

= Orval Grove =

Orval Leroy Grove (August 29 , 1919 ? April 20 , 1992) was an American pitcher in Major League Baseball who played for ten seasons in the American League with the Chicago White Sox . In 207 career games , Grove pitched 1 @, @ 176 innings and posted a win ? loss record of 63 ? 73 , with 66 complete games , 11 shutouts , and a 3 @. @ 78 earned run average (ERA) .

The only freshman on the Proviso High School varsity baseball team , Grove 's pitching ability attracted the attention of the White Sox . After signing with the team in 1937 , Grove moved between the major leagues and minor leagues for a few seasons until 1943 , when he found a solid place in the White Sox 's pitching rotation . Grove had a career @-@ year in 1943 , finishing the season with career @-@ bests in ERA , wins , and complete games ; in 1944 , he made his only All @-@ Star appearance .

Grove spent four more full seasons with the White Sox , and after pitching one game in 1949 , was sent to the Sacramento Solons of the Pacific Coast League . After playing four seasons with them , he formally retired from professional baseball . After retirement , he worked with his uncle in a trucking business in Chicago while continuing to pitch at the semi @-@ pro level . In 1992 , Grove died at the age of 72 .

= = Early life = =

Grove was born in West Mineral , Kansas , on August 29 , 1919 , and was raised in Maywood , Illinois . By eighth grade , Grove developed a fondness for baseball and began pitching for the Proviso East High School baseball team . He became the first freshman member of the varsity team in school history . During a high school pitching career of three years , Grove lost only two games and pitched a no @-@ hitter and two one @-@ hitters . Over the summer of 1937 , Grove attracted the attention of Chicago White Sox talent scout Doug Minor , who requested that he " come and workout with the Sox . " Later that year , Grove was signed by the White Sox for \$ 2 @, @ 500 and began his minor league career , foregoing his senior season of high school .

= = Minor league career = =

Grove began his career with the Dallas Steers of the Texas League at the start of the 1938 season . He played with the Steers until management began to replace young players with veterans due to the team 's struggling form and moved Grove to the Longview Cannibals . As his first minor league season drew to a close , Grove planned on returning to Proviso High School to complete his education . At the end of the season , the St. Paul Saints purchased Grove 's contract to replenish their pitching staff .

After the 1939 season had begun , Grove became part of the Oklahoma City Indians of the Texas League ; St. Paul did not see much potential in him . Grove played well enough over the course of the season to receive votes for Most Valuable Player , which ultimately went to Nick Cullop . In 1939 , Grove had a peculiar game while pitching against the Tulsa Oilers . Playing in a night game with virtually no light due to storms , Grove did not allow a hit during his time on the mound , but earned the loss because he walked three men in a row , which allowed a run to score . As the 1940 season began , Grove became a part of the White Sox roster and began his Major League career .

= = Transition to the majors = =

During spring training in 1940 , Hall of Fame pitcher Ted Lyons said that Grove would have a great career , stating , " They 'll never drive that sinker very far . " Grove was an official part of the 40 @-@ man roster as the 1940 season began (teams started rather than ended the season with 40 men at this time) , but had not made an appearance after a month on the roster . The White Sox planned to use three rookie pitchers , including Grove , during the final week of May , as they had three doubleheaders that week . Grove made his Major League debut on May 28 , 1940 . He

pitched in two more games for the White Sox that season before being sent back to Oklahoma City . Grove finished 1940 with six innings of major league work over three games , allowing two earned runs . The highlight of Grove 's 1940 season came on August 11 against the Oilers ; he pitched a complete game that lasted 12 innings , winning 1 ? 0 against Hall of Famer Dizzy Dean . Grove finished the minor league season with nine wins and eight losses , but the team saw issues with his control , and as a result he spent most of the next season in the minor leagues .

In 1941 , Grove played two games for the White Sox , pitching seven innings and allowing eight runs during the two outings . He spent the start of the 1941 season at Oklahoma City , though on May 19 he was sent to the Shreveport Sports of the Texas League , where he spent the rest of the season . Grove concluded the year at Oklahoma City with a 17 ? 7 record , an improvement over the previous season . However , Grove received a knee injury late in the season , which he did not think much of at the time . In October , Grove injured his other knee when he was involved in an automobile accident in Missouri .

The following season , Grove was provided an opportunity to be a starting pitcher for the White Sox . Over the course of the season , he started eight games and played in four more en route to a 4 ? 6 record and a 5 @.@ 16 ERA . In the middle of July , Dr. Philip Kruescher discovered that Grove had torn cartilage in his left knee , a result of the same injury which caused him problems for most of the season and the previous off @-@ season . Grove was scheduled for knee surgery , which necessitated two months of recovery , effectively ending his season . Issues with his knee drew concern both during and after the season . Dr. Kruescher stated that Grove had a " 1 in 100 " chance of playing again , but the surgery was a success , and by season 's end Grove was able to test the knee and do light workouts . Complications arose shortly thereafter as an abscess developed on the back of his knee , prompting another operation in December to correct the problem .

= = Prime years = =

As the 1943 season began , the White Sox held strong doubts about Grove 's status as a pitcher . They were so doubtful of his recovery from knee surgery that Grove was signed to a \$ 1 contract until he could prove that his playing ability was back on par with the abilities of the other White Sox pitchers . After Grove proved himself in spring training , manager Jimmy Dykes gave him his first major test of the season against the New York Yankees in relief of Eddie Smith . He won the game in extra innings , and was placed in the starting rotation . In 1943 , Grove had to deal with issues related to World War II and the selective service . He was originally classified as 3 @-@ A , meaning that registration was deferred due to hardship to dependents , but was ordered to take the selective service screening examination in Cleveland in mid @-@ May . After the examination , Grove was classified as 4 @-@ F , making him ineligible for military service , which meant that he could continue his baseball career .

Grove took advantage of his place in Chicago 's starting rotation by winning nine consecutive decisions to start his season and by not losing a game until a contest against the Yankees , which he lost as the result of a balk . At the time , Grove became the second member of the White Sox to win nine consecutive decisions to start a season . The first pitcher to win nine straight games for the team was Lefty Williams in 1917 , and the only one to do it since Grove was LaMarr Hoyt in 1982 . On July 8 , 1943 , Grove nearly became one of the few pitchers in baseball history to pitch a no @-@ hitter . In a game against the Yankees , he was one out away from pitching a no @-@ hitter when Joe Gordon came up to bat . Gordon hit a double to left field that was fair by inches , ending Grove 's closest bid for a Major League no @-@ hitter . Grove finished the season with career bests in ERA (2 @.@ 75) , wins (15) , and complete games (18) . He led the White Sox that season in ERA , wins , innings pitched , complete games , and strikeouts ; at the time , Grove was the youngest pitcher on the team 's staff . Grove 's personal life improved along with his career . On January 8 , 1944 , he married Catherine Sloan , having met her at a party thrown for the White Sox by her father , Francis Sloan , a year and a half earlier .

Grove started the 1944 season with an interesting honor : he was assigned to the 4 @-@ F All

@-@ Star team , a group of 25 major league players who were the best of those exempt from military service . Grove was given the job of being the Opening Day starting pitcher for the White Sox . He pitched the first game of the season against the Cleveland Indians and their starting pitcher , Al Smith , on April 19 , 1944 , and won 3 ? 1 . Grove also managed to shut out the Yankees on May 18 ; it was the first time the Yankees had not scored a run in 1944 . By mid @-@ season , Grove had seven wins , six losses , five complete games , and a 3 @. @ 40 ERA . Because of these statistics , he was selected to the American League All @-@ Star team , his first and only career appearance . Five American League pitchers pitched in the All @-@ Star Game on July 11 , although Grove was one of the four on the roster who did not ; therefore , his lone All @-@ Star appearance was indeed only an appearance . During the second half of the season , Grove performed well at Comiskey Park , but struggled on the road , at one point losing five straight games despite good run support from the White Sox . Grove finished the season with 14 wins , 15 losses , an ERA of 3 @. @ 72 , two shutouts , and a career best of nearly 235 innings pitched .

There was a sense of closure for Grove before the beginning of the 1945 season , as he was awarded \$ 310 (\$ 4 @, @ 075 today) in damages for the auto accident in 1941 . He held out for a new contract in the off @-@ season , and finally signed with the White Sox a couple weeks before the beginning of the season after becoming the last remaining holdout . Grove was the workhorse of the White Sox , leading the team in games pitched (33) and started (30) , while remaining the youngest pitcher on the roster . He finished the season with 217 pitched innings , a career best four shutouts , a 14 ? 12 record , and a 3 @. @ 44 ERA .

The 1946 season saw Grove persist as a stable part of the White Sox pitching rotation . He pitched in 33 games during the season , second to closer Earl Caldwell , and started in 26 , second to Ed Lopat 's 29 . His best outing of the season occurred on August 3 against the Washington Senators . Grove pitched a complete game and threw to the minimum 27 batters , allowing three hits and a walk , all of which were negated by double plays . He finished the season with more losses than wins because he was eager to succeed and was trying too hard , and because of this the coaching staff planned to make Grove into " as good a pitcher most of the time as he is some of the time " . At the end of the 1946 season , Grove had eight wins and 13 losses , a 3 @. @ 02 ERA , 10 complete games , and a league @-@ leading 10 wild pitches .

= = Later career = =

During the off @-@ season , while preparations were underway for the 1947 season , Grove was the subject of trade discussions . Most notably , White Sox manager Ted Lyons and Cleveland Indians president Bill Veeck discussed trading him for Indians pitcher Steve Gromek , but the deal was nixed when they could not come to an agreement . As the season began , Grove remained part of the rotation , which was led by Lopat and included Joe Haynes and Frank Papish . While Grove started off the season well , he struggled through the middle of the year , going from May 18 to August 2 without winning a game . As a result , he was benched , and finished the season with 19 starts in 25 pitching appearances . For the first time , Grove finished a full season with an ERA above 4 @. @ 00 . He ended the season with six wins , eight losses , a 4 @. @ 44 ERA , and six complete games . Grove spent the off @-@ season working in the men 's furnishings department of Henry C. Lytton 's department store in Chicago .

In the 1948 season , the White Sox faced difficult decisions regarding their pitching staff and starting rotation . In the midst of Caldwell 's departure and Papish 's absence for most of the preseason , Grove remained a starter heading into the season , having pitched decently during spring training . In his final exhibition matchup of the season against Johnny Schmitz , Grove pitched the full nine innings and the White Sox defeated the Chicago Cubs 1 ? 0 , making Grove the only White Sox pitcher to throw a complete game during the preseason . By the end of May , Grove was the lone White Sox pitcher with a complete game through the first several weeks of the season . However , Grove eventually lost his starting job , and by the end of the season , he had two wins , 10 losses , a 6 @. @ 16 ERA , and had started 11 games out of 32 total pitching appearances .

As the 1949 season began , Grove was again the subject of trade rumors . The Detroit Tigers

agreed to trade an outfielder , presumably Don Lund or Jimmy Outlaw , in exchange for Grove , although the Tigers denied the existence of such a deal , stating " We need pitching , but I don 't think Grove would help us . " Grove pitched one game during the season on April 27 , 1949 , allowing four runs in two @-@ thirds of an inning . In his one appearance against the Indians , he hit Lou Boudreau with a pitch , which prompted concern until X @-@ rays revealed Boudreau 's left elbow was only bruised .

Shortly afterward , Grove was demoted to the Sacramento Solons of the Pacific Coast League , having pitched his final major league game . During his inaugural season at Sacramento , he was part of a pitching quartet that included Ken Holcombe , Bob Gillespie , and Frank Dasso , and was declared by Sporting News sportswriter John B. Old as " the best any Coast League club ever had . " Over the course of the next three seasons , Grove continued to pitch for the Solons . He was one of the workhorses of the 1950 squad , finishing the season with 17 victories .

His contract with the Solons promised him part of the purchase price if he was sold to the majors . When this did not occur , he considered quitting baseball and devoting himself full @-@ time to his uncle 's trucking business . However , Grove continued to play , and pitched 159 innings in 1951 , compiling an 8 ? 9 record . There was talk of his retiring in the off @-@ season ; however , Grove ended up playing part of the 1952 season , making his season debut on June 10 and playing for the rest of the season . After the season ended , Grove was traded to the Portland Beavers , and refused to report , choosing instead to pitch at the semi @-@ pro level . Grove stated , " I 'm now pitching for Earl Smith Motors Pontiac sales service " , signaling the end of his professional baseball career .

= = Later life = =

After his retirement from baseball , Grove continued to work with his uncle . His legacy lived on in his nephew , Wayne Grove . While playing for the Bellwood Lions of the Chicago Little League , Wayne pitched a no @-@ hitter and struck out 15 , and narrowly missed a perfect game when a runner got on base with two outs in the bottom of the ninth inning . Despite an unimpressive Major League career , Grove earned a few votes for induction into the Hall of Fame , receiving five votes in the 1958 balloting (1 @.@ 9 % of the required votes needed) and seven in the 1960 balloting (2 @.@ 6 % of the required votes needed) .

Grove had four children and four grandchildren , and later was the co @-@ owner of a car wash in Sacramento , California for 20 years . He became close friends with Joe Gordon , the player who broke up Grove 's no @-@ hitter , after moving to Sacramento . Grove died in Carmichael , California on April 20 , 1992 , and is buried alongside his wife , Catherine .