss and former teammate Bobby Doerr to clinics in Germany, Hawaii, Okinawa, Japan and Korea. He and Doerr also conducted the first baseball clinic ever held in Guam.

Ferriss remained active in civic, community and church affairs into his 90s. A charter member of Covenant Presbyterian Church in Cleveland, he served as an elder in the Presbyterian Church and has long been recognized as father and founder of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes in Mississippi.

Ferriss was preceded in death by his parents, his sister Martha Anne Parker and her husband Henry Lee Parker, and his brother Will D. Ferriss and his wife Toni.

He is survived by his much-beloved wife of 67 years, Miriam Izard Ferriss, son Dr. David Ferriss, Jr. (Pam) of Brentwood, Tenn., daughter Margaret White (John) of Madison, grandson David Ferriss III of Nashville, granddaughter Miriam Pittman (Chase) of Memphis; three great granddaughters Mary Chase Pittman, Kathryn Pittman and Jane Pittman; and numerous nieces and nephews.

Visitation will be Tuesday, Nov. 29 at Covenant Presbyterian Church from 4-8 p.m. A memorial service will be held at Covenant Presbyterian Church on Wednesday, Nov. 30 at 2 p.m. with Rev. Tim Starnes officiating. For those who have not visited with the family a short visitation will follow the service in the fellowship hall. Burial will be private.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to the Delta State baseball program, P.O. Box 361-DSU, Cleveland, MS 38733; Fellowship of Christian Athletes, P. O. Box 449, Ridgeland, MS 39158; Covenant Presbyterian Church, P.O. Box 896, Cleveland, MS 38732; or the Mississippi Sports Hall of Fame and Museum, 1152 Lakeland Drive, Jackson, MS 39216.