

= Joe Tipton =

Joe Hicks Tipton ( February 18 , 1922 ? March 1 , 1994 ) was an American professional baseball player . He played as a catcher in Major League Baseball ( MLB ) from 1948 through 1954 with the Cleveland Indians , Chicago White Sox , Philadelphia Athletics , and the Washington Senators . In 417 career games , Tipton recorded a batting average of .236 and accumulated 29 home runs , and 125 runs batted in ( RBI ) .

Born and raised in Georgia , Tipton played amateur baseball until the Cleveland Indians signed him . He spent two years in the minor leagues before serving in World War II . He played two more years in the minor leagues upon his return , then made his MLB debut with the Indians in 1948 . The Indians traded him to the White Sox in 1949 , then the White Sox sent him to the Philadelphia Athletics in 1950 . Tipton spent two and a half years with the Athletics before returning to Cleveland . After spending a season with the Washington Senators , he played and managed in the minor leagues for a few seasons before being banned from the minor leagues . After the ban , he moved to Birmingham , Alabama where he died in 1994 .

= = Early life and career = =

Tipton was born and raised in McCaysville , Georgia as the fifth of seven children . His birthplace was on the Tennessee border , so it was originally registered as Copperhill , Tennessee . Tipton attended Epworth High School and Copperhill High School in Tennessee , where he played on the high school basketball and football teams . He moved to Shannon , Georgia at the age of 16 in order to pursue a career in baseball . Tipton began his playing career in the Textile League with Brighton Mills in Shannon in 1938 , and spent the next three years with the Talladega team . While with Talladega , he was spotted by a scout from the Cleveland Indians organization , who signed Tipton to a professional contract .

After being signed by the Indians , Tipton made his professional debut with the Appleton Papermakers of the Wisconsin State League , where he had a .298 batting average and 11 home runs in 59 games . He spent most of the year there , and played in ten games with the Flint Arrows of the Michigan State League . In 1942 , Tipton was promoted to the Charleston Senators , the Indians ' Class C minor league affiliate . In one of his first games with the Senators , Tipton hit two triples and a home run to give his team the win by a score of seven to four . In 81 games with the team , Tipton had a .313 batting average .

= = Military service = =

Before the 1943 season began , Tipton joined the military to serve in World War II . He served in the United States Navy and was part of the Pacific Theater of Operations from 1943 to 1945 . During his time in the Pacific , he served on the USS Kadashan Bay . The ship was part of a kamikaze attack in January 1945 ; Tipton emerged unscathed from the attack .

After the end of the war , Tipton returned to baseball . He spent the 1946 season with the Harrisburg Senators , and had a .327 batting average in 104 games . In 1947 , he was promoted to the Wilkes @-@ Barre Barons of the Eastern League . That season , he had a .375 batting average , which led the league . The following season , Tipton joined the Cleveland Indians for spring training . By the end of March , he was considered a sure thing to make the major league roster .

= = Major League career = =

The Cleveland Indians decided to keep only two catchers on the roster for the 1948 Cleveland Indians season , and manager Lou Boudreau chose Tipton to back up Jim Hegan . He made his major league debut on May 2 , and a month later , in a game on June 6 , he had five hits in five plate appearances to give Cleveland a win against the Philadelphia Athletics . Tipton played in 47 games over the course of the season and had a .289 batting average . He also played in one game during

the 1948 World Series , striking out in his only appearance .

After the World Series , Indians owner Bill Veeck wanted to improve the pitching staff . Despite finding Tipton to be worthy of a starting job and despite Veeck considering trading Hegan instead , Tipton was traded to the Chicago White Sox for Joe Haynes . Early in the season , White Sox manager Jack Onslow accused Tipton of tipping pitches after a loss to the St. Louis Browns and fined him \$ 500 . The two then fought and Tipton threatened to leave the team , but they buried the hatchet a short time later . He played in 67 games during the season , and ended the year with a .204 batting average and three triples .

On October 19 , 1949 , the White Sox traded Tipton to the Philadelphia Athletics for Nellie Fox . Fox played 14 years for the White Sox and went on to become a Hall of Famer , and as a result the trade is considered one of the most lopsided in baseball history . During spring training for the Athletics , Tipton battled Mike Guerra and Joe Astroth for the starting job at catcher . All three ended up splitting time over the course of the season . Tipton finished the year hitting .266 with six home runs and 20 RBIs in 64 games .

Jimmy Dykes took over as Athletics ' manager in 1951 , and had high hopes for Tipton heading into the season , saying that he " is a lot better catcher than most people think . " In May , Tipton was hit in the head by a stray baseball bat during a game , and spent some time in the hospital as a result . He split time with Astroth and Ray Murray during the season , but appeared in a career @-@ best 72 games , hitting .239 with 51 walks . After the season ended , Tipton was part of Lefty O 'Doul 's American baseball team that toured Japan . To start the 1952 season , Tipton was rumored to be the subject of a trade involving the Boston Red Sox and two of their players , but the deal never materialized . Tipton missed part of May with a kidney infection , and struggled upon returning , hitting .191 in 23 games . In late June , he was waived by the Athletics and picked up by the Indians . He spent the rest of the year with them , and finished with nine home runs , 30 RBIs , and a .225 average in 66 games .

Tipton remained the backup catcher to Hegan during the 1953 season . He battled a myriad of injuries throughout the season , including a bruised hand , a broken thumb , a split finger , and losing a fingernail . He finished the year with a .229 batting average in 47 games . On January 20 , 1954 , Tipton was traded to the Washington Senators for Mickey Grasso in an exchange of catchers . Manager Bucky Harris traded for Tipton in hopes that he would compete for the starting job due to his defense . Tipton served as the backup catcher to Ed Fitz Gerald in 1954 . He made his last MLB appearance on September 26 , and in 54 games he had a .223 average .

= = Later life = =

The New York Giants purchased the contracts of Tipton and Wayne Terwilliger on January 14 , 1955 , who sent them to the minor league Minneapolis Millers . While Terwilliger played for the Millers that year , Tipton had planned to retire from baseball , and never played a game for Minneapolis . Later that year , White Sox general manager Frank Lane wanted him to join the Memphis Chickasaws so that the young pitchers in the minor leagues could work with a veteran catcher ; Tipton obliged and joined the team for the 1955 season . In 60 games for the Chickasaws that season , Tipton had a .277 batting average and seven home runs .

After playing in the 60 games , Tipton was suspended after an argument with Chickasaws manager Jack Cassini , and after the season ended he retired from the game to work at his service station . He returned to baseball in 1957 and spent a season with the Birmingham Barons , and partway through the 1958 season , he joined the Panama City Fliers as manager . He was fired a month later , and in protest the Fliers refused to play their next game . Tipton retired afterwards , and a year later was banned for life from the minor leagues after it came to light that he accepted payouts by acting as a liaison for Jesse Levan , who was intentionally fouling off balls in order for gamblers in the stands to take advantage of them .

His baseball career over , Tipton moved to Birmingham , Alabama with his wife and three children , where he ran automobile dealership . He was named to the Fannin County Sports Hall of Fame in 2013 . In 1994 , Tipton died in Birmingham at the age of 72 .

