

# Jack Bailey, Jr. collector extraordinaire

(As published in The Oak Ridger's Historically Speaking column on June 23, 2009)

Please be patient for the most amazing story about the other Oak Ridge Bombers baseball team. I must delay that story for at least another week. My source of some key information has taken a vacation trip. You will delight in the story, maybe next week we can start on it.

But now, let me bring you a special insight into a unique collection of baseball memorabilia right here in Oak Ridge. It is by far the most complete collection I have ever seen. I think you will agree it is an amazing history of its own.

As I have said, Jack Bailey first told me of Oak Ridge's professional baseball teams. Little did I know just how helpful Jack would be and just how much he knew of this unique piece of Oak Ridge history. He has amazed me even more as I have gotten to know him.

After working on the *Historically Speaking* articles over several weeks, Jack invited me to come see his collection of baseball memorabilia. I wanted to get a photo of one of his baseball cards to illustrate the second Oak Ridge Bombers' story, so I made an appointment to see his collection.

Was I ever surprised. His entire basement is literally filled with the most completely amazing collection of baseball cards and other sports items. It was then that I realized that you readers would appreciate knowing of this amazing collection in Oak Ridge. So, I asked Jack to help me bring his story to you.

We have done that by having Jack respond to a series of questions. I hope you enjoy learning about his amazing collection as much as I have.

QUESTION: How did you start collecting?

JB: My family moved to Oak Ridge in 1951 from West Virginia. I remember my Dad bought me a pack of cards that year. We belonged to First Presbyterian Church and I remember very vividly that our second grade Sunday School teacher, Mr. Caldwell (Charles, I think), would give us penny packs of 1952 baseball cards AFTER Sunday School. Probably to make sure we were well behaved during class! That got me started.

I have always been a sports fan, especially baseball, so it was fun to collect. As a side note, my mother saved Reader's Digest issues for many, many years from the time she married in 1942. I have a lot of those now. Collecting is a disease!!

QUESTION: What does your wife think about this collecting thing?

PAT BAILEY: Everybody should have a hobby, one they can be passionate about and enjoy. Jack has several, one of which is collecting sports memorabilia. It also "brings out the little boy in him" which I find to be a very loveable quality.

QUESTION: What type of collectibles do you have?

JB: It is an eclectic collection---baseball and football cards, U. of Alabama memorabilia, baseball programs, magazines and scorecards, autographed baseballs and pictures, postcards of sports venues and places Pat and I have visited, pins, Roy Rogers comic books, movies and memorabilia, Track and Field and golf.

My favorite collectible, though, might be my 1966 Mustang, which I recently obtained. Pat and I bought a brand new 1966 Mustang when we were married in 1966 and kept it for several years before selling it. I have wanted to get another one for a while and the one I have looks very much like the one we bought way back in 1966.

QUESTION: Why pins?

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JB: We went to the 1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta, attending 26 events over 17 days. Pin collecting is a very popular thing at the Olympics. We got hooked. We now have about 1500 pins pertaining to the Olympics, sports venues and places Pat and I have visited.

QUESTION: Why U. of Alabama memorabilia? Don't you know this is "Big Orange Country?" I attended the U. of Alabama on a full, 4 year track scholarship after running for ORHS. Alabama has a fabulous football tradition, as you know, so it was only natural (to me) to collect Alabama memorabilia. Ed. Note: Jack was one of the team captains in 1962 when Oak Ridge High School won the last of their seven boy's state track championships. He was a member of the winning 2 mile relay which set a new state record.

QUESTION: Does your wife collect?

JB: Yes, she does. She collects lighthouse collectibles, plates and penguin memorabilia. She (the former Pat Hensley) was a "Penguin" (social and service club) at Oak Ridge High School so she loves to find little penguin figurines, etc. She also loves photography, keeping family scrapbooks and genealogy, so she has lots of collecting interests, as well.

QUESTION: What is your favorite sports' collectible?

JB: It might be a different answer every day or every sports season. However, baseball is my favorite sport and, of course, I really enjoy the University of Alabama memorabilia, too

QUESTION: Tell me about your personal background/

JB: I was raised in Oak Ridge after moving here from West Virginia at age seven. I graduated from ORHS in 1962. I obtained a Bachelor of Science degree in Marketing from the University of Alabama in 1966.

I married my high school sweetheart, the former Pat Hensley, in 1966. She was also a 1962 graduate of Oak Ridge High School. We have a daughter, Kathy (40), who is married and lives in Aiken, South Carolina. They have two children, Charlie (8) and Claire (4). Our son, Darrell (32), lives in Dallas, Texas. He is single but has a serious girl friend. Pat is anxious for more grandchildren some day!

I spent my entire working career of 38 years with JCPenney. We lived all over the South during that time. I retired as the Store Manager of a large store in Tampa, Florida in 2005.

We decided to move back to Oak Ridge after I retired and came back in 2006. Both of our mothers still live in Oak Ridge (Mary Frances Bailey and Melba Hensley). My sister, Judy Bailey, and Pat's brother, Tom Hensley, live in the area so it has been great to come back home!

Since moving back to Oak Ridge, I have been active in The Rotary Club of Oak Ridge and will become Club President this July.

We are members of Kern Memorial United Methodist Church. I enjoy serving as a volunteer Track and Field official the University of Tennessee, SEC Track and Field Championships, major youth track meets, etc.

QUESTION: How do you find new items for your collection?

JB: I attend the National Sports Collectors Convention each year, which will have up to 1000 booths of all types of sports memorabilia. Occasionally, I will find something on ebay.com

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QUESTION: What is going to happen with all this stuff some day?

JB: I'll let my kids deal with that.

QUESTION: As a sports fan, where have you been? What types of events have you attended in person?

JB: 16 College Football Bowl games  
2 World Series  
1 Baseball All-Star Game  
1 Super Bowl  
2 College Basketball "Final Four"  
About 700 Major League Baseball regular season and exhibition games  
1996 Summer Olympics in Atlanta. 26 events in 17 days.  
World Cup Soccer Matches

At various times, we have had season tickets for Tampa Bay Rays(baseball), New York Yankees spring training (baseball), Tampa Bay Mutiny (Major League Soccer), Tampa Bay Buccaneers (NFL football),

I have also attended many University of Alabama college football games. Of course, we save the memorabilia from these events.

QUESTION: Biggest thrill?

JB: I carried the torch in the 1996 Summer Olympics Torch Relay when it passed through Tampa. I have long been involved in community activities and someone nominated me as a "Community Hero" and I was selected. What a thrill!

Running the Boston Marathon in 1989 was also a thrill for me.

Attending the 1998 World Series in New York and going to Yankee Stadium. I am a life-long Yankees fan and it is the only time we have ever been there.

QUESTION: What are you actively collecting now?

JB: Primarily old baseball cards, and University of Alabama football programs (especially Alabama-Tennessee games.)

QUESTION: What is the biggest mistake in collecting that you ever made?

JB: In 1964 I debated on whether to buy a 1956 Chevrolet to take back to the U. of Alabama or to buy a 1910 cigarette baseball card of Honus Wagner. The Chevy was \$400 and the card was \$250. I bought the Chevy and sold it a couple of years later for \$50. The top price ever for a Honus Wagner card is over \$2 million dollars. OOPS! Oh, well, win a few and lose a few.

Now you know Jack Bailey, Jr. Well, maybe one other insight might help you to appreciate his sense of humor a little better. His basement has a bathroom which Jack has decorated in University of Alabama crimson red with one small exception...his toilet paper sports a logo of the University of Tennessee on every single sheet!

I hope you have enjoyed reading this *Historically Speaking* story as much as I have enjoyed getting to know Jack Bailey, Jr.

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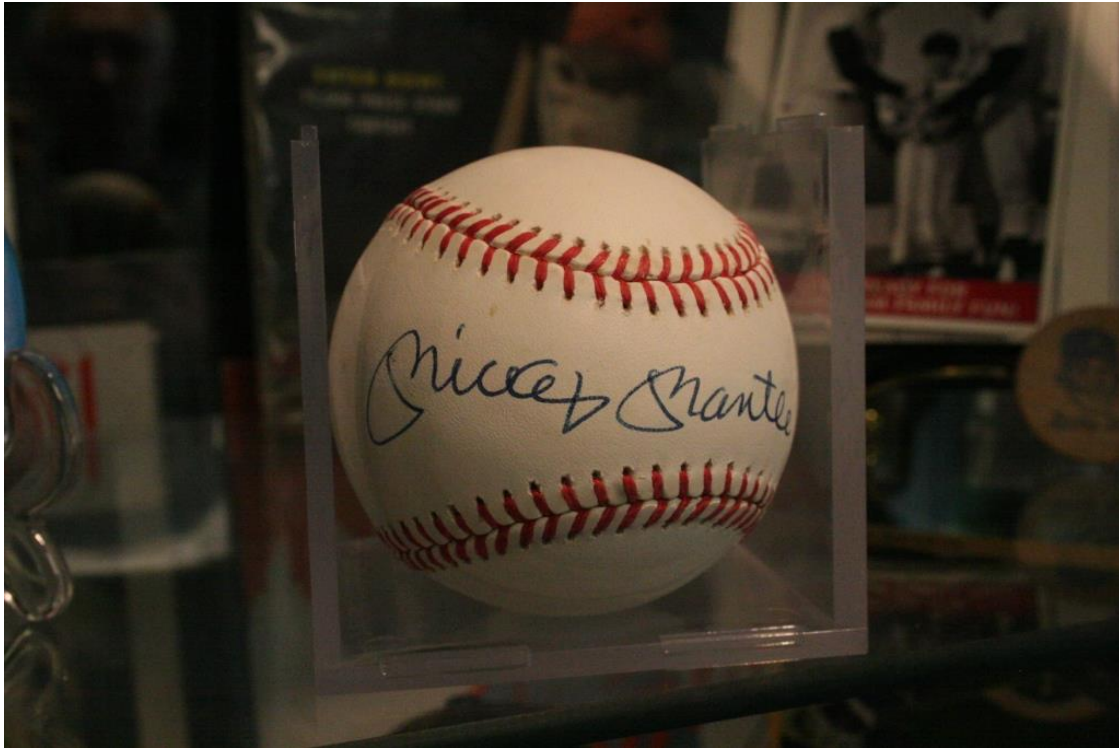
Jack stands beside the special cabinet his father made for him with drawers shaped precisely to fit baseball cards



Jack shows part of his enormous display of baseball memorabilia

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One of the many autographed baseballs Jack has collected, this one autographed by Mickey Mantle