

= Putsy Caballero =

Ralph Joseph " Putsy " Caballero ( born November 5 , 1927 ) is a retired infielder in Major League Baseball . Caballero played eight seasons in Major League Baseball , all for the Philadelphia Phillies during the Whiz Kids era , and holds the record as the youngest person in major league history to appear at third base .

After graduating high school at age 16 , the Phillies signed Caballero to a contract worth \$ 10 @, @ 000 . After a few short stints at the major league level and playing parts of three seasons in the minor leagues , Caballero was named the starter at third base in 1948 . In his one season as an everyday player , Caballero batted .245 in 380 plate appearances at age 20 . After another stint in the minors in 1949 , he was a backup infielder , pinch hitter , and pinch runner for the 1950 season , and continued in that role through 1952 . After three more seasons in the minors , Caballero retired from baseball after the 1955 season .

After baseball , Caballero worked as an exterminator . His Louisiana home was destroyed in 2005 during Hurricane Katrina , and he lives in Lakeview , New orleans .

= = Early career and minor leagues = =

Caballero attended Jesuit High School in New Orleans , Louisiana , where he played baseball during the 1943 and 1944 seasons . During his first season , the Jesuit High team won both the city championship and the American Legion championship . The Philadelphia Phillies signed Caballero as an amateur free agent on September 9 , 1944 , the same year that fellow Whiz Kid shortstop Granny Hamner joined the organization . Caballero planned on attending Louisiana State University , where he had been offered a scholarship to play baseball and basketball . Mel Ott , a scout for the New York Giants and former outfielder , wanted Caballero to sign with the Giants , but counseled him to sign with " ' whoever offers you the most money ' " . The Phillies offered Caballero a \$ 10 @, @ 000 signing bonus ( \$ 169 @, @ 000 today ) , and his father advised him to sign the contract offered by general manager Herb Pennock and owner Bob Carpenter . At 16 years old , Caballero appeared in four games for the 1944 Phillies , getting four at @-@ bats without reaching base . In so doing , Caballero became the youngest third baseman ever to play in Major League Baseball , a record he still holds .

For the 1945 season , the Phillies sent Caballero to the Class @-@ A Utica Blue Sox of the Eastern League , where he played in 130 games at third base , batting .272 with 132 hits , 9 doubles , and 10 triples . While there , he was managed by Eddie Sawyer , and played with Hamner and Richie Ashburn , with whom he lived for two seasons . Caballero appeared in nine games with the Phillies in 1945 , scoring his first major league run and batting in a run as well . In 1946 , Caballero lost playing time as he and Hamner were both summoned to military service ; however , he did play in 76 games with the Terre Haute Phillies in the Class @-@ B Three @-@ I League and 1 game with the Blue Sox . That year , Caballero hit the first two home runs of his minor league career with Terre Haute , along with nine doubles and four triples .

Most of Caballero 's 1947 season was played at Utica as well , where he posted a .287 batting average , 114 hits , and 13 doubles while splitting time with Hamner at second base . His last cup of coffee with the Phillies came at the end of 1947 , when he notched his first major league hit and first walk in eight at @-@ bats .

= = Major league career = =

= = = 1948 ? 1949 = = =

1948 was Caballero 's first full season in the major leagues ; he played 79 games during the year at third base ? where he was the regular starter over Willie " Puddin ' Head " Jones ? and 23 games at second base . At the plate , Caballero had a .245 batting average , the second @-@ lowest among

the team 's starters that season ? higher only than catcher Andy Seminick . He posted 86 hits ( 13 for extra bases ) in 380 plate appearances . In the field , Caballero played 102 games , he made 18 errors in 363 chances for a .950 fielding percentage . He started a triple play in a game against Cincinnati when Virgil Stallcup hit a sharp line drive to third base ; Caballero forced Ted Kluszewski out at second base with a throw to Hamner and Danny Litwhiler was picked off first trying to return to complete the third out . Additionally , Caballero notched the team 's only hit in a one @-@ hit pitching performance by Brooklyn Dodgers starting pitcher Rex Barney .

In the middle of the season , the Phillies promoted Caballero 's former manager Eddie Sawyer from their Triple @-@ A farm team , the Toronto Maple Leafs of the International League , to replace Ben Chapman at the helm . Teammate Robin Roberts described Caballero , as well as Hamner , Ashburn , and catcher Stan Lopata , as having " the highest respect for [ Sawyer ] " ? all having played under his tutelage at Utica ; Caballero himself gave Sawyer the credit for his development , along with that of several other Whiz Kids . Caballero regressed in 1949 , playing 22 games with the Phillies but spending the majority of his season playing second base for the Maple Leafs in Triple @-@ A. He played in 48 games , amassing a .318 batting average ( the second @-@ highest total on the team ) and eight extra @-@ base hits .

= = = 1950 : The " Whiz Kids " = = =

Entering the Phillies ' 1950 season at 22 years old , Caballero was described as having " great potential " , but the Phillies wanted Mike Goliat to take over as the everyday second baseman . Caballero went to the major league club 's spring training as a non @-@ roster invitee ; his .379 average in the Grapefruit League won him a roster spot and a utility infield role with the Phillies . Media reports speculated that the Phillies would challenge the Dodgers for the National League pennant , and one of Caballero 's most valuable roles as a utility player was as a pinch runner off of the bench . In the second game of a July 25 doubleheader against the Chicago Cubs at Shibe Park , starting pitcher Roberts batted in the bottom of the ninth in a 0 ? 0 shutout . With Bob Rush on the mound for Chicago , Roberts managed a walk and was replaced on base by Caballero , who promptly took second base on a hit and run groundout by first baseman Eddie Waitkus . A single to center field by Richie Ashburn allowed the speedy Caballero to score from second and completed the doubleheader sweep for Philadelphia ? Bubba Church having pitched a three @-@ hit shutout in the first game earlier in the day .

As a pinch hitter , Caballero came through with hits in clutch situations , notably against the St. Louis Cardinals on August 30 . Behind 6 ? 3 at Sportsman 's Park in St. Louis , the Phillies sent Caballero to the plate to pinch hit in the top of the seventh inning . He led off the inning with a single , scoring the first run of a seesaw come @-@ from @-@ behind rally that ended with a 9 ? 8 Phillies victory , closer Jim Konstanty 's 13th of the season . Caballero displayed his running skills again in September , replacing Goliat in the ninth inning of another game against the Cardinals , and scoring a late @-@ inning run in place of Lopata against the Cincinnati Reds several days later to tie a close game that the Phillies eventually lost in 18 innings . On September 26 , Caballero scored another crucial run against the Boston Braves when he pinch @-@ ran for outfielder Dick Sisler . Waiting on third base after advancing from first on a Del Ennis single to center field , Jones hit a high ground ball to Boston shortstop Sibby Sisti , who booted the ball and allowed Caballero to score the game @-@ tying run ; the Phillies won , 8 ? 7 .

In the final game of the season , in which the Phillies defeated the Dodgers , Caballero appeared as a pinch @-@ runner , replacing catcher Andy Seminick in the ninth inning . Philadelphia advanced to the 1950 World Series to play the New York Yankees , where they were defeated , four games to none . In the series , Caballero made three appearances : two as a pinch @-@ runner ? for Seminick in Game 2 , and for Goliat in Game 3 ? and one as a pinch @-@ hitter for Konstanty in Game 4 , where he struck out . For the season , Caballero appeared in 46 games and posted a .167 batting average .

= = = 1951 ? 1952 = = =

Caballero continued as a utility player after the Whiz Kids ' defeat in the World Series , but the talented young players would never return to the Fall Classic with the Phillies . He played mostly second base during the 1951 season , fielding the position in 54 games . He posted a .186 batting average at the plate and hit his only major league home run , along with 3 doubles and 2 triples in 84 games played . With 10 hits in 42 at @-@ bats in what would be his final season in the major leagues , Caballero achieved a .238 average in the 1952 season , hitting three doubles . On June 15 , Caballero had a three @-@ hit game against the Pittsburgh Pirates in the second game of a doubleheader , one of the top performances of his career . He also batted in three runs in one game against the Giants on September 27 .

= = Return to the minors = =

In 1953 , Caballero played for the minor league Baltimore Orioles , where he batted .268 in 133 games , the most played in his professional career . He added 25 doubles , 2 triples , and 5 home runs to his total , but did not earn a promotion back to the major leagues . He returned to the Phillies system , playing for the Syracuse Chiefs . After batting .258 with 2 home runs and 41 runs batted in during the 1954 season and declining to a .225 average in 1955 , Caballero retired from baseball .

= = After baseball = =

After retiring from baseball , Caballero returned to Louisiana , where he worked as a salesman for an exterminating company , partnering with E.J. D ? Arensbourg in 1963 . Eventually , he opened his own company in Metairie , Louisiana . Caballero lives in Lake View , Louisiana , where his home was destroyed by Hurricane Katrina . He lost memorabilia signed by Babe Ruth , Eddie Mathews , and Pete Rose in the flood , calling the hurricane damage " a catastrophe " . He lives with his wife , Clare ; they have seven children and nine grandchildren . Caballero rejoined some of his old teammates in 2008 to celebrate the Whiz Kids on Alumni Weekend .