

SPORTS OCTOBER 26, 2015

# Scout signed many future big-leaguers



1955 Sacramento Solons spring training left-handed hitters, from left to right, Jack Tobin, Bud Sheely, Don Hunter, Pete Milne and Ronnie King. The Sacramento Bee Archives

BY JIM JENKINS

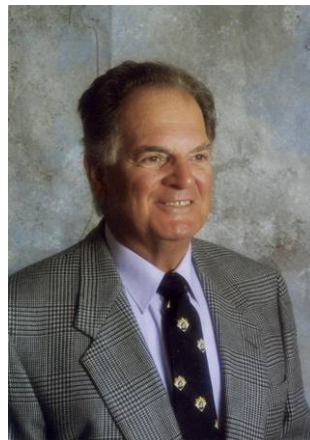
*Special to The Bee*

Ronnie King, a Sacramento-area scout who signed Steve Sax and many other major leaguers, died Monday after an extended illness.

Toni King said her father passed away peacefully at 87 in his Land Park area home. He was visited regularly by friends and former players whose careers he touched during a 41-year career as a regional scout for the Pittsburgh Pirates, Los Angeles Dodgers and Philadelphia Phillies.

"He was like a second father to me," said Sax, a former Dodgers second baseman. "He was a tutor to a lot of players, an unbelievable man. He would work all of us out tirelessly to make sure we did things right. He knew just about everything in baseball. He wasn't boastful but could always give you that special input. Between seasons, I'd come back home to meet with him. If it wasn't for Ronnie, I probably would have never made it to the major leagues."

King, a baseball and football standout at Christian Brothers High School, had an eight-year minor-league career as a catcher and occasional relief pitcher that included a brief stop with the Sacramento Solons in 1954.



Ronnie King

He never reached the big leagues. As a Solons batboy in his youth – “a dream job for any kid,” King once recalled – he began to learn the intricacies of the game.

In addition to Sax, King signed or helped develop future major leaguers Dave Sax (Steve’s brother), Jim Nelson, Bob Oliver, Greg Sims, Bill McNulty, Leon Lee, Max Venable and Greg Vaughn.

Even King’s wife, Betty, who died last year, accompanied him on scouting trips.

“They used to call her “Betty Gun,” Toni King said, “because she held the speed gun to test the pitchers’ fastball.”

“A baseball encyclopedia – that was Ronnie,” said former Solons and major-league catcher Cuno Barragan. “Ask him about any player, and he knew something about them.”

A rosary will said at 6 p.m. Sunday at Klumpp’s Funeral Home, 2691 Riverside Blvd., Sacramento, followed by a mass at 11 a.m. Monday at Our Lady of Assumption Church, 5057 Cottage Way, Carmichael.

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