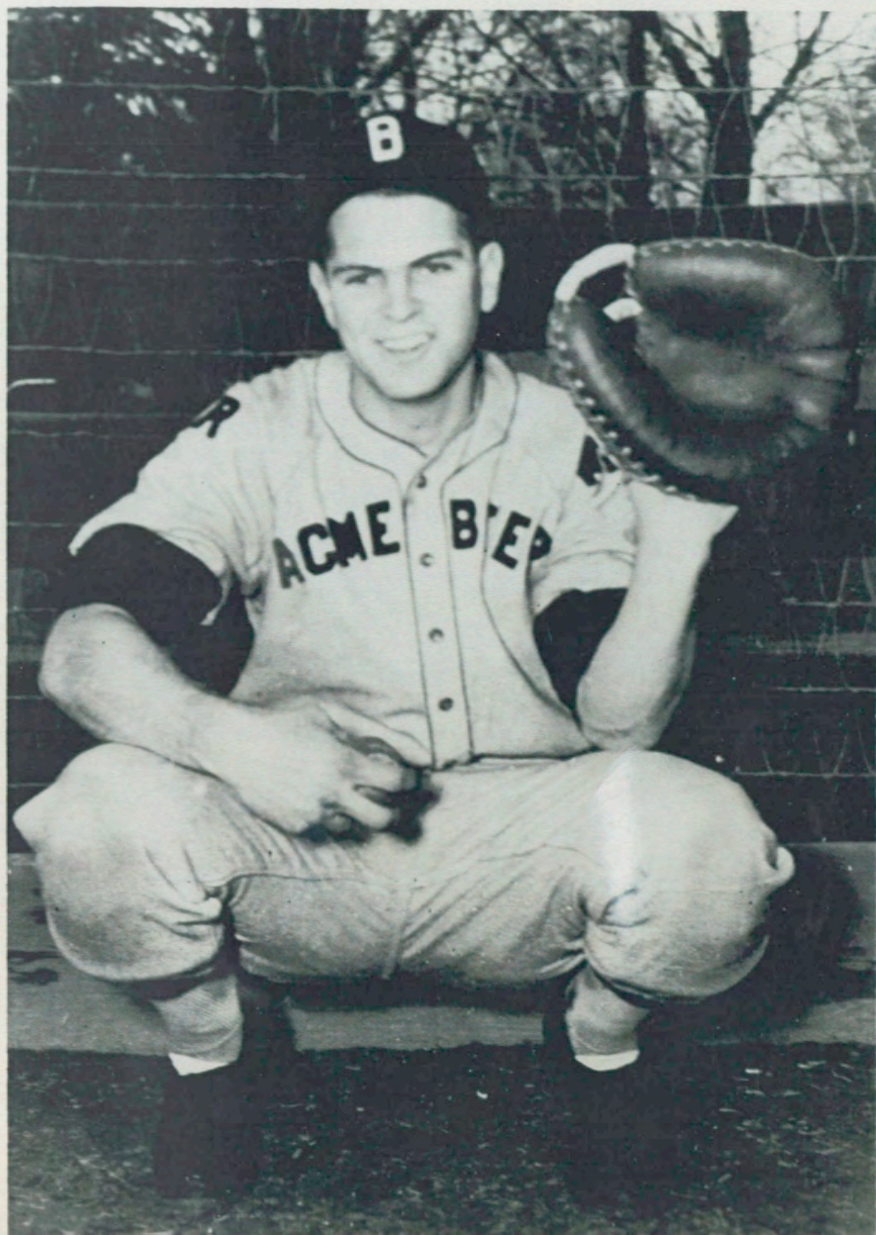


Ronnie King '46  
Professional Baseball Player  
And Baseball Scout







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# Sacramento's Ron King reminisces about lifelong love for baseball

October 10, 2014

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When it comes to the topic of sports history in the capital city, despite what many loyal Sacramento Kings fans may say, baseball is king. And somewhat ironically, one of the renowned people in local hardball lore is a man with the last name of King.



Ron King holds a baseball bat with engraved autographs from the 1971 World Champion

...was a... / Valley Community Newspapers photo,  
...ance Armstrong

This man, Ron King, who is known as “Ronnie” by many of his closest friends, grew up at 309 W St., near Southside Park, as the only child of Manuel and Anna King.

When he was about eight years old, Ron, 82, who presently resides in Sacramento with his wife Betty, began playing baseball.

It was at this time, during the 1930s, that Ron planted his roots toward becoming a notable figure in the city’s professional baseball history, which dates back to the 19th century.

**Born to play ball** Baseball was very much a large part of his life at a very young age, Ron explained.

“I used to carry a catcher’s glove with me all the time in case somebody wanted to play catch,” he recalled.

Ron honed his baseball skills during his youth on Sacramento fields, as he played in local city league games.

He also picked up a baseball job in 1937, when he became employed at Cardinal Field – home field of the Sacramento Solons of the Pacific Coast League – at Broadway and Riverside Boulevard.

Ron initially worked at the stadium as a visitors’ batboy, then the following year, he gathered baseballs off the roof with Norman Greenslate, another young



...ing, ... ..  
uring his baseball playing days,  
s shown in this c.1945  
hotograph. / Photo courtesy of  
ton King

, local baseball player.

n 1940, Ron once again became the visitors' batboy, followed by the scoreboard operator in 1941 and 1942 and a visitors' clubhouse boy from 1943 to 1946.

While working as a scoreboard operator, Ron was paid 25 cents per game and 35 cents per doubleheader.

Considering Ron's love for baseball, working at Cardinal Field, which by 1945 was known as Edmonds Field, was a dream job.

Working at the stadium presented Ron with the opportunity to meet professional players. And for Ron, this was an experience that was the equivalent of a motion picture fanatic meeting Hollywood movie stars.

### The CB years

After gaining experience playing on city league baseball teams during his childhood, Ron played baseball for Christian Brothers High School, when the school was located at 21st Street and Broadway.

Since baseball was Ron's greatest passion in life, it did not take long for him to become known as a "baseball nut."

Evidence of Ron's love for baseball can be seen on a page of a 1946 edition of his high school newspaper, *The Talon*, which includes a write-up with the following words: "Do you want to know anything about baseball? Ask Ronnie King."



and Park resident Ron King points to a  
photograph of Steve Sax, one of the top players  
who he scouted during his Major League

Newspapers photo, Lance Armstrong

Ron said that Brother Eugene Ward, Christian Brothers' principal at the time, was a big influence in his life.

Brother Eugene said to me, 'If I asked you to read a page, you can't tell me what you read.'" Ron said. "I looked at him and said, 'No.' Right about when baseball was going to start, (Brother Eugene) gave me a poem and he said, 'I want you to learn this poem. I'll give you a day to learn it and if you don't learn it, you're not going to play.'

Determined to play baseball at the school, Ron learned the poem so well that he can still recite the poem to this day.

Fortunately for Ron, who was given more than one lesson in discipline from Brother Eugene, and Christian Brothers High, Ron achieved much success playing high school baseball.

In 1946, the year that he graduated from the school, Ron was named as one of the 12 players of *The Sacramento Union's* All-City Team.

Reminiscing about his four years of playing varsity baseball at Christian Brothers High, where he was also the student body vice president during his senior year, Ron said that the baseball team had much success during this time.

"We didn't lose too many games," Ron said. "Our pitching staff was pretty good. We had four pitchers on the team and three of them pitched in the National Division of the Sacramento Winter League and (this semi-pro division) was the big thing before pro football took over. The games used to draw quite a few people."

At the age of 15, Ron became the youngest player to ever join the National Division, which played its games at such places as William Land, McKinley and Stanford parks.

### The minor leagues

Following his time at Christian Brothers, Ron began to live out his dream, as he signed with the Cleveland Indians organization and played with its Bakersfield farm club in the California League in 1946 and 1947 and then in Billings, Mont. in the Pioneer League in 1948.

### 1956 Salem Senators



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as a player-coach for the Salem Senators of the Northwest League. / Courtesy of Ron King.

In 1949, Ron played in Dayton, Ohio and was part of a pennant winning team in the Double A Central League.

Ron took on a new role in baseball in 1950, when he served as a substitute catcher for various teams' catchers who were recovering from injuries.

Ron said that it was during this segment of his career, playing for teams in Dayton, Ohio, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Wilkes Barre, Pa. and Oklahoma City, Okla., when he "learned how to travel."

After taking time away from baseball in 1951 and 1952 to serve his country during the Korean War, Ron joined a Reading, Pa. team, which ended up posting a 106-42 won-loss record in his first season with the Eastern League club.

In 1954, Ron came home to play in familiar territory, as he became a member of the Sacramento Solons. But his time playing for his hometown team was short-lived.

In 1955 and 1956, Ron was a player-coach for the Salem Senators of the Northwest League.

#### Team manager

Ron was selected to manage the Senators on the road, because the team's owner, who was also the Senators' home manager, did not like to participate in the road trips.



Ron King shows off his 1997 Major League Baseball West

Since it had been one of his dreams to manage a team, Ron said that he was excited to become the team's road manager.

Since minor league managers at the time were also required to be players, unless they owned the team they were managing, both Ron's playing and managing career came to an end during a playoff game in 1956, when he severely injured his back.

But true to the well-known line, "When one door closes, another opens," a new door opened for Ron when he was contacted by Joe L. Brown, general manager of Major League Baseball's Pittsburgh Pirates.

### **Talent scout**

Ron said that Joe L. Brown, who was the son of the actor and comedian Joe E. Brown, offered him a job as a baseball scout for the Pirates organization.

(Joe L. Brown) said to me, 'The streetcar only comes by every so often, so if you want to be a scout, you better get on the streetcar,'" Ron recalled.

Making the decision to jump aboard this figurative streetcar, Ron began his new role in baseball.

Ron said that becoming a scout was one of the best decisions he made during his many years in baseball.

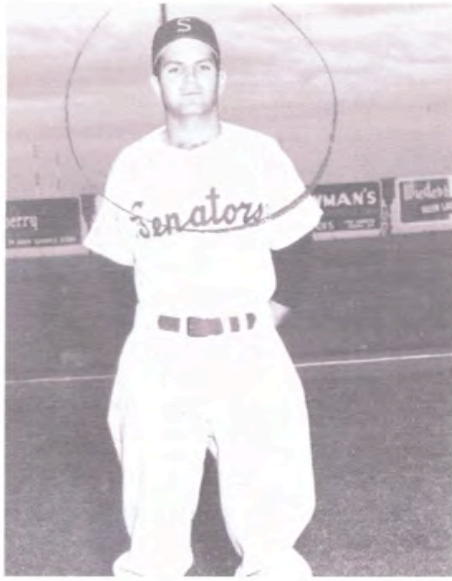
And when asked how well he transitioned into the role of a scout, Ron showed how much of a natural he was for this position when he said, "Well, I don't know, you just went after the guys who could play and who had the tools. And I knew what I was supposed to look for in a player."

While working for the Pirates from 1960 to 1974, Ron scouted the following notable players from Sacramento: Bob Oliver, Jim Nelson, Greg "Duke" Sims, Rod Curry, Rich Standart, among others.

Commenting that different scouts have different methods of scouting players, Ron said that as a scout, he placed great emphasis on a player's speed.

"Speed was the big thing," Ron said. "Power became second and then the arm became third, except with the catcher, shortstop and the right fielder."

During a time when the Pirates wanted Ron to relocate back East, he instead took a scouting job with the Los Angeles Dodgers on June 25, 1974.



Ron King is shown in his Salem Senators uniform in this c. 1955 photograph. The circle drawn around his head indicates that he was elected to play on the team. / Photo courtesy, Ron King

While maintaining his Sacramento home base with the Dodgers until 1987, Ron scouted various players, including Steve Sax, R.J. Reynolds and Rudy Law.

Sax was one of Ron's biggest recruits, as he was drafted into the Dodgers organization in 1978, won the National League Rookie of the Year award and was a five-time All-Star in 14 seasons.

Following his time with the Dodgers, Ron worked for three years as a national cross checker for the Philadelphia Phillies before taking a job as a national supervisor in his second stint with the Pirates.

Ron, whose best friend in baseball was Pittsburgh Pirates legend Willie Stargell, is also known for scouting many other notable players, including Max Venable, Rich Rodas, Matt Whisenat, Brian Clark, Joel Adams and certainly one of his favorites, the All-Star catcher, Jason Kendall.

One of the proudest moments in Ron's baseball career, which ended in 2000, came in 1997, when he was named the West Coast Scout of the Year by Major League Baseball.

Now in his retirement years, Ron, who still enjoys watching professional baseball games, as well as serving as president of the Southside Improvement Club and reading mystery books by James Patterson, Michael Connelly and John Sandford, said that he enjoys reminiscing about his many years working in baseball.

"I got to do everything I wanted to do," Ron said. "Every time I woke up in the morning, I looked up at the sky and said, 'Thanks.' When you get to do what you

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AA, AAA, baseball, Bob Oliver, Brother Eugene, Brother Eugene Ward, California league, Cardinal Field, catcher, Christian Brothers, Christian Brothers High School, Double A Central League, Emonds Field, Greg "Duke" Sims, Jim Nelson, Joe E. Brown, Joe L. Brown, Lance Armstrong, Lance Armstrong writer, Los Angeles Dodgers, Minor League ball, Norman Greenslate, Pacific Coast League, Pittsburg Pirates, Rich Standart, RJ Reynolds, Rod Scurry, Ron King, Ronnie King, Rudy Law, Sacramento, Sacramento Solons, Salem Senators, scout, Scout of the Year, Solons, Steve Sax, talent, writer  
October 14, 2010 Lance Armstrong's History Features 4 Comments

### Responses to *Sacramento's Ron King reminisces about lifelong love for baseball*

1. *Brian Moore* says:

August 21, 2013 at 4:15 pm

Ronnie King is a hero to many kids in Sacramento. And he should be a model for the nation as well. He is a gentleman's gentleman, always interested in kids and always encouraging young players how to improve their baseball skills. He is a baseball educator, par excellence, and inspired his youth team players in Sacramento to believe in themselves. Ronnie is also a very humble man, down-to-earth, and a man of integrity and Christian values. I was one of the kids he took under his wings upon his early return to Sacramento from professional baseball. I never made it to play professionally, but benefited from Ronnie's guidance in my high school and college playing years. It was just a thrill to be around him and the players Ronnie instructed and enabled them to gain many honors and accolades. As baseball is Americana, Ronnie King is the embodiment of what gives it its rich tradition and values. Brian Moore, Florida

2. *Digital Watch Adoption – electric fan heater – weight loss diet | how to lose weight fast | Dieting and Steak* says:

October 15, 2010 at 3:20 am

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