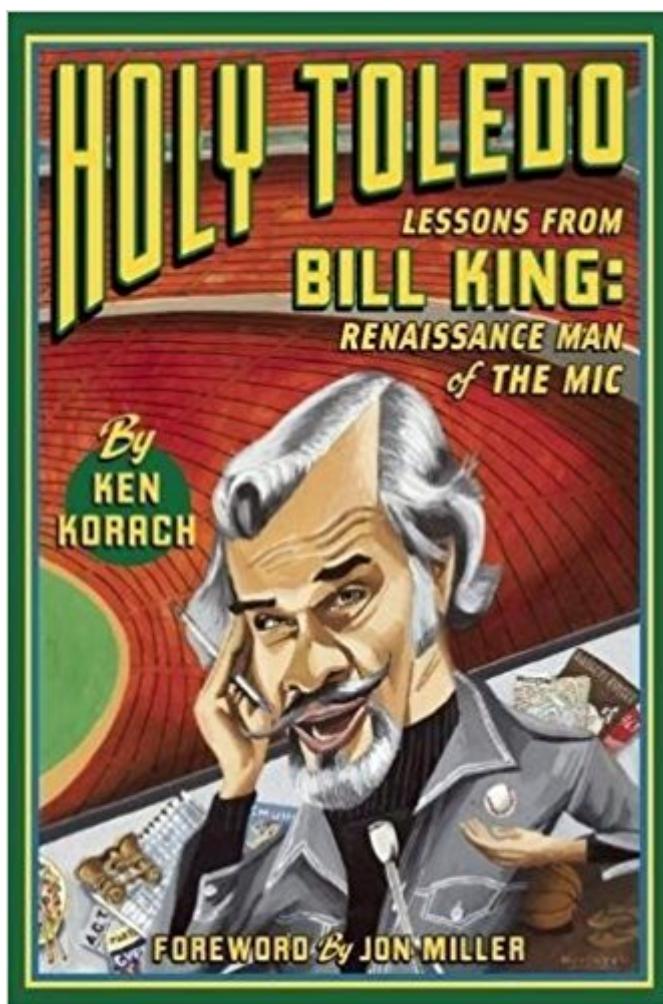


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# Holy Toledo: Lessons From Bill King, Renaissance Man Of The Mic



## Synopsis

Bill King, longtime voice of the Oakland A's, Golden State Warriors and Oakland (and Los Angeles) Raiders, was a beloved figure in California for decades, celebrated for his passion and precision in calling a game and for his colorful life away from sports, an utterly original figure who lives on today in the hearts and memories of countless fans. Bill was also one of the most influential broadcasters of all time, an inspiration to legions of his fellow broadcasters who looked up to him. In *Holy Toledo*, Ken Korach, longtime voice of the A's and Bill's partner for ten seasons until King's death in 2005, brings Bill to life on the page. A half-century ago, Ken Korach was a kid in Los Angeles, spinning the night dial to tune in Warriors basketball games from faraway San Francisco for one reason: He just had to hear Bill. Now he tells the remarkable story of King the legendary baseball, basketball and football broadcaster, the student of Russian literature, the passionate sailor, the fan of eating anything and everything from gourmet to onions and peanut butter, the remarkable painter. Korach draws on a lifetime of listening to and learning from King as well as extensive research, including more than fifty interviews with King's family members, colleagues, friends and associates to create this rich portrait. *Holy Toledo* features a moving foreword by Hall of Fame broadcaster Jon Miller, previously of ESPN, and a brilliant cover by Mark Ulriksen, internationally recognized for his *New Yorker* magazine covers, that captures King's flair and personality.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Ken Korach is one of the best known voices in California sports broadcasting, with a career that

dates back to 1980. He joined the Oakland A's broadcast team in 1996, paired with Bill King, and became the voice of the A's in 2006 after King's death. Korach has also been a broadcaster for the Chicago White Sox, San Jose State University, UNLV and Sonoma State University. The National Sportscasters and Sportswriters Assn. named him 2013 California Sportscaster of the Year. In 2003 he was inducted into the Nevada Broadcasters Hall of Fame. Korach graduated from UC Santa Barbara. Jon Miller is the longtime radio voice of the San Francisco Giants. A veteran of more than forty years in broadcasting, including twenty-one seasons doing play by play on ESPN's Sunday Night Baseball, Miller was honored by the Baseball Hall of Fame as the 2010 Ford C. Frick award winner for excellence in baseball broadcasting. He lives in San Francisco.

At first glance... a prospective reader that had not spent time listening to sports in the bay area from the 1960's to the early 2000's... would probably not be interested in this book. If you're one of those... you'll be sorry. I am going to give you a second chance to grasp at an opportunity to read a book that is extremely interesting on many... many... levels. The late Bill King at one time was the radio announcer for the Oakland Raiders... Oakland A's... and the Golden State Warriors! That alone would qualify as interesting. But the unique..."I'm me"... and that's the way it is... personality of Bill... is yet another level of interest. The fact that Mr. King was a self-taught man... who continued to reinvent himself... in so many unique ways... from studying Russian Poetry... to studying art... to his indulgence and exploration of foods... and foods that some people wouldn't consider foods... such as one of his favorites.... \*Calf-Brain-Tacos\*... uggh... washed down with Dos Equis... (Dramatic-pause... pause.) ... FOR BREAKFAST! His study of wines... and boats... And his never ending dedication to prepare himself for every game... in every sport... every day. As Bill became famous and a household name in Northern California... one of the main points of this book... is he never let one of his sidekicks or co-hosts feel left out. There were many moments in the spotlight that he could have easily hogged or simply cashed in the large stack of chips he had rightfully earned... to keep the light shining solely on him... but he graciously let admiring and lesser known individuals bask in that precious warm light. In fact... the largest portion of this book is built around testimonials overflowing with admiration and thanks from everyone from John Madden... to Rick Barry... to Jon Miller... to Al Attles... to Hank Greenwald and Lon Simmons... and everyone in between and adjacent to. If all you did was watch ESPN... once you read this book... you would be shocked how many of his announcing quotes have stood the test of time... and you may not have even known... that the historical quote that has been music to your ears for decades... was in fact

the voice of Bill King. As an example the famous interception and run for a touchdown in the 1976 Super Bowl by Hall of Famer Willie Brown..."And he looks and throws. Intercepted by the Oakland Raiders, Willie Brown at the thirty, forty, fifty, he's going all the way. OLD MAN WILLIE!! TOUCHDOWN RAIDERS!! Bill's calls on "THE SEA OF HANDS"... "THE HOLY ROLLER"... "THE IMMACULATE RECEPTION"... and of course his "Mother's Day" tirade against a referee while broadcasting a Warriors game on December 6, 1968. This is a very unique and interesting book... about a very unique and interesting man.

Baseball announcers are often regional phenomena with stories of little interest to anyone but fans of the team they cover. Oakland A's announcer Ken Korach has produced a loving, but more importantly, a vivid, compelling portrait of announcer Bill King entitled *Holy Toledo Lessons for Bill King: Renaissance Man of the Mic*. It is must reading for any sports fan. In addition to serving as the A's play-by-play man, King was also the voice of the Oakland (as well as Los Angeles) Raiders and Golden State Warriors. But it is more than simply a story for sports fans. It is a portrait of a fascinating man, whose interests ranged from Russian literature to opera to ballet to sailing to art to gourmet meals and fine wine to tortillas with onions and peanut butter, not to mention popcorn covered with anything and everything. King was truly an artist behind a microphone, painting accurate pictures, sweeping us into the action and educating his listeners to understand the nuances of whatever sport he was announcing. If listeners and colleagues considered King an artist, King considered himself simply a hard-working reporter who had a treasury of stories and facts to fall back on. He had an eye that always saw the bigger picture, putting it into perspective but also allowing his listeners to focus on what was happening at the moment. The way Bill King approached his work, the way Bill King approached his passions provide us with insights how we should approach life. He was always true to himself. I talked with Ken about the book several times during the season, and commented that the irony of Bill King the sportscaster was that baseball, the sport he loved best, was probably his third best sport. Ken disliked that assessment. But when you're flat-out the best basketball announcer ever - a position that didn't win me friends when working in Los Angeles, the home of Chick Hearn - and a matchless football announcer, to say that baseball was Bill's third-best sport is like saying Beethoven's Ninth was his second-best symphony. How many basketball announcers can follow the ball as it is passed around the court, describing screens opening up players just before they receive the ball without missing a beat? How many basketball announcers can be heard over the air referring to an official as a person who engages in sex with a woman who has bore a child and then receive annual mother's day cards from the official (Ed

Rush)? How many football announcers can follow the bouncing ball from hand to hand resulting in a touchdown in the famous Raiders' 'Holy Roller' play in San Diego? And then top it off by describing then-Raider coach John Madden's reaction to the "zany, unbelievable, absolutely impossible dream of a play" by saying, "Madden is on the field. He wants to know if it's real. They said yes; get your big butt out of here." Vin Scully, who announced the Dodgers in Brooklyn and still calls the action in Los Angeles, is acknowledged the best baseball announcer ever. But, as with Scully, a transcript of King at a pivotal moment of a game reads like a carefully crafted script with impeccable choice of words rather than the impromptu reaction to a play. If there's a complaint about the book, it's that we have to wait 182 pages to learn the only thing that could disrupt the broadcasting booth for King's partners. Korach talks of the three rules that King laid down for his partners. Breaking one of those rules, I'll say thanks, Ken, for the stories that made me smile, made me sigh, made me renew my appreciation of the very special Bill King.

What a wonderful book about a brilliant man. Any Bay Area sports fan over the past 50 years will enjoy this book with its funny and charming stories and anecdotes shared by Bill King's friends, colleagues, and fans (most of whom are all 3). Like so many others, I grew up listening to him paint pictures calling Warriors' game; it was literature, brilliant and unparalleled. It was also an evening vocabulary lesson, even when railing against the refs. The book is very enjoyable, but Mr. Korach saved the best for last in the Afterword. You want the definition of a great man and a worthy standard we should all strive to achieve? Read these moving statements about Bill's kind, welcoming and generous spirit, his dedication to his craft, his integrity and genuineness, but most of all the love and deep respect of those who knew him.

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