

Lucian S. “Dutch” Hiner

Martinsburg 1916, Cumberland 1917, Hanover 1917

Class D, Blue Ridge League

Catcher

By Mark C. Zeigler

One of “the most popular players to don a Blue Ridge League uniform” was young catcher named Lucian Syrus Hiner. Known by his teammates as “Dutch”, Hiner’s friendly personality and sense of humor, made him a fan favorite throughout all the league towns in the league’s early years.

Hiner was born in Troutville, Botetourt County, Virginia on December 17, 1891. He was the second oldest child of James Clinton and Margaret Ann (*nee* Winters) Hiner. According to family records, Lucian was one of nine children, from a prominent farming family in the Roanoke Valley.

In his teen years, Lucian was a farm laborer on his family farm, though he evidently yearned to become a Major League baseball player. His southern drawl, bright smile, and his polite personality became some of the assets of the tall, slender youngster with black hair, as he played amateur baseball in the southern Virginia area.

In 1916, Hiner signed with “Country” Morris’ Martinsburg Mountaineers of the Blue Ridge League. Hiner started the season’s as the club’s starting catcher, but struggled at the plate going 6-for-50 (.120 avg). On June 1, Hiner was injured in a game when he was spiked during a close play at the plate, and he spent most of the next month recuperating, and warming up the pitchers.

Eager to get back into action, Hiner caught one game for the Hagerstown club against his Mountaineers on June 30, when both of the Terriers catchers went down with injuries the day before, and their new catcher couldn’t arrive to the game on time. He went 1-for-3 in the game.

Hiner finished out the season in Martinsburg, playing sporadically, behind catcher George “Stuff” Johnson, who had been recently released by the Frederick club, and signed with Martinsburg to take over the catching duties when “Dutch” was injured.

The following season, Hiner returned to the Blue Ridge League, playing 22 games for the Cumberland Colts, and the Hanover Raiders. Hiner played six weeks with the leagues new entry, Cumberland-MD Colts, mainly warming up pitchers, and helping serve as a third base coach. When Hanover catcher Bill Lamond was injured in late August, “Dutch” played with the Raiders the final week of the season, and batted an impressive .480, going 12-for-25 in eight games.

After the end of the 1917 season, “Dutch” got engaged to his childhood sweetheart, R. Pauline “Pearl” Whittaker of Roanoke, VA. When the 1918 season was shaping up, the Martinsburg-WV club was hoping to have Hiner’s services behind the plate, however “Dutch” turned down the offer to stay close to home to help on the family farm.

On June 25, 1918, “Dutch” and “Pearl” were married at the Jefferson Street Baptist Church in Roanoke, VA, and within one month they were expecting their first child. The celebration would not last long as Lucian, along with two of his brothers, Sylvester and Clarence,

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were called to duty to serve their country during the Great World War.

In mid-October of 1918, while serving with Company C, Joe Stern Lane Battalion, Hiner contracted influenza, and sadly died less than two weeks later of its effects from pneumonia, on November 4, 1918. He was 26-years old. Hiner was buried at what is now known as Evergreen Burial Park in Roanoke, VA.

Five months after his death, on April 9, 1919, Pearl gave birth to their only child, a son, Lucian Whittaker Hiner (1919-2006) in Roanoke, VA. She never remarried, and died at the age of 95 in late 1989.

"Dutch" Hiner's Known Minor League Batting Statistics

BATTING

Year	Club	League	.AVG	G	AB	R	H	TB	2B	3B	HR	RBI	SAC	SB
1916	MARTINSBURG-WV	BRL-D	.157	38	108	7	17	22	5	0	0	7	1	4
1916	HAGERSTOWN-MD	BRL-D	.333	1	3	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
1917	CUMBERLAND-MD	BRL-D	.194	13	36	3	7	9	2	0	0	1	0	0
1917	HANOVER-PA	BRL-D	.480	8	25	3	12	14	2	0	0	1	0	0
BLUE RIDGE LEAGUE TOTALS			2 years	.216	60	172	13	37	46	9	0	9	1	4

Sources: www.ancestry.com - James Clinton Hiner World Family Tree; Social Security Death Index - Lucian W. Hiner, Sr.; "Colts Drop Second Game To Terriers", *The Cumberland Times*, August 15, 1917; *The Cumberland Times*, May 25, 1918; "Catcher 'Dutch' Hiner To Be Married June 25", *The Cumberland Times*, June 8, 1918; *The Frederick Post*, Deaths, November 11, 1918., pg. 4; 1910 U.S. Census, Virginia, Botetourt, County - Troutville/Amsterdam District; WWI Draft Registration Card, June 5, 1917; www.rootsweb.com; Baseball research through 1917 and 1918 Spalding Baseball Guides, detailed statistics compiled by Mark C. Zeigler.