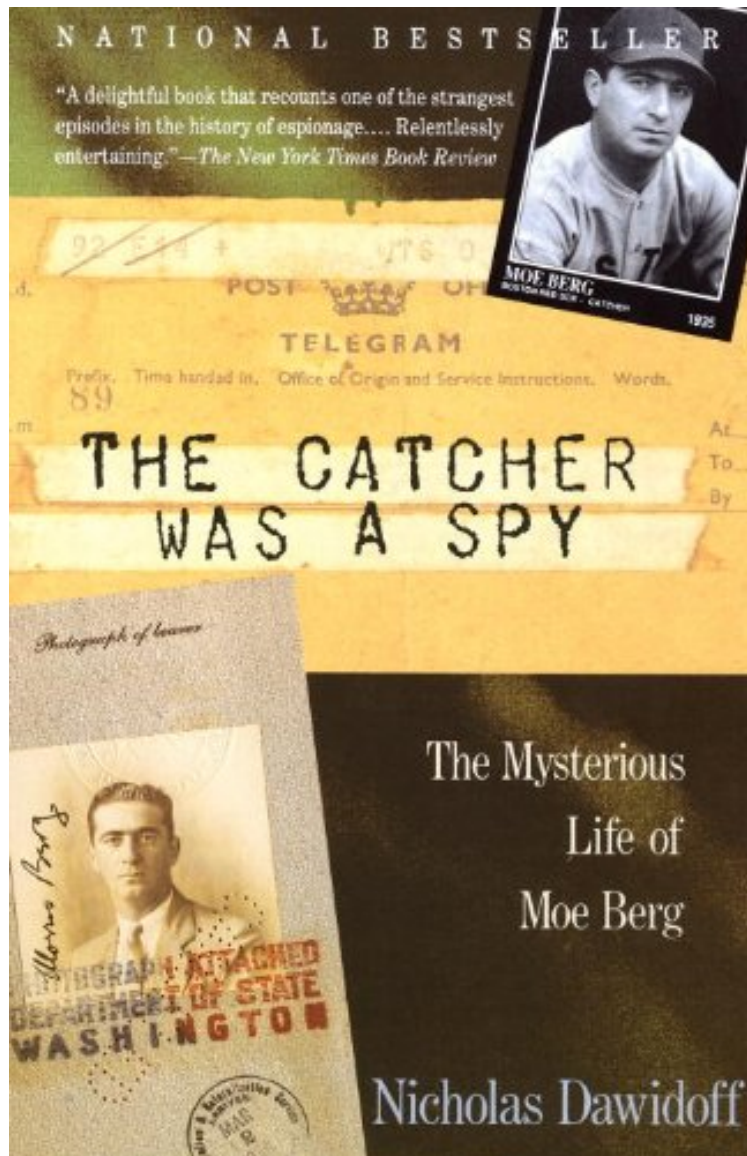


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## The Catcher Was a Spy: The Mysterious Life of Moe Berg

Von Nicholas Dawidoff

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**Von Nicholas Dawidoff : The Catcher Was a Spy: The Mysterious Life of Moe Berg** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Catcher Was a Spy: The Mysterious Life of Moe Berg:

KundenrezensionenHilfreichste Kundenrezensionen0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Strange Man, Great StoryVon David SavageI came across this book in a bookstore and was immediately intrigued. I had just

finished bios on Ted Williams and Rogers Hornsby. This was a very different story. Moe Berg was not a great baseball player. He was a backup catcher who bounced around the majors for a number of years. Because he played alongside Babe Ruth, Eddie Collins, Ted Williams, etc., the book contains a number of great baseball anecdotes. The real fascination here, of course, is Moe Berg's life inside and outside of baseball. "The Catcher was a Spy" tells the story of a complex man who could have been a decent baseball player but found himself more interested in reading a dozen newspapers a day. Whether he actually became a "spy" during the war is questionable. He did do extensive travelling in Japan and Europe in the Forties spending time with such notables as Albert Einstein. As Moe Berg slows down after the war, so does the book. He becomes a wanderer relying on old friends to take him in for a few weeks at a time. You get the sense that this was an intelligent and kind man who had great potential. At the same time, Moe Berg was a very odd individual. This of course is what makes the book a great read.

0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Moe Berg was an Idiot? I disagree with Nick Dawidoff

Von Ein Kunde Dear Nick: Why not spend more of your time with sports and less with AMERICAN HEROES? Nick Dawidoff does a lousey job of interviewing Moe Berg's enemies and a horrible job of researching the facts. Moe Berg spoke 17 languages fluently and was a genius. He worked for US Intelligence beginning in 1939. His secretly taken photos of downtown Tokyo were used by Doolittle for his famous raid in 1942. Moe Berg hooked up with Werner Heisenberg who ran the Nazi Atomic Bomb project and helped Heisenberg sabotage the project. In addition, Heisenberg notified Berg about Yoshio Nishina's Rikken Institute in Tokyo and Nishina's research into Japan's A Bomb project. Berg was a very popular baseball player in Japan and he was able to organize (with the help of General Leslie Groves) an operation to 'deep six' that Japanese nuclear program. Moe Berg was called in front of President Harry Truman to receive the civilian equivalent of the Congressional Medal of Honor. He asked the President if he could tell others what he did to receive the medal and the President told him NO! Berg turned down the award, and the rest is history. Nicholas Dawidoff's essay here is WORTH READING, but only to look at a leftist view of a great American and a HERO. Not just a hero at Langley, but with all patriotic Americans. The fact that he was a Jew is irrelevant.

0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. Good attempt, weak presentation. Von Eric Flisser (flisse01@popmail.med.nyu.edu) Dawidoff clearly spent much time and energy researching his subject, and by doing so he has demonstrated that Moe Berg was an enigma, but only by repeatedly retelling the same few Berg stories from every one of his numerous sources. The reader will suffer through each story as if he were present at each of Berg's recountings and then be reminded by the author that Berg was an engaging charmer. Although Berg's career as a spy is intriguing, Dawidoff lacks restraint and casts aspersions on Berg's character by suggesting he may have been a sexual deviant, but holds short of actually stating he was one because of lack of evidence. These stories retold by Dawidoff serve unnecessarily to taint the image of Berg. Dawidoff concludes his book without having illuminated his subject. Unfortunately there is simply not a sufficiently diverse body of information about Berg's life to warrant the writing of a book; this subject would have been better served as a "New Yorker" article. (BTW, it should be a crime for the editors to have allowed the description, "the perspicacious Berg" to be used twice in the span of a book, let alone forty pages.)

Kurzbeschreibung NATIONAL BESTSELLER Moe Berg is the only major-league baseball player whose baseball card is on display at the headquarters of the CIA. For Berg was much more than a third-string catcher who played on several major league teams between 1923 and 1939. Educated at Princeton and the Sorbonne, he is reputed to speak a dozen languages (although it was also said he couldn't hit in any of them) and went on to become an OSS spy in Europe during World War II. As Nicholas Dawidoff follows Berg from his claustrophobic childhood through his glamorous (though equivocal) careers in sports and espionage and into the long, nomadic years during which he lived on the hospitality of such scattered acquaintances as Joe DiMaggio and Albert Einstein, he succeeds not only in establishing where Berg went, but who he was beneath his layers of carefully constructed cover. As engrossing as a novel by John le Carr, *The Catcher Was a Spy* is a triumphant work of historical and psychological detection. From Booklist For all his renown as a big-league catcher, wartime spy, and Renaissance man, Moe Berg emerges from the pages of this book as very much a phantom. He played 13 seasons in the majors but was never more than a third-string catcher. He earned the Medal of Freedom by spying on the German's A-bomb project for the OSS but was later dropped by the CIA as ineffectual. He could use his Princeton-trained intellect to associate with Nobel laureates, diplomats, and linguists (Berg spoke many languages but, as a teammate put it, couldn't hit in any of them), yet he never truly applied that intellect. Thus, readers are left with an intriguing plot and a cast of fascinating supporting characters but a disappearing protagonist. And as with any phantom, it's entirely fair for those readers who finish the book--however great in number they may be--to ask themselves, Was he worth looking for? Alan Moores From Kirkus s Magazine writer Dawidoff (Sports Illustrated, New Yorker, New Republic) reduces one of baseball's most colorful characters mostly to monochrome. What better subject for a biography than Moe Berg, a man reputed to be the sport's greatest intellectual, who iced the cake by retiring to become an espionage agent in the nation's service? Sadly, Dawidoff has taken a mythic character and exposed him as an eccentric crank whose oversized feet were made almost

entirely of clay. And the author has done so in the worst fashion possible: with pedantry rather than heart. A closing "Note on Sources" lists the hundreds of people interviewed and archives researched; it is a fitting coup de grace to a book filled with the minutest details of who Berg mooched a dinner and a hotel room from in 1959, or who he regaled with exaggerated tales of wartime heroics. Dawidoff has accumulated a vast body of information in a remarkable job of research, especially considering that Berg, who died of a heart attack at age 70 in 1972, deliberately cloaked the details of his life in mystery. What Dawidoff has failed to do is distill it into a story calculated to hold a reader's interest. Rather, he presents an almost legalistic mass of evidence to prove that Berg followed up a career (1923-39) as a pseudointellectual, third-string catcher by becoming a mediocre WW II spy, and then spent the last 25 years of his life as an unemployed vagabond, living off his charm and his wit and his vast store of friends. The only mystery left at the end of the book is whether to feel pity for Berg as a tragic, unfulfilled genius or irritation with him as a boor who gets more attention than he deserved. The reader is left knowing immeasurably more about Moe Berg, and caring immeasurably less. (16 pages bw photos) -- Copyright 1994, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.