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# Lyman Bostock

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*This article is about Lyman Bostock, Jr., the former Major League Baseball outfielder. For his father, who played in the [Negro Leagues](#), see [Lyman Bostock, Sr.](#).*

Lyman Wesley Bostock, Jr. (November 22, 1950–September 23, 1978) was an American professional [baseball](#) player. He played [Major League Baseball](#) for four seasons, as an outfielder for the [Minnesota Twins](#) (1975–77) and [California Angels](#) (1978). He batted left-handed and threw right-handed.

Bostock's career was cut short when he was shot and killed in his hometown of [Gary, Indiana](#).

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## Early life

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Lyman Bostock, Jr. was born in [Birmingham, Alabama](#), the son of Annie Pearl Bostock and [Lyman Bostock, Sr.](#) (1918-2005), a [Negro Leagues](#) professional baseball star from 1938-1954 as a left-handed first baseman. Pearl and Bostock, Sr., split when Bostock, Jr., was a young child, with Pearl relocating her son and herself first to [Gary, Indiana](#), in 1954. In 1958, when young Bostock was eight years old, the two relocated again, this time to [Los Angeles, California](#). The younger Bostock remained estranged from his father for the remainder of his life, feeling that his father had abandoned him.

At one point during his youth, Bostock's baseball glove was stolen. With his mother unable to afford to purchase another, he had to use a glove given to him by a friend of the family. However, the donated glove was for left-handed fielders. Bostock's discomfort in catching fly balls with the hand he was unaccustomed to using led him to begin making basket catches at that time. The habit stayed with him and he frequently made basket catches of fly balls for the remainder of his life.

Bostock played baseball at [Manual Arts High School](#) in [Los Angeles](#) and after graduating from there, attended San Fernando Valley State College, now known as the [California State University](#),

Lyman Bostock	
<span></span> <div>Outfielder</div>	
Born: <span>November 22, 1950</span> <div><span></span> <a href="#">Birmingham, Alabama</a></div>	
Died: <span>September 23, 1978 (aged 27)</span> <div><span></span> <a href="#">Gary, Indiana</a></div>	
Batted: Left	Threw: Right
MLB debut	
April 8, 1975 for the <a href="#">Minnesota Twins</a>	
Last MLB appearance	
September 23, 1978 for the <a href="#">California Angels</a>	
Career statistics	
<span>Batting average</span> .311	
<span>Hits</span> 624	
<span>Runs batted in</span> 250	
Teams	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Minnesota Twins (1975–1977)</a></li> <li><a href="#">California Angels (1978)</a></li> </ul>	

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**Northridge** (CSUN). It was there that he met Youvene Brooks, who would become his wife. He did not play baseball during his freshman and sophomore years at the school, choosing instead to become involved in **student activism**. Nonetheless, he was selected in the 1970 amateur draft by the **St. Louis Cardinals**.

Bostock chose not to sign with the team, instead electing to stay in college, and he began playing baseball there. Bostock was an all-conference player in the **California Collegiate Athletic Association** in both of his seasons at Northridge, hitting .344 as a junior and .296 as a senior, leading the Matadors to a second-place finish at the 1972 Division II **College World Series**. He was drafted by the **Twins** in the 26th round (596th overall) of the 1972 amateur draft and decided to turn professional, though he was 15 credits short of finishing his college degree.

## Career

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Bostock's minor league stops were in **Charlotte** in 1972, **Orlando** in 1973, and **Tacoma** in 1974. His batting averages for those years were .294, .313, and .333, respectively. He was promoted to the major leagues in April 1975, and batted .282 in 98 games for Minnesota (and .391 in 22 games for the AAA **Tacoma Twins**).

A fine defensive **center fielder**, Bostock finished fourth in the tight **American League batting** race in 1976, his first full season in the majors. After finishing second in the league in batting in 1977 to **Twins** teammate **Rod Carew**, Bostock became one of baseball's earliest big-money free agents, and signed with the **California Angels**, owned by **Gene Autry**. Almost immediately, Bostock donated \$10,000 to a church in his native **Birmingham** to rebuild its Sunday school.

The 1978 season started off poorly for Bostock; he batted .150 for the month of April. Bostock went the team's management and attempted to return his April salary, saying he had not earned it. The team refused, so Bostock announced he would donate his April salary to charity. Thousands of requests came in for the money, and Bostock reviewed each one of them, trying to determine who needed it the most. Ultimately he would recover his form, hitting .404 in June on the way to a .296 average for the season, just outside the top ten for the year.

## Murder

[[edit](#)]

Bostock was able to recover his hitting stroke, and as the 1978 season neared its conclusion, he had the highest batting average on the Angel ballclub. With a week remaining in the season, he went 2 for 4 with a walk in a Saturday afternoon game against the **White Sox** in **Chicago**, to raise his average to .296. Following the game, as he regularly did when in Chicago, Bostock visited his uncle, Thomas Turner, in nearby **Gary, Indiana**. After eating a meal with a group of relatives at Turner's home, Bostock and his uncle went to visit Joan Hawkins, a woman whom Bostock had tutored as a teenager, but had not seen for several years. After the visit, Turner agreed to give Hawkins and her sister, Barbara Smith, a ride to their cousin's house. Turner drove the vehicle, with Hawkins seated in the front passenger's seat. Bostock and Smith rode in the vehicle's back seat.

Smith had been living with Hawkins while estranged from her husband, Leonard Smith. Unbeknownst to the group, Leonard Smith was outside Hawkins' home in his car and observed the group's departure in Turner's car. According to Smith, his wife was frequently unfaithful to him, and although he did not know Bostock, he would later say that upon seeing Bostock get into the back seat of the vehicle with his wife, he concluded that the two were having an affair. In fact, however, Bostock had only met the woman twenty minutes previously, when he and his uncle arrived at Hawkins' home.

As Turner's vehicle was stopped at a traffic signal at the intersection of 5th and Jackson Streets, Smith's car pulled up alongside them. Smith leaned out of his vehicle and fired one blast of a **.410 caliber shotgun** into the back seat of Turner's car, where Bostock and Barbara Smith were seated. Leonard Smith said that his lethal wrath was intended for his estranged wife; however, Bostock was

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seated between Barbara Smith and the position from which Leonard Smith was firing. Instead of striking Barbara Smith, the blast caught Bostock squarely in the right temple. He died two hours later at a Gary hospital.

## Aftermath

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Leonard Smith was tried twice for murder, with his lawyers arguing that Barbara Smith's alleged infidelity had driven her husband insane. The first trial resulted in a hung jury. In the second trial, Leonard Smith was found **not guilty by reason of insanity** and was committed for psychiatric treatment. Within seven months, he was deemed no longer mentally ill by his psychiatrists and released. Including his time in jail awaiting and during trial, Smith's total time in custody amounted to 21 months. In the aftermath of Smith's case, the legislature in Indiana changed the state's insanity laws. After the change, a person found to be insane at the time of the commission of a crime could still be found legally guilty, and thus could be sent to prison if and when they were released from psychiatric treatment.

As of 2008, Smith still lived in Gary, Indiana, and had not run afoul of the law since his release from custody in 1980. He had declined all requests to comment publicly about the death of Bostock. Leonard Smith resided in Gary, Indiana until his death December 17, 2010. He died of natural causes in his apartment in a senior citizen high rise. His body was found four days after his death. Smith lived a quiet existence his years in the high rise, ordering meals from Meals on Wheels having them delivered to his door. The neighbors noticed a week of meals at his door. The neighbor then called and request the Gary Police for a well being check and the police found Smith deceased and the remains decayed. It did not appear to be any foul play and it was determined Smith died of natural causes. With Smith death went the insight of why and many unanswered questions concerning the death of Bostock, because Smith still declined any requests to speak about the incident.

In his four season career, Bostock was a .311 hitter with 28 **home runs** and 250 **RBI**s in 526 **games**. The Angels wore a black armband in memory of Bostock for the remainder of the 1978 season. He is interred in the **Inglewood Park Cemetery** in **Inglewood, California**. A memorial scholarship fund was commissioned in his name, and is annually awarded to a needy **CSUN** student athlete. In 1981, he became the first inductee into the CSU Northridge Matadors Hall of Fame.

## Highlights

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- **Hit for the cycle** (July 24, 1976)
- Collected 12 **putouts** in the second game of a doubleheader, tying the major league mark, as the Twins swept the **Red Sox**, 13–5 and 9-4. Bostock became only the third big leaguer to do it in a nine-inning game and just the second center fielder in the 20th century. His 17 putouts in the doubleheader also set a record in the **American League** that still stands today (May 25, 1977).
- In 1976 hit .323, finishing fourth behind **Kansas City Royals George Brett** (.333) and **Hal McRae** (.332), and teammate **Rod Carew** (.331).
- His .336 batting average in 1977 was only second to Carew's .388. Carew would be traded to the Angels in 1979 shortly after Bostock's murder.

## References

[[edit](#)]

## Sources

[[edit](#)]



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1. [Pearlman, Jeff](#) (2008-09-18). "Fifth and Jackson" [↗](#). [ESPN.com](#).
2. "The Tragedy of Lyman Bostock". Reporter: [Tom Rinaldi](#), Host: [John Barr](#). *Outside the Lines*. [ESPN](#). 2008-09-21.

## External links

[\[edit\]](#)

- Career statistics and player information from [Baseball-Reference](#) [↗](#), or [Fangraphs](#) [↗](#), or [The Baseball Cube](#) [↗](#)
- Lyman Bostock's career statistics at [Baseball-Almanac.com](#) [↗](#)
- [Box Score](#) [↗](#) Final game 23-Sep-1978
- [CSU-Northridge Hall of Fame](#) [↗](#) Lyman Bostock, Jr.
- [Lyman Bostock's Gravesite](#) [↗](#) Inglewood Park Cemetery in Inglewood, CA
- [MLB.com profile of Lyman Bostock](#) [↗](#)
- [A remembrance of Bostock's career](#) [↗](#)
- [Bostock story from author of Cool of the Evening: The 1965 Minnesota Twins](#) [↗](#)

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