Abstract

Wanting a higher level of hockey for local youth to aspire to, city hockey officials created the semi-professional Teamsters hockey team in 1975. The team was initially comprised of the best local recreational players, many of whom relocated to Fairbanks to work on the TransAlaska Pipeline from the upper Midwest and Seattle. Two years later the team took on the name Fairbanks Gold Kings (later changed to the Alaska Gold Kings), and quickly began proving itself against teams from Anchorage and the Pacific Northwest.

From 1975 to 1995 the Gold Kings were an amateur senior men’s team, and from 1995-1997 they spent their last two Fairbanks years in the professional minor league West Coast Hockey League. Between its inception in 1975 as the Teamsters, and in spite of its relocation to Colorado Springs in 1998 as the Alaska Gold Kings, Fairbanks’ team was a huge success. The Gold Kings won five national championships, played 16 different international and Olympic teams, played overseas in Asia and Europe on multiple occasions, and laid the foundation for the level of hockey found in Fairbanks today.
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1. Introduction:

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this project is to document the history of the Alaska Gold Kings ice hockey team from its inception in Fairbanks in 1975, when the team was known as the Teamsters, to its relocation to Colorado Springs after the 1996-1997 season. My research examines the importance of the Gold Kings to Fairbanks, and the team's socio-cultural impacts on the town. Specifically, I consider the Gold Kings' actions in the Fairbanks community during and after their playing years, the Fairbanks community's volunteerism in support of the Gold Kings, and the cultural exchanges that occurred in Fairbanks as a result of the Gold Kings' international hockey contests. I argue that the Gold Kings were instrumental in popularizing hockey in Fairbanks. While the construction of the Big Dipper Ice Arena in 1968 spurred the organization and growth of youth hockey in the early 1970s, Fairbanks was not a hockeytown until the formation of the Gold Kings, then known as the Teamsters, in 1975.

On a larger scale, this project also traces the trajectory of the team from an amateur, semi-professional organization formed in the 1970s and 1980s heyday of men's senior league hockey to a professional minor league franchise in the mid-1990s, when it struggled to earn community support and compete as professional hockey expanded into warm, sunny climates. It is a worthy case study of the trends in North American sports in the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century. While former players, coaches, and staff are undoubtedly part of the audience that this project seeks to reach, so are Alaskans with a passion for hockey, sports history, and local history. I hope that fans and all those in Fairbanks who were positively impacted by the team enjoy this booklet.

Because the recent and timely donation of the John Rosie Gold Kings Hockey Collection in part inspired my decision to focus on the Gold Kings, this project also explores the collection, with which I have worked closely at both the University of Alaska Museum of the North and the Rasmuson Library's Alaska and Polar Regions Collections & Archives. In the late spring of 2019, Fairbanks Hockey Hall of Fame President and local hockey historian Randy Zarnke donated a large collection of hockey sticks, trophies, personalized pucks, trading cards, jerseys, and Gold Kings documents to the University. The donation is officially known as the John Rosie Gold Kings Collection. On March 8, 2020, a Gold Kings reunion took place at the University of Alaska Museum of the North. Former Gold Kings President John Rosie, University of Alaska Fairbanks Chancellor Dan White, and Dr. Druckenmiller, the Museum's Director attended, along with scores of community members. This gathering was a time to celebrate the Gold Kings' legacy, and to ceremonially transfer the large assortment of Gold Kings items over to the University. Section four of the project details my own work with the museum portion of the collection, which I have prepared for a year-long display at the Rasmuson Library as a part of the Museum Research Apprenticeship Program. In this section I also discuss the parts of the collection donated to the Alaska and Polar Regions Collections & Archives, and the Alaska Film Archives.
1.2 Research Questions

This project explores the following questions:

1. What are the origins of the Alaska Gold Kings?
2. Who were the Alaska Gold Kings?
   a. Who were the players?
   b. Who were their domestic and regional rivals?
   c. In what international contests did they compete?
3. What were the socio-cultural impacts of the Gold Kings on Fairbanks?

Answers to these research questions are significant for a number of reasons. The Gold Kings were the first major ice hockey attraction in Fairbanks and are credited by many Fairbanksans with popularizing the sport locally. In its 21-year Alaska stay, numerous players came and went, but many chose to become permanent Fairbanks residents after their hockey careers ended. Their faces have contributed to the social fabric of the city. Gold Kings players were employed locally as plumbers, pipefitters, and construction laborers, among other professions. In addition to their work and ice hockey careers, the Gold Kings served the community as coaches of youth hockey teams. While certainly some of the University of Alaska Fairbanks Nanooks and Fairbanks Ice Dogs players have settled in Fairbanks after their hockey playing ended, most do not, given that they tend to play hockey in Fairbanks for a few years as a stepping stone to another level of the game. The permanency of many Gold Kings in Fairbanks is a unique attribute of the team that speaks to the special relationship between players and the community, and the hometown atmosphere that supported the amateur senior men’s team before they joined the ranks of professional hockey in 1995. Moreover, Fairbanksans supported the Gold Kings through numerous unpaid, volunteer efforts, such as transporting opposing teams from the airport by bus, running concessions during games, and selling tickets. These community efforts allowed the team to function and thrive.

The Gold Kings held rivalries with in-state neighbors the Anchorage Wolverines and the various iterations of senior men’s hockey in Anchorage that formed after the Wolverines folded in 1979. They competed several times for the Anderson Cup against the St. Paul Parkers, forming a rivalry with the Twin Cities team. Thanks to the diplomacy and persistence of team president John Rosie, the Gold Kings hosted international teams from all over the world and competed in foreign countries beginning in the mid-1980s. The Gold Kings established themselves in North American senior men’s hockey, and they built relationships in the microcosm of the real world that is the international ice hockey community. Men from Alaska, Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Seattle, and elsewhere made Fairbanks the nucleus of their hockey world and lives, achieving remarkable feats together.

The connection between town and team that Fairbanks and the amateur Gold Kings represent has been lost in today’s sports scene where multi-million dollar contracts and player-management disagreements dominate headlines. The Gold Kings players who relocated to Fairbanks did so out of passion for the sport, balancing that passion with work and family. This team is a case study of amateur sport, which has been subverted and lost to professionalism. Team members wore multiple hats as hockey players, employees, and family men. As former team president John Rosie told me about the players, “As much as they’re the guy that works
behind the counter at Fairbanks Lumber, they’re athletes and they’re competitors. And they just love the game.”\(^1\)

The Gold Kings were primarily working class men who earned significant achievements in a collective manner. John Haddad was a gifted collegiate player at Michigan Tech University who tried out for the National Hockey League. Roger McKinnon played minor league hockey all over the country, and has been consistently praised as a highly talented coach. Whereas today sport is defined by seven or eight figure salaries, and players have no real connection to the city in which they play, the amateur Gold Kings were more grounded in their love for the sport and affiliation with the community. Gold Kings contributed to the community through employment and coaching youth hockey while playing, and those who stayed after hanging up the skates still make a large impact on the town. This connection is also reflected in the volunteer endeavors by locals to help the team. The various high school hockey teams and Fairbanks Figure Skating Club helped with parking and concessions during the games, earning portions of the profits for their own organizations, John Rosie told me that it was Jim “Clutch” Lounsbury who would volunteer to drive the bus to the airport and pick up the visiting team.\(^2\)

The amateur status, yet profound athletic achievement of the Gold Kings made them a rallying point for the community of Fairbanks.

1.3 Literature

Little has been written about Alaskan sports, and even less has been written about ice hockey in the state. The existing publications tend to be popular literature, lacking the structure and focus of academic writing. This project fills a niche in Alaskan sports literature because there is only one book on the history of hockey in the state: Randy Zarnke’s *Fairbanks Hockey Pioneers*. Zarnke’s book broke ground by putting the spotlight on Alaska hockey within state historical research, and it remains a valuable resource.

My research illuminates how sports contribute to the identity of northern cities and towns such as Fairbanks. Athletics can have profoundly positive individual and communal effects, particularly on isolated communities. It also contributes to the literature by telling another story of sports and sports success in a remote, northern part of the United States. In recent twentieth century history, Alaska has presented pioneers from varying backgrounds opportunities to build new lives. Zarnke reveals this about hockey in Fairbanks, noting the significant individuals who laid the foundation for the sport in town. Lew Freedman captures this essence of “starting anew” and being different “because of Alaska” in *Thunder on the Tundra*, by chronicling the story of Barrow football on the Arctic Ocean. He does something similar in *Diamonds in the Rough*, sharing with readers the individuals and teams that have built up the Alaska Baseball League over the years. Michael D’Orso’s *Eagle Blue* provides insight into the challenges of maintaining a successful high school basketball team in the fly-in community of Fort Yukon, Alaska. My research similarly illustrates the hardships of creating a semi-professional and professional hockey team in Fairbanks, and achievements through player, coach, and community perseverance. Whereas Zarnke’s book focuses on the stories of individuals involved in Interior hockey, not all of them related to the Gold Kings, my project examines the larger scale socio-cultural impacts of the Gold Kings on Fairbanks, and how the story of the Gold Kings reflects changes in the broader American professional sports scene. This

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\(^1\) Interview with John Rosie, interview by author, November 2019.
\(^2\) Rosie interview.
project also touches on the Fairbanks community’s rejection of the Gold Kings when they turned professional in 1995, a development Zarnke does not address.

1.4 Methodology

I collected data from semi-structured interviews, online newspaper archives, the University of Alaska Museum of the North, and the Rasmuson Library’s Alaska and Polar Regions Collections & Archives. My interviewees include John Rosie, former president of the Gold Kings; Rob Proffitt, former player and current General Manager of the Fairbanks Ice Dogs; John Haddad, former player and current owner of Outpost Alaska; Randy Zarnke, fan and Fairbanks’ hockey historian; and Dan Raley, former Fairbanks Daily News-Miner sports writer who covered the Gold Kings and sports in the late 1970s.

Knowing that each of the interviewees would have a different story to tell, I wanted participants in this research to feel comfortable taking the interview down any path, as long as it related to Gold Kings hockey. For John Rosie, Rob Proffitt and John Haddad, I asked the following:

1. When were you a part of the Gold Kings?
2. What is your own background?
   a. Where are you from?
   b. When did you start to play hockey?
   c. What brought you up to Fairbanks?
   d. How did you end up playing/coaching/managing the Gold Kings?
3. What was your role with the team?
4. What was the hockey community in Fairbanks like back when you were a part of the team?
5. Who were the main rivals of the Gold Kings?
6. Given the semi-professional status of the team, what kind of employment did you possess while you were a hockey player?
7. How did you manage to balance personal life, hockey, and work?
8. What was your life like up here while playing (managing or coaching depending on the interviewee) for the Gold Kings?
9. What do you do now? Do you have a family? Do you work? If so, where? What kept you in Fairbanks?
10. In retrospect, where do you see the Gold Kings in the evolution of hockey in Fairbanks? Would hockey be what it is today with a strong youth program, high school programs, a North American Hockey League program, and an NCAA Div. I program had the Gold Kings not been around?

I asked sports writer Dan Raley and local hockey historian Randy Zarnke the following:

1. Were you born and raised in Fairbanks?
   a. If not, where are you from?
   b. What brought you up here?
2. What was your relationship to the Alaska Gold Kings?
3. Do you have any favorite memories of Gold Kings hockey?
(4) Fairbanks appears to be a pretty hockey-crazy city in the present-day, but my understanding is that was not always the case. Did the Gold Kings play a role in popularizing hockey in Fairbanks for both playing and spectating?

I searched through the archives of the *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, which are stored through the online database NewspaperArchive. Using specific dates, terms, and phrases I narrowed my search. Terms included “hockey,” “Teamsters,” and “skating.” Phrases used were “Gold Kings Hockey,” and “Ice hockey in Fairbanks.” My online *News-Miner* archive research ranged from the early twentieth century, c.1906, through 1998.

At the University of Alaska Museum of the North I have organized the paraphernalia and equipment portion of the *John Rosie Gold Kings Collection*. Items such as collectible beer steins, personalized hockey pucks, jerseys, sticks, hockey trading cards, fan apparel and pennants were donated. Documents at the Rasmuson Library Alaska and Polar Regions Collections & Archives include season programs, government resolutions concerning the team, and photographs. At the Alaska Film Archives, collection donator Randy Zarnke and I watched parts of the nearly dozen filmed games. Additionally, the Film Archives hold audio tapes of games, including an audio tape of the official theme song made for the Gold Kings by Bruces Innes Music. A considerable amount of material has been donated to both the Museum and Library, and is still being processed.
2. History of the Gold Kings

Those who have walked the track on the second story of Fairbanks’ Big Dipper Ice Arena have seen the many trophies, photographs, commemorative plaques, and portraits that adorn its walls. These memories and memorabilia form the Fairbanks Hockey Hall of Fame. Much of the Hall of Fame consists of the Alaska Gold Kings and the many individuals who made this five-time national championship winning senior men’s team a reality. For many of today’s youth players, the Gold Kings may not register, but for more established Fairbanksans the Gold Kings tread hallowed hockey ground.

Names like Chuck Cartier, John Haddad, Chris Cahill, and Timmy Lee represent hockey playing legends to many in Fairbanks. John Rosie’s name is synonymous with an unyielding devotion to team management. Roger McKinnon is remembered as a grand chessmaster of the game - a former player and coach who excelled equally in both roles. The Anchorage Wolverines, Anchorage Aces, Minneapolis Bucks, and St. Paul Parkers command the degree of respect demanded by sport and the scale of animosity expected of rivals. The Big Dipper is home. Amateur senior men’s hockey brings to mind glory and success once parallel with the National Hockey League, and also reminds avid hockey fans who know their sport’s history of a swift extinction brought on by NHL expansion and the emergence of ice hockey in the American Sunbelt. In 1975 the Gold Kings, then Teamsters, began their intrepid navigation of the semi-professional hockey world. In 1995, the team turned pro, and just three years later the team relocated to Colorado Springs. This project demonstrates that without the Alaska Gold Kings, ice hockey would not be what it is today in Fairbanks.

The history of ice hockey and ice skating in Fairbanks is almost as old as the town itself. With a long winter and cold temperatures, Fairbanksans first pursued ice sports on the naturally frozen waterways about town. Several newspaper articles from the earliest iteration of the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner, then called the Fairbanks Daily Times, capture this interest in ice skating and hockey. The Chena River and Noyes Slough served as particularly popular wintertime skating spots. An early article from October 29, 1906 references the popularity of skating on the Chena River:

Skaters of Fairbanks had the pleasure of skating before their very doors on First Avenue yesterday. Hundreds of people were out on the ice and enjoyed the glassy surface on the Big Chena River.3

Like their Canadian neighbors to the east, Alaskans have had a long, natural affinity for ice sports. In a short film clip archived in the Oral History Collection of the Alaska and Polar Regions Collections & Archives at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, interviewee Mark Ringstad discussed how old-time Fairbanksans used to skate on the Chena River and at Griffin Park in the 1920s and 1930s. When asked about it, Ringstad remarked, “I think we could skate before we could walk.”4

According to local hockey historian and Fairbanks Hockey Hall of Fame curator Randy Zarnke, true citywide organized youth hockey did not begin until 1970. It was Local Teamsters Union President and father of hockey-playing sons Gary Atwood who kicked off Fairbanks youth hockey. Zarnke credits Atwood as an influential figure in the early days of Interior ice hockey. It was also Atwood who got the ball rolling with the Gold Kings, then Teamsters, hockey team. Zarnke told me in an interview:

The way I understand it … youth hockey started here in 1970. [...] Gary had some sons that were playing, and ... he saw, or foresaw, that if there was a higher level the younger kids would have something to aspire to. The way I understand, he was talking to some of the other community leaders, and he said, ‘What can we do? How can we do this? How can we develop a men’s team that can compete against Anchorage and Seattle?’

To Dan Raley, who served as the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner sports editor from 1977 to 1979, the relatively modern history of hockey in cold, wintry Fairbanks came as a surprise. On his arrival in Fairbanks from his hometown of Seattle, Raley was bewildered by the undeveloped state of hockey in the Great Land. He told me:

Oh what I remember was, you know, here we are in the Great North, Great White Northland, [and] we didn’t have any hockey. I remember just all of sudden someone decided to change that by providing a semi-pro hockey team. And these guys all came up out of north Seattle.

While several players came from Seattle, not all originated from the Puget Sound. The Teamsters’ first coach, Roger McKinnon, came from Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, a city on the Upper Peninsula of Michigan separated by the St. Mary’s River from its sister city of Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. In his earliest days, as was common in senior men’s hockey, Roger served as a player-coach. McKinnon was one of many Teamsters/Gold Kings players to make their way north to Fairbanks from the city affectionately nicknamed the “Soo.” Former player and coach John Haddad mentioned that a lot of players came from “Michigan, Washington, Minnesota. Guys just happened to come here for work,” and they were drawn to the prospect of continuing to play.

McKinnon, whose profile can be found on a plaque hanging on the walls inside the Big Dipper Ice Arena, had a lasting impact on Fairbanks hockey. When Atwood and other city officials were scrambling to put together a senior men’s team in the mid-1970s to compete with Anchorage and the Pacific Northwest, some of the local hockey founders knew of McKinnon and his reputation in the hockey world. Zarnke recalled:

5 Interview with Randy Zarnke, interview by author, Fairbanks, November 22, 2019.
6 Zarnke, interview.
7 Interview with Dan Raley, interview by author, Fairbanks-Seattle over phone, November 2019.
8 Interview with John Haddad, interview by author, 2019.
It just so happened that somebody knew Roger. Roger was not here at the time. So they put out a request to Roger that if you come to town, we are trying to build a senior men’s team, and we want you to be our coach. He was kind of between gigs at the time. He had played in a variety of places: Reno and Lima, Ohio, and I think he was in Stevens Point at the time. He liked their sales pitch, and so he came up in ’75.\(^9\)

According to John Rosie, Gary Atwood and Tim Sanderson recruited McKinnon, who saw a unique opportunity in the Interior. As Zarnke noted, when McKinnon accepted the Fairbanks coaching job, “he was already a veteran of semi-pro hockey, having played for several minor professional teams around the country.”\(^10\) According to Rob Roos of *The Sault News*, a thriving Alaskan economy in the midst of the pipeline heyday, and “an opportunity to play and coach hockey, and perhaps a chance to settle down and build something special in his own way” were enough to convince McKinnon to move to Fairbanks in 1975.\(^11\)

When the team first began to play in 1975, home games were held at the Big Dipper Ice Arena off Lathrop Street. Originally a World War II airplane hangar constructed for the Lend-Lease program in Tanacross, 200 miles southeast of Fairbanks, the structure was relocated to Fairbanks in 1968. While today the Big Dipper has an artificially frozen surface, and the arena is heated for spectators’ comfort, in the early days of Teamsters and Gold Kings’ hockey the arena relied on Mother Nature’s brutal sub-arctic temperatures for creating ice, and fan comfort suffered.

Sports writer Dan Raley recalled, “I remember it being cold always to sit in that arena and cover the games.”\(^12\) Many of the early players and fans note that the temperature of the Big Dipper reflected the temperature outside. With a rink, coach, management, sponsor, and players selected from the top tier of the local men’s league, the Teamsters began playing when Fairbanks temperatures proved conducive to ice hockey, often in early November.

The significance of the Big Dipper to Fairbanks ice hockey and the community as a whole cannot be overstated. The brainchild of Hez Ray, the physical education director at Lathrop High School, moving the facility was initially a joke. As Ray recalled in an interview, when he and some boys were returning from an athletics tournament in Whitehorse, the team saw the building off the ALCAN Highway. Apparently the team “looked at the building and they jokingly said, ‘Hey, why don’t we bring this back to Fairbanks.’”\(^13\) While the work by individuals such as Gary Atwood brought spirit to Fairbanks youth hockey, the Big Dipper ultimately gave it life, providing the much needed structure. The Dipper also serves as much more than an ice hockey rink. As a November 1972 editorial piece from the *News-Miner*.

\(^9\) Zarnke, interview.
\(^10\) Ibid.
\(^12\) Raley, interview.
highlights, “Figure skating, speed skating, recreation skating and ice hockey participation by hundreds of residents can now be enjoyed daily at the Big Dipper.”

As expected of any community facility, the Big Dipper has undergone transformations over the decades since first being disassembled, relocated, and rebuilt in Fairbanks in 1968. The plaque honoring Roger McKinnon still greets visitors and athletes in the entrance; the Gold Kings five-time national championship banner still hangs from the wall; and the many glass encased photographs and trophies of the team adorn the second floor.

While Fairbanksans were certainly no strangers to ice, the Big Dipper did something nothing else had before: It gave the community a centralized, communal area in which to hone and develop hockey skills. While hockey continued to be played on outdoor rinks and frozen bodies of water throughout town, the Dipper became, to borrow hockey lingo, “the barn” that generations of hockey players have been coming to since its relocation in 1968. Just a couple of years after the installation of the Big Dipper, outdoor rinks proliferated in Fairbanks. Rinks were built at all local elementary schools, providing kids with a place to skate and play hockey anytime of the day with the help of floodlights. This boom in outdoor rink construction can be attributed to the “Buy-a-Board” program, which encouraged residents to donate $15 to help furnish the materials needed to build outdoor rinks. Naturally, Mother Nature took care of the rest when winter engulfed the Interior. John Rosie remembers those outdoor practices vividly:

All the rinks were natural surface ice. Most of the rinks had neighborhood groups that would shovel them when the snow fell, maybe once in a while actually flood them so they could get a nice surface. For a while, I don’t know if it was actually true, but in my mind I believe it was true that every elementary school had an outdoor rink, and hockey was a big deal.

After two seasons as the Teamsters, the team’s stockholders convened to officially incorporate the organization. In 1977 the Teamsters became the Fairbanks Gold Kings. Several years later, beginning in 1983, the team changed its name to be representative of the whole state, becoming the Alaska Gold Kings. As the Anchorage Wolverines had folded in 1979, and the southcentral city was unable to consistently maintain a senior men’s team, the Gold Kings organization found it prudent to replace “Fairbanks” with “Alaska” at the start of the team name. Joe Jackovich of Jackovich Tractors and Equipment created the new team name by nodding his cap to the gold mining history of the Interior, the Goldpanners baseball team, and his favorite NHL team the Los Angeles Kings. With an unproven track record and reputation in the early years, the Teamsters-turned-Gold Kings were confined to competing against more regional teams, the obvious one being the in-state rival Anchorage Wolverines. Rosie mentioned that the Gold Kings had to pay their way south to clash against the Wolverines, and in order for the Wolverines to travel north to Fairbanks, the Gold Kings also had to foot the bill. Other teams were drawn from the Pacific Northwest region of Washington, Oregon, and British Columbia. When asked how these teams were enticed to travel thousands of miles north to play the nascent

15 Rosie, interview.
16 Ibid.
Gold Kings, John Rosie emphatically said, “Offer money! Fifteen tickets you know; 16 tickets and a weekend in Fairbanks, Alaska that you pay for.”

Over time as the Gold Kings continued to rack up impressive wins, their credibility grew, as did their ability to schedule more competitive, prominent teams. While the team had admirable performances in previous national championships, placing second in 1978 and 1980, and third in 1981, their first national title in 1983 opened several new doors for the Gold Kings, linking Fairbanks to the hockey world.

When asked by *News-Miner* sports editor Keith Olson what the 1983 victory meant, Roger McKinnon commented:

> Being national champs, the Gold Kings should be invited to at least one trip overseas since Redford went overseas twice while they were national champs. Also, there’s a good chance we could be matched up with some of the international teams that tour the country every year.

Retrospectively, the *possibility* of the Gold Kings playing internationally is almost comical. One of the most defining traits of the team and its legacy is their international play. John Rosie attributes the attraction of international teams to Fairbanks partly to the city’s “mystique,” but much credit goes to Rosie himself. With the permission of USA Hockey, Rosie traveled to a convening of the heads of the International Ice Hockey Federation in Vienna, Austria in the early 1980s. There Rosie mingled with hockey leaders including European royalty and constituents of the wealthy elite in their home countries. At 37, a lawyer from Fairbanks wearing an Alaska Gold Kings blazer “while these guys are wearing three piece suits,” Rosie bluntly pitched his idea to the various hockey diplomats. While surely the intelligent and diplomatic Rosie was more subtle in real life, he recalled going up to the sporting leaders and saying: “Hi I’m John Rosie, I’m from Fairbanks, Alaska. I’d like you to bring your national team to play mine in Fairbanks, Alaska. Would you do that?”

Much to his surprise, seemingly owing to the mysterious allure of Fairbanks, the hockey officials began bringing their national teams to the Interior to play the Gold Kings.

The team’s first foray into the international hockey community came in March of 1985 when the team and Fairbanks hosted the national squads of Austria, Japan, and the Netherlands in the *Fairbanks World Invitational*. A year later the Kings hosted another international tournament with the national teams of Yugoslavia and Norway, and the Canadian representative, the Moose Jaw Generals. Saskatchewan’s Moose Jaw Generals were no joke, even when stacked up against the Yugoslavian and Norwegian national teams. The Generals were runners-up for the Hardy Cup in 1984, and winners of the Canadian Senior AA trophy in 1985. Just a month before, in February 1985, the Gold Kings made their first trip to Alaska’s eastern neighbor Canada, where they played Alberta’s Stony Plain Eagles.

In the 1986-1987 campaign, the Gold Kings did the seemingly impossible, what many consider their greatest accomplishment: They tied the Russian National B team 4-4 after getting

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17 Ibid.
19 Rosie, interview.
20 Ibid.
clobbered the day before. The Russian National B team was far from the equivalent of a junior varsity football team. The Soviet national team is the winningest of all time in international competition. The backups to the best in the world rank among the best. This “B” team was comprised of players from the prestigious Russian clubs of Moscow Dynamo, the Red Army, and the Moscow Wings; the Red Army being the most central and perhaps famous of all Russian sports clubs. To top off the 1986-1987 season, the Gold Kings hosted their third World Invitational. The honor was split with the co-host city of Anchorage. Canada, Sweden, Norway, and the Gold Kings competed.

In February 1988, the Kings held their first Olympic Hockey Preview the week before the official 1988 Calgary Winter Olympics kicked off. France, Norway, Austria, Poland, Switzerland, and the Gold Kings competed. Five years later in 1993, Alaska held a second Olympic Hockey Preview preceding the 1994 Lillehammer Games. Split between Anchorage and Fairbanks, the 1993 Arctic Challenge Hockey Preview pitted the “Big Three” (Russia, Canada, and the United States) against one another and Team Alaska at the Carlson Center and Sullivan Arena. Team Alaska consisted of players from both the Alaska Gold Kings and Anchorage Aces. The fact that the top three teams in the world were in Alaska was enough to lend immense prestige to the tournament, not to mention $20,000 on the line, with half going to first place, $7,500 to second, and $2,500 to third.

Adding to the international credibility of the Gold Kings was stiff competition against the Finnish and Czech junior national teams in December 1988. In February 1989 the Gold Kings traveled across the Pacific to play in Japan. In the years to come the Gold Kings played in Europe twice more, once in Denmark/Norway, and later in France.

Beginning in 1990 the Gold Kings started their amicable hockey relationship with the Khabarovsk Red Army team. The New York City-based People to People Sports Exchange Commission initiated the hockey exchange. While Rosie told me the trip to Khabarovsk turned out to be a front so the commission head at the time, Leonard Milton, could talk forestry business with Soviet officials, it nonetheless sparked a relationship between the Gold Kings and Khabarovsk, and made the Gold Kings the first American team to travel and play in the Russian Far East.22

The proximity of Khabarovsk to Alaska and America’s West Coast, and its continued hockey series with Fairbanks throughout the early 1990s, was nearly enough to make the Russian squad a part of the fledgling minor league West Coast Hockey League. While Khabarovsk only played exhibition games against WCHL opponents, for individuals like News-Miner sports writer Tim Mowry, the possibility of the team joining the West Coast league was very real. In defense of the idea, Mowry wrote:

> Just imagine a hockey league, if you will, between the Soviet Union and Alaska. The Alaska Gold Kings. The Glasnost Gladiators. The Anchorage Aces. The Khabarovsk Kapitals. The Whitehorse Wahoos. The Siberian Senators. Sounds ridiculous, doesn’t it? Well think again, the idea of a U.S.S.R.-Alaska league may not be that farfetched. Or that far off, for that matter.23

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22 Ibid.
Unlike the strong hockey bond between Khabarovsk Red Army and the Gold Kings, the relationship between the University of Alaska Fairbanks Nanooks hockey team and the Gold Kings was often on shaky ground in their early years of coexistence. As John Haddad put it, “It was always a huge rivalry. Everybody hated UAF. They hated us. Because we stole each other’s crowd back and forth.”24 The University had sponsored several iterations of a club hockey team since nearly its founding in 1917, playing outdoors on naturally frozen ice. It was, however, the construction of the indoor, climate controlled Patty Ice Rink and entrance of the Nanooks into NCAA hockey in 1979 that complicated the relationship of the two teams. A major reason for the tension between the two clubs was attracting a fanbase. The other factor that strained the relationship was media coverage, specifically by the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner. A common argument from Gold Kings proponents was that the News-Miner maintained a bias against the Gold Kings, giving far more coverage to the Nanooks.

In the late 1980s under Nanooks head coach Don Lucia, there appeared to be de-escalation. The Gold Kings and Nanooks played several times, competing annually for the KSUA Cup. By the early 1990s many Gold Kings roster spots were filled by former Nanook players who saw the senior men’s team as an opportunity to continue playing the game. Tensions, however, still plagued the relationship. News-Miner sports writer Tim Mowry aptly captured the relationship between the two teams in a 1991 piece titled “Don’t expect a local ice hockey showdown soon.” Despite having competed in previous years, he quotes both Rosie and Lucia as favoring an end to the intercity competition, leaving both teams to fill their respective niches. Mowry wrote:

Will the two teams ever get back on the ice together? Let’s put it this way: Will Roseanne Barr ever sing the national anthem at the presidential inauguration?...Ultimately it will be up to hockey fans in Fairbanks whether the Golden Heart City is big enough for two teams.25

While the Gold Kings’ relationship with the Nanooks was fragile over the years, the organization’s connection to the international hockey community was sturdy. By the time the Gold Kings were close to ceasing operations and moving to Colorado Springs in 1997, they had played 16 different national and Olympic teams, three of which no longer exist.26 They were the only American sports team to cement a bond with a team from the Russian Far East. In fact, several Russian players played for the Gold Kings in the early-to-mid 1990s.

In addition to their games with teams from the European and Asian continents, from their earliest days, the Gold Kings held contests with Canadian teams. In the late 1980s when Anchorage supported a senior men’s team inconsistently, Fairbanks developed a fierce rivalry with the Taku Whitehorse Stallions and played a few games against the Whitehorse Huskies. The latter was the only men’s senior hockey team from the Canadian territories to ever win the Allan Cup, an award once regarded as prestigious as the Stanley Cup.

After the 1994-1995 campaign in which the Gold Kings took home their fifth national title upon beating the Anchorage Aces 7-6 in overtime, John Rosie and the organization went professional. The team became a founding member of the incipient West Coast Hockey League

24 Interview with John Haddad.
26 John Rosie, “It was go pro or die,” February 11, 1997.
or WCHL. Modern day fans of the game will know of the ECHL or East Coast Hockey League, which is two tiers below the NHL, and absorbed the remaining WCHL teams in the early 2000s. The Gold Kings’ new league replaced the brief one-season Pacific Hockey League (PHL), in which the Gold Kings were members. PHL co-members, the Anchorage Aces and Fresno Falcons, joined the Alaska Gold Kings in forming the WCHL alongside the Bakersfield Fog, Reno Renegades, and San Diego Gulls. Talk of making the Khabarovsk Red Army league members never culminated in membership. Khabarovsk, however, played exhibition games against the WCHL over the ensuing seasons.

Fairbanks’s first year in the West Coast Hockey League was clearly a success; they lost in the championship round of the playoffs only by one game in a five-game contest to the San Diego Gulls. Even with an impressive first season in the WCHL, interviews and newspaper clippings indicate that Gold Kings fans and the Fairbanks community were reluctant to see their team go professional. This attitude carried over to the abysmal 1996-1997 season when the Gold Kings won just 13 of 64 games.

In early January of 1997, News-Miner sports writer Mike Stetson wrote a piece titled, “Bring the real Gold Kings back,” in which he claimed that the blame for the downfall of the Gold Kings rested with the organization’s management. He criticized Rosie’s decision to turn professional, arguing that the simple amateur days when Gold Kings worked and lived in the community, and crushed the best competition, were the pinnacle of Fairbanks hockey. Stetson went so far as to say that if the rumors of the minor league, professional Gold Kings relocating to Colorado Springs or Boise were true, so be it.

While Stetson’s nostalgia was understandable, given the success of the amateur senior men’s Gold Kings teams throughout the 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s, the history of hockey at this time supports Rosie’s decision and his reasoning for joining the WCHL. Until the mid-1980s, senior men’s hockey was immensely popular, and the annually contested Allan Cup that pitted Canada’s two best senior men’s teams against one another was once considered as distinguished as Lord Stanley’s Cup. For most of its history, hockey was limited to the northern regions where it originated. By the late 1980s / early 1990s, however, hockey rapidly expanded into non-traditional markets in the American Southwest and Southeast. By the early 1990s the growth of the National Hockey League, professional minor leagues, and junior hockey rendered senior men’s league hockey nearly obsolete.

The decline of high levels of amateur hockey in the United States and Canada gave Rosie little choice but to professionalize the organization. Rosie explains the dilemma in his guest opinion piece titled, “It was go pro or die,” his rebuttal to the criticisms Mike Stetson and others in the Fairbanks hockey community leveled at him. Rosie explains that with only three teams competing for the 1997 U.S. amateur championship, and the most storied organizations such as the St. Paul Parkers and Warroad Lakers no longer playing, the writing was clearly on the wall.

After a woeful 1996-1997 season the Gold Kings ceased operations, Rosie citing the inability to keep the team financially afloat by himself, as crowd numbers continued to dwindle as a contributing factor. Fan support decreased significantly once the Kings entered the WCHL. Rosie later recalled: “When I turned the Gold Kings pro, Fairbanks really rejected the team.

28 John Rosie, “It was go pro or die: Fairbanks can look forward to a growing league,” Fairbanks Daily News-Miner Guest Opinion, February 11, 1997.
29 John Rosie, “It was go pro or die.”
They didn’t like the idea of playing San Diego and Bakersfield and Fresno...the community rejected the team.”\textsuperscript{30} Professionalization resulted in the team losing its “hometown team” feel that had made the Gold Kings such an integral part of the community. Rosie discussed the inevitability of the team losing its “Fairbanks identity” with professionalization as players were recruited from all over North America and even Russia. He also had to compete with general managers and coaches recruiting talented hockey players to play ice hockey in the middle of the Sunbelt in states like California, Arizona, Texas, and Florida. Rosie acknowledged that he simply could not compete with organizations that could offer players the chance to leave practice at the rink and head to the golf course. The six months of outdoor naturally frozen ice Fairbanks could offer was obsolete, proving Fairbanks’s geography disadvantageous in the changing tides of professional hockey.\textsuperscript{31} In mid-February 1998, with no warning given to local media, the Alaska Gold Kings and Rosie stealthily left Fairbanks.\textsuperscript{32} The franchise moved south to Colorado Springs, becoming the Colorado Gold Kings. The franchise folded after four years in Colorado.

In the team’s proverbial ashes came an opportunity for former Gold Kings Rob Proffitt and Roger McKinnon to establish the Fairbanks Ice Dogs in 1997, enabling Alaskan players to continue developing their skills close to home, and filling the gap in the city’s socio-cultural sports fabric after the relocation of the Gold Kings. The cessation of Gold Kings operations in the spring of 1997, and the quiet disappearance of the team in February of 1998 left a void in Fairbanks. As Rob Proffitt told me, “I don’t think it was just a hockey void in this community. It was a social void.”\textsuperscript{33} The Big Dipper was a social space where community members not only gathered to watch hockey but also mingle. Such social centers are essential for any community, but perhaps they carry more weight for a northern, isolated community such as Fairbanks. Proffitt and the Ice Dogs have gone on to fill that void for Fairbanksans, becoming huge successes and routinely playing in front of packed crowds at the Big Dipper. Proffitt credits Rosie and the Gold Kings for much of the foundation on which the Ice Dogs were built:

\begin{quote}
The platform that was built by John Rosie and company if you will has been a huge catapult to our success. Because we took that template, used a lot of it, and just built on it, you know, and that’s where we got where we are today.\textsuperscript{34}
\end{quote}

It cannot be known for certain if the Ice Dogs would exist without the Gold Kings, but the latter undoubtedly helped establish the basis for the junior hockey team. In 2011 during February’s “Hockey Week in Fairbanks,” the Ice Dogs wore the Gold Kings logo on their jerseys as an homage to their senior men’s predecessors who once packed the Big Dipper to capacity. Further evidence of the Ice Dogs’ connection to the Gold Kings can be found on the “Team History” section of the Fairbanks Ice Dogs’ website. Near the bottom of the timeline in 1997, the site states “Founded the Fairbanks Ice Dogs to replace the Alaska Gold Kings.”\textsuperscript{35}

As an ardent hockey fan, I believe Fairbanks owes much to the Gold Kings and the many dedicated and talented individuals who played for and represented the team. They are all legends.

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\textsuperscript{30} Rosie interview.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{33} Interview with Rob Proffitt, interview by author, 2019.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{35} The Official Site of the Fairbanks Ice Dogs, “Team History,” accessed April 6, 2020, \url{https://www.fairbanksicedogs.com/team-history}.
\end{flushright}
in their own right, and just as importantly many are contributing members of the Fairbanks community. Most of the UAF Nanooks and Ice Dogs players come from elsewhere, and few choose to settle here. The Goldpanners without question are only here for three months of 24 hour daylight baseball before returning to their colleges and universities in the Lower 48. The Gold Kings were different. Many decided to make the city their permanent home. It is remarkable to have five-time national champions / international hockey competitors living down the street, especially in a northern isolated city, but we do, and for that Fairbanks is richer.

2.1 Socio-Cultural Impacts of the Gold Kings on Fairbanks

On March 8th, 2020, due to the age and geographical dispersion of some of the team, possibly the last Gold Kings reunion took place. Former players, fans, and even president John Rosie, who came from Colorado for the event, convened at the University of Alaska Museum of the North to christen the John Rosie Gold Kings Collection, and ceremonially pass on box after box of memorabilia to the University. In the Museum’s auditorium, representatives from the Ethnology and History Lab, Alaska and Polar Regions Collections & Archives, and the Alaska Film Archives collaborated to display many of the items, documents, and films donated to the University. As ex-players, diehard fans, and even John Rosie himself funneled into the auditorium to look, one individual after another thanked us for helping document, record, and preserve the Gold Kings. While through semi-structured interviews and primary resources it was already evident to me how impactful the Gold Kings have been on the Fairbanks community, the emotional outpouring of the community affirmed my assessment. I argue that there are five avenues through which the Gold Kings have socio-culturally impacted Fairbanks: 1) Coaching youth hockey, 2) Participating in charitable acts such as Christmas donations and SS Nenana restoration while the team was in Fairbanks, 3) Inspiring Fairbanksan volunteers to help keep the amateur team functional through actions such as running concessions and ticket sales during games, 4) Bringing foreign cultural exchanges to Fairbanks as a result of international hockey, and 5) Settling down in Fairbanks after the end of their playing careers.

During the Gold Kings’ reign in Fairbanks, many players began coaching the sport, including head coach Roger McKinnon. 36 McKinnon was a prolific youth coach and, alongside former Gold Kings player Rob Proffitt, was instrumental in starting the junior hockey Fairbanks Ice Dogs in 1997. 37 Seven former Gold Kings have won the Fairbanks Hockey Hall of Fame “Coach of the Year Award”: Wayne Sawchuck (2006), Dave Teets (2008), Jordy Wolter (2009), Rob Proffitt (2010), Mark Weber (2012), Bruce Laiti (2013) and Matt Atkinson (2017). In addition to providing Fairbanks youth with coaching, many former players have raised children of their own through the local hockey scene, adding to the reputation of Fairbanks as a hockeytown. John Haddad’s son Nick played for both the Fairbanks Ice Dogs and UAA Seawolves; Chris Cahill’s son Cayden formerly played for the Ice Dogs and is now a member of the University of Wisconsin River Falls men’s hockey team; Rob Proffitt’s son Ty is also an Ice Dogs alum who now plays for the University of Wisconsin Superior; John Teets, son of former

Gold King Dave Teets, played for the Ice Dogs, and now represents the University of Alabama-Huntsville in hockey; and Bruce Laiti’s daughter Lisa is a former Bemidji State women’s hockey team player who now serves as the Community Engagement Coordinator for UAF Nanooks Athletics. This is not a comprehensive list of the Gold Kings who have coached hockey in Fairbanks, but it illustrates the passion of the players for passing on the game to the progeny.

While in Fairbanks from 1975 to 1997, the organization gave back in spades to the community. Through researching the online archives of the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner, I came across numerous guest opinion pieces submitted by Fairbanksans over the years expressing gratitude for the charitable, community-driven work done by the Gold Kings. In 1983, Sue Thomason, then the president of the Fairbanks Figure Skating Club, warmly praised John Rosie and the Gold Kings for the numerous forms of support they provided to athletics training and education in Fairbanks.38

Years later in 1989, former Gold Kings employee Shirley Schneider submitted a piece to the News-Miner, titled “Gold Kings provide much to city besides plenty of hockey games.” Her letter perfectly captures the public spiritedness of the Gold Kings, referencing the local hockey teams and figure skaters who earned profits working games, the variety of local businesses that benefited from visiting teams using their services, and the UAF scholarships funded by the team in the late 1980s. Additionally, Schneider commends the Gold Kings for two

of the same principles I make arguments based on: the coaching of youth hockey players, and the immersion of Fairbanksans into global cultures through international hockey contests.

In August of ‘89 the team descended on Alaskaland where “they volunteered time to help with the restoration effort on the Riverboat Nenana...They sanded part of the deck and the sides of the deckhouse.” In the 1990s the Gold Kings also began visiting local elementary schools to raise awareness about the importance of education to impressionable young minds. The program was called K.I.C.K. or “Kings in Class for Kids.” Through this program Gold Kings players visited local elementary schools. In a “Letter to the Editor” from 1997, local Trudi Rand captured K.I.C.K. and its positive impact perfectly:

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Ticasuk Brown elementary school has had the pleasure of having four Kings so far. The students have received one-on-one tutoring, help with art projects, and talks about team playing and sportsmanship. They have also had the benefit of learning about different countries such as Russia and Canada. One class learned the Russian alphabet, count to five, and say hello and goodbye in Russian.\textsuperscript{41}

Even though by the 1997 season the Gold Kings were losing community support, and on the verge of having to leave Fairbanks, they continued to have a worthwhile influence on the community through programs such as “Kings in the Class for Kids.” These are just a few examples of the magnanimity of the Gold Kings, and the appreciation of the Fairbanks community for such charitableness.

In April of 1978 The Gold Kings traveled to Roseau, Minnesota for the National Tournament. What made the trip possible for the team was not the deep pockets of its stockholders or sponsors, but “a community fund raising drive that produced nearly $15,000.”\textsuperscript{42} This example of community action inspired by the team introduces the third form of evidence of the Gold Kings’ socio-cultural impact on the city: the way in which Fairbanks rallied around the team. Near the end of our interview, Rosie reflected deeply on the community’s volunteer efforts that helped keep Gold Kings hockey functional. An introspective man, Rosie gave immense credit to Fairbanks for supporting the Gold Kings. “The community made it happen. If the community didn’t buy in, we wouldn’t be talking about this,” he said, referring to the willingness of Fairbanks to accept a group of hockey players, some local and other transplants, and embrace them as the town’s team. Regarding the physical volunteer work of the community, Rosie said:

> On any given night you might have 100 volunteers at the Big Dipper, because you had Lathrop parking cars, West Valley selling programs, somebody else selling tickets, and Youth Hockey running one concession stand, and Women’s Hockey running another concession stand, and Men’s Hockey running another concession stand, and the figure skaters running another concession stand. I didn’t do that intentionally, I needed labor, and these people were willing to volunteer to earn some money for their programs.\textsuperscript{43}

In examining the volunteer efforts of the community towards the Gold Kings, it must be recognized that the players themselves were volunteers until the team went professional in 1995. The same can be said

\textsuperscript{42} Olson, “Kings face Dakotans Saturday,” April 5, 1978.
\textsuperscript{43} Rosie interview.
for John Rosie, Roger McKinnon, team trainer Mike Weber, and anyone else affiliated with the team. John Rosie’s income came from his law practice, not serving as the team’s president. McKinnon ran the sporting goods store Sport King. The players had to work various jobs during the day, especially in the summer off-season, so they could earn a living while representing Fairbanks and giving local youth a goal to aspire to, pro bono.

The foreign cultural exchanges the team partook in abroad and brought to Alaska also had significant socio-cultural impacts on the Fairbanks community. Beginning in 1985 the Gold Kings hosted their first international tournament against the Dutch, Japanese, and Austrian national teams. This was the first of many foreign cultural exchanges to occur on Fairbanks soil. From 1987 through the mid-’90s the Gold Kings hosted Soviet and post-Soviet Russian squads. In 1990 the team, through the People to People Sports Exchange Commission, initiated a relationship with the Far Eastern Russian team Khabarovsk Red Army. The three-week long hockey series was played in both Fairbanks and Khabarovsk. In his News-Miner coverage of the exchange, Bob Eley captured the warm relationship between the two teams, quoting Rosie as saying “You could see it developing,’ ... ‘Some guys hugged each other after the game against Khabarovsk and others were patting each other on the shoulders during warmups before the game.”

When Khabarvosk came to Fairbanks in the winter of 1990, the visiting players took advantage of the cultural opportunities unavailable to them back home, interacting with Fairbanksans in the process. In her article “Soviets come to trade,” News-Miner staff writer Mary Jones wrote “Members of a visiting Soviet hockey team walked into the Footlocker at Bentley Mall loaded with watches, souvenir pins and teapots Tuesday. They left with arms full of Nike clothing and sports gear bags.”44 While abroad the Gold Kings served as ambassadors for the Golden Heart City. In 1989 the team participated in a playing tour of Japan. Fairbanks resident Bill Gordon happened to be on a business trip in Japan at the same time. He witnessed the positive diplomacy of Rosie and the Gold Kings, and Japan’s embrace of the organization.

John Rosie (Gold Kings president) and the young players were magnificent diplomats for our state and country. Playing before large Japanese crowds, these Alaskans delighted the fans with their skills and an aggressive style of hockey. But more importantly they represented our city in a statesmanlike manner. All of us should reap great benefits from the exposure Alaska has received. Beside the huge crowds, there was also extensive press coverage by most Japanese media.45

This is just a sample of the Gold Kings’ socio-cultural impact on Fairbanks through foreign cultural exchanges. The team was instrumental in bringing international hockey teams to Fairbanks thanks to the diplomacy of John Rosie at the Vienna International Ice Hockey Federation meeting in the early ‘80s.

A fifth means through which the Gold Kings socio-culturally impacted Fairbanks, and continue to do so, is the permanent settlement of many Gold Kings in town after hanging up the skates. Besides continuing to serve as youth hockey coaches, many former Kings have gone on to lucrative careers, contributing to Fairbanks society and its economy. One of the more obvious examples is Rob Proffitt, who, alongside Roger McKinnon launched the Fairbanks Ice Dogs junior hockey program in 1997. Proffitt continues to serve as the general manager for the Ice Dogs, one of the most popular attractions in town. The Ice Dogs have continued carrying the Fairbanks hockey legacy set by the Gold Kings, routinely playing in front of sold-out crowds, producing three NHL draft picks, and turning out numerous NCAA division I and III players. Former standout player and coach John Haddad runs Outpost Alaska, a purveyor of all-terrain vehicles and snow machines, and the farthest north Harley Davidson dealership. When I walked into Outpost Alaska to interview John Haddad I was amazed by the number of employees working the sales floor and back offices. Outpost Alaska is an economic contributor to Fairbanks and the state, as well as a provider of the necessary equipment that some Alaskans quite literally depend on, such as snow machines.

Matt Atkinson, the 2017 Fairbanks Hockey Hall of Fame “Coach of the Year” recipient, co-owns Northern Alaska Tour Company. The Fairbanks-based company provides tourists and residents alike excursions ranging from northern lights viewing to the extremes of Kaktovik polar bear tours. Atkinson’s business contributes to the Fairbanks economy, enticing tourists from all over the world to interior and northern Alaska. Chuck Cartier, one of the most seasoned Gold Kings, manages Alaska Rubber & Rigging Supply’s Fairbanks operation on Van Horn Road. His company is a statewide and regional provider of hydraulic and industrial hosing, and rigging equipment. Alba Brice, who played for the Gold Kings in the late ’80s and early ’90s, now works out of Anchorage as the Director of Business Development for the Calista Native Corporation. A regional ANCSA corporation, Calista represents 56 communities in southwest Alaska along the Bering Coast, Yukon River and Kuskokwim River. Other examples of Gold Kings who have remained local after the end of their hockey careers include Dave Teets, manager of Fairbanks Fuel; Curt Franklin, co-owner of the Oasis Restaurant and Lounge on University Avenue; and Bruce Laiti, who played hockey at the University of Wisconsin, and is now a mechanical estimator at Alyeska Pipeline Service Company. Many of the Gold Kings chose to stay in Fairbanks or in the case of Alba Brice, Alaska, after their days with the Gold Kings came to a close. These former players have gone on to run local businesses and sports franchises, contributing to the socio-cultural fabric and local economy of the city and state.

In her newspaper coverage of the March 8th, 2020 Gold Kings reunion at the University of Alaska Museum of the North, News-Miner writer Kyrie Long wrote, “In Fairbanks hockey history no one beats the Kings in impact.” That impact has been widespread in Fairbanks, spanning decades from the mid-1970s to the present. The Gold Kings have socio-culturally shaped Fairbanks in five ways. First, many Gold Kings have served as local youth hockey coaches. Roger McKinnon is an obvious example, who not only made a mark coaching youth hockey, but alongside Tim Waggoner also

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ran the sporting goods store Sport King, where youth and adult players alike could get the equipment necessary to play the game. In addition to McKinnon, seven former Gold Kings have won the Fairbanks Hockey Hall of Fame “Coach of the Year” award. Secondly, during their 21 years in Fairbanks the Gold Kings contributed to the community through numerous charitable acts such as aiding in the restoration of the SS Nenana, a sternwheeler built in the 1930s, and visiting local elementary schools to promote education. Local organizations such as the Fairbanks Figure Skating Club, Oldtimers Hockey, Women’s Hockey, Lathrop and West Valley high school hockey, and Fairbanks youth hockey teams benefited immensely from the Gold Kings who enabled them to earn revenues by working concessions, ticket sales, and parking during Gold Kings games. Third, the Gold Kings became a rallying point for the community, inspiring community volunteer action such as the aforementioned work of various local organizations during games, and individuals like Jim “Clutch” Lounsbury stepping forward to transfer visiting teams from the airport to town by bus. Importantly, the work of John Rosie, coaches like Roger McKinnon, trainer Mike Weber, the players, and all other staff was volunteer until the team merged with the professional West Coast Hockey League. The fourth manner through which the Gold Kings affected Fairbanks was by hosting foreign hockey teams for international competitions. These international games gave the team and town exposure to different cultures and peoples otherwise distant from the Golden Heart City. Finally, the many former Gold Kings who chose to call Fairbanks home after their hockey playing careers concluded continue to socio-culturally and economically contribute to the well-being of the town through continuing to coach youth hockey and promote the sport, and running popular and successful entities such as the Fairbanks Ice Dogs and Oasis Restaurant & Lounge.
3. The Gold Kings: A Pictorial Timeline

“Rome wasn’t built in a day and neither were the Detroit Red Wings”

Certainly there’s money to be made by any group that can successfully and economically put a semi-pro Fairbanks team on the ice. But the prospect of making it big from the start defies any get-rich-quick scheme. “We just don’t want to start out in a position of having to fold right in the middle of the season,” Atwood said.

Will it work? Rome wasn’t built in a day and neither were the Detroit Red Wings. The lack of an arena where the spectators can watch comfortably makes the plan an iffy prospect for rapid success. Still, the promoters feel hockey has a definite future here and foresee in their crystals the community interest to make it work.48


The following pages contain a comprehensive timeline of the Alaska Gold Kings from their origins in 1975 to their relocation to Colorado in 1997. I aim to supplement the second chapter, “History of the Gold Kings,” taking readers through a dynamic and engaging visual journey of the team’s years. Some seasons contain more highlights and newspaper clippings than others. As you move through this timeline you will meet myriad characters, some of whom came and went, and others of whom remained with the Gold Kings for many years. I took all of the articles and article clippings from the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner online archives.

Each season is listed in bold, followed by a season summary, roster, and schedule. From there readers can review season highlights. Given the size and remoteness of Fairbanks, the Gold Kings achieved a remarkable record in just over two decades in Alaska. They won five national championships, played some of the best North American amateur teams, and competed in several international tournaments with squads from Canada, Europe, and Russia. Despite their impressive record, not all of Fairbanks supported them. Even in their winningest years, some local hockey aficionados scoffed at the Gold Kings’ style of play as archaically violent and unruly. Others thought and still think that the Gold Kings are the best thing to ever happen to Fairbanks. No matter one’s personal opinion, it is undeniable that the Gold Kings had a

significant presence in town, and they were a big force in making the Golden Heart City an ice hockey playing, watching, and loving town.

Becoming an accomplished hockey team was not always so easy for the Gold Kings. Many summers appear to have filled John Rosie with anxiety as he struggled to negotiate ice time with the Big Dipper, Carlson Center, or Patty Arena for the impending season. In the early years the Gold Kings depended entirely on the naturally frozen ice of the unheated hangar-turned-hockey rink Big Dipper. This sometimes meant waiting days before an opening series to have the first practice. Rosie and the Gold Kings had to navigate financial constraints, and market themselves heavily in a city with a collegiate program as well. There were fans that criticized their style of play and ridiculed the team in its last days, but there were also diehard fans that truly supported the Gold Kings. Many Fairbanksans over the years submitted opinion pieces to the *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner* expressing deep gratitude for all of the charitable work done by the team. This timeline captures the ups-and-downs, triumphs and struggles that the Alaska Gold Kings faced during their time in Fairbanks. I hope readers will develop a firm grasp of the history of the team, and the impact the Gold Kings had on Fairbanks. The timeline illustrates how the Teamsters rose out of relative obscurity to become a dominant force in senior men’s league hockey as the Gold Kings, and then faded into obscurity again when they turned professional in 1995. This depicts a larger movement in North America in which the professionalization of sport undercut amateurism in the late 1980s to 1990s.

**Before the Teamsters:**

An article written for the *News-Miner* in 1972 by Allan Curtis offers a view of the long and at times choppy history of hockey in Alaska. Allan reflects on the growth of hockey in the state, and how the game had ups-and-downs until then. He notes that at the turn of the 20th century ice sports such as skating and curling were quite popular pastimes in the territory.

Organized hockey in Fairbanks and Anchorage had its roots in the 1920s when hockey associations were established for both cities. Not until the early 1960s did Anchorage organize a program for boys, and shortly thereafter Fairbanks did so. In 1926 the University of Alaska established its hockey team, which was comprised of students and faculty members. The UA hockey team competed against Dawson, Yukon Territory, various Anchorage squads, and teams cobbled together in Fairbanks, as well as teams from Ladd Field (later Fort Wainwright), and later Eielson Air Force Base. Hockey contests were often held during the annual Ice Carnival. Allan comments on the restructuring of the Fairbanks youth program in 1970, crediting three individuals - Hez Ray, John Contento, and Terry McKean - with helping to rebuild the program. According to Curtis, these men “started with nothing and built the framework for the years to come.” Of course the work of Gary Atwood must not be overlooked. Curtis ends the article stating “Hockey has come a long way in Alaska and in Fairbanks since the first hockey association was formed in 1925. Since then, the emphasis has changed from the older player to the younger.”
If only Allan Curtis could have then looked into a crystal ball to see what was to come just three years away in 1975 with the formation of the Gold Kings’ predecessor, the Teamsters.

Below are two photographs from the Allan Curtis article. The above photograph is of children playing ice hockey at the Big Dipper circa 1972. The bottom photograph’s caption reads “1936 Championship—hockey was established many years ago in Fairbanks. In the photo above the University of Alaska meets Dawson in the Fairbanks Ice Carnival. UA was victorious.”

1967: Hockey was still, relatively speaking, undeveloped in town. Players from the university and soldiers stationed at Fort Wainwright would compete outside, as Fairbanks was still a year away from the first indoor rink, the Big Dipper, being built.

U of A Hockey Squad Ties Ft. Wainwright

Bob Balster’s unassisted goal with 90 seconds left in the contest salvaged a 2-2 tie for the U of A hockey squad against the Ft. Wainwright Rangers. Armstrong then appeared to tie the game up with five minutes left but after a heated纠缠 the tie was saved.

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In 1967, the local school board struggled to finance the building of an ice rink, which was a much needed addition in order to add winter sports to the local physical education curriculum.51

1968: Hockey on post at Fort Wainwright was revitalized in the late 1960s. One of the Army’s main opponents was the UA Nanooks.52

Below is a photograph of hockey action from the 1968 Winter Carnival. This year local Fairbanks teams and Canadian squads from Whitehorse, Y.T. and Inuvik, N.W.T. competed in the hockey tournament.53

In order to dedicate himself to what was called “Operation Big Dipper” without taking taxpayer dollars, Hez Ray excuses himself from his job as Lathrop High School physical education director “to move an abandoned 220-foot by 167-foot hangar at Tanacross some 200 miles to Fairbanks where it will be used as a youth recreation facility. The area has no such facility now.”

Upon returning from an athletic tournament in Whitehorse, led by Ray, the team of boys “looked at the building and they jokingly said, ‘Hey, why don’t we bring this back to Fairbanks.’ That’s the way it started. Now it’s no joke.”

After a successful relocation of the airplane hangar some 200 miles northwest from Tanacross to Fairbanks, the ice rink portion of the facility is set to open mid-November just in time for hockey season.

1969: UAF erected the rink covering affectionately known as the “Beluga.”

Above is a photograph of the rink dome covering known as the “Beluga” being inflated.

1970: The advertisement to the left for the Big Dipper Ice Arena sponsored by the City Recreation Department promotes recreational ice skating and hockey for youth interested in learning the sport.

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the university’s basketball program, UAF’s hockey program continued to grow with the 1969-1970 season being a pivotal year as the team took on its first out-of-state collegiate squad when nationally ranked Gustavus Adolphus traveled to Fairbanks (above photograph). The addition of the air inflated dome known as the “Beluga” covering a rink was a major boost to UAF hockey.

In October, meetings were held to organize a youth hockey league in Fairbanks modeled after the youth football league, which was then only in its second year of existence. The program planned to compete against Anchorage youth teams, something that had not been done since the 1963-64 season.

Despite still being in the shadow of

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1971: In its first season the youth hockey program was a resounding success.\textsuperscript{62}

1972: Youth hockey continued to flourish in Fairbanks.\textsuperscript{63}

The Big Dipper, while filling an otherwise huge void in area recreational needs, has already been outgrown. The Fairbanks Youth Hockey Program is in need of outdoor facilities this year to augment the Big Dipper due to the fantastic two-year growth of the organization. The wheels of government have turned exceptionally slow on recreational projects such as the Big Dipper, but the desires of the people for whom the government functions, have been made loud and clear by the phenomenal growth of the various recreational programs.

The youth hockey program continued to expand rapidly, so much so that some locals believed more hockey facilities were needed to accommodate said growth. This editorial piece discusses the fact that the much needed Big Dipper has done a great deal for the community in terms of recreation, but now the Borough must help build more of these facilities as the demand for them increases.\textsuperscript{64}


\textsuperscript{64} Ibid, “Eye to the local election,” August 17, 1972, January 5, 2020.
1973: Into its third season, the Fairbanks Youth Hockey Program attracted increased community support. The association’s numbers continued to grow. A local program called “Buy-a-Board” allowed Fairbanksans to pay $15 that would help furnish the 675 sheets of plywood necessary to build nine outdoor rinks at the local schools.65

This photograph shows a local volunteer helping to construct an outdoor rink at Barnette Elementary School through the “Buy-a-Board” program.66

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1974: In a May editorial piece, the News-Miner recommends that the University strongly consider putting funds and effort into building a strong intercollegiate hockey program to attract attention to the school, much like the basketball team and mining engineering program do. Ultimately, the Patty Ice Rink would not be constructed until 1979 when the Nanooks began play as an intercollegiate team, competing against other universities, as opposed to just local Fairbanks and Anchorage men’s teams.67

In December the first intra-city high school hockey game in Fairbanks took place when West and East Lathrop took to the ice against one another.68

1975: In March the Fairbanks Men’s Recreational Hockey League concluded with a tournament. Competing were Chilkoot Charlie’s, East Lathrop, West Lathrop, Sports Cache, Green Construction and Jackovich Tractor. Chilkoot Charlie’s was crowned the champion.

In the Letters to the Editor of an April News-Miner edition, Rich Tarkiainen of the Fairbanks Men’s Recreational Hockey League writes about the success of the 1974-1975 season, which attracted over 100 adults to the league as a way to get exercise and stay active in the winter.69

1975-1976: The First Season

Little in terms of articles from the News-Miner on the Teamsters can be found for the 1975-1976 season, particularly the first half of the season. Local interest in hockey at both the youth and adult levels continued to grow over the course of the season, however. An important milestone was the formation of the Blue Line Club in January of 1976, led by president Marlo Miller and Vice President Gary Atwood. The goal of the non-profit was to raise $1.2 million for a new indoor, year-round ice rink. By June the club had raised $300,000.

In addition to the new rink, a proposition for a three-city, four-team hockey league was put forth. The idea was for the Fairbanks Teamsters, Whitehorse, Anchorage Wolverines, and University of Alaska Anchorage to compete, helping keep local talent in Alaska and the Yukon Territory instead of promising players moving to the Lower 48 or southern Canada for development. The big question was whether the Anchorage Wolverines, then facing financial troubles, would join the fledgling league.

July, 1975: Gary Atwood is named head of Teamsters Local 959.70
January 1976: An article written by *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner* Sports Editor Scott Barry, a.k.a. “Sideliner,” focuses on the explosive growth of hockey in Fairbanks, and Roger McKinnon’s optimism surrounding its growth and expectations. Barry writes, speaking vicariously through McKinnon, that for youth hockey to continue growing in the Interior, the top levels of hockey need to be expanded to a semi-pro league with Anchorage and Canadian towns, and a university program.71

In a late January contest with the University of Alaska Fairbanks, the Teamsters posted an impressive 17-3 victory as Roger McKinnon scored five goals himself. In the article below, McKinnon equates the Teamsters with the semi-professional Anchorage Wolverines.72

In March the “Blue Line Club,” a group of local ice hockey enthusiasts spearheaded by Marlo Miller and Gary Atwood, launched a public fund to finance a public arena closer to downtown as UAF continued work on its $4.8 million ice hockey facility. The arena was part of the plan to help aid the expansion of hockey in Fairbanks, and put a semi-professional team in town.73

April, 1976: The Teamsters beat the Anchorage *All-Stars* at Ben Boeke Arena in a three-game series to capture the first ever Alaska Governors Cup, an event that is now contested between UAF and UAA hockey.74

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Progress for hockey league

Progress is being made toward creating a regional hockey league, and Fairbanks would have a team.

Gary Atwood, a member of the Blue Line Club and president of the Teamsters hockey team, said Whitehorse, Fairbanks and Anchorage might field teams to play in the new league.

Whitehorse is interested in joining the proposed league, Atwood said, while the Anchorage Wolverines might join.

Presently, the Fairbanks Teamsters play only in local city league competition, as do teams.

chorage will field a varsity hockey team next year and Atwood has contacted the university about having their team play in the league.

If they joined, Anchorage could have the University team and the Wolverines in the league. Fairbanks would field a team and the fourth squad would be made up of Whitehorse area players.

"We plan to have a few exhibition games too, with clubs coming up from Calgary, Edmonton, Portland or Reno to play in each city our league plays in," Atwood said.

June, 1976: The Blue Line Club raised over $300,000 for a new arena in anticipation of the three-city, four team semi-professional hockey league. The projected cost for the arena was $1.2 million. Both Marlo Miller and Gary Atwood, president and vice president of the Blue Line Club respectively, felt the increased interest in ice hockey and ice sports necessitated another indoor artificial ice rink.

Above is a sketch of the building printed in a News-Miner article.  

May, 1976: Great progress was being made toward the formation of a four team semi-professional hockey league to include the Fairbanks Teamsters, Anchorage Wolverines, University of Alaska Anchorage, and Whitehorse.  

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1976-1977: The Second Season

With hockey being a relatively new organized sport, and the Teamsters being an even newer team in Fairbanks, few articles for the 1976-1977 season can be found. Prior to the start of the season, plans for a three-city, four-team league were scratched in August due to the withdrawal of the University of Alaska Anchorage and the Anchorage Wolverines. The Blue Line Club, a nonprofit organization formed in January 1976, desperately continued to raise funds for a new year-round artificial ice arena. The prebuilt rink was being shipped to Fairbanks, but the opening of the rink continued to be postponed. The rink was to be located at the old city impound lot across from Growden Field.

The photograph on the right depicts a December contest between in-state rivals Anchorage Wolverines and Fairbanks Teamsters.77

1977-1978 Season

In its inaugural season as the Fairbanks Gold Kings, the team achieved major milestones. The organization dropped the team name Teamsters in favor of the Gold Kings. It was Joe Jackovich, an original stockholder and owner of Jackovich Tractor and Equipment Co., who came up with the name combining references to the gold mining history of Fairbanks, the Goldpanners baseball team of Fairbanks, and his favorite professional hockey team the Los Angeles Kings. With some new faces and many familiar returning players, the Gold Kings trounced the Anchorage Wolverines in a best-of-three contest for the Alaska Governor’s Cup. In April, the team traveled to Roseau, Minnesota, thanks to the fundraising efforts of local supporters of the team. The team beat the Grand Forks Wheat Kings and Bemidji Blues but lost to R-K Design of Redford, Michigan 9-3 in the championship game.

Roster

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<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Paul Malette</td>
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<td>Jim Ozimkoski</td>
<td>Charlie Freese</td>
<td>Chuck Cartier</td>
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<td>Brent Cole</td>
<td>Gary Whiteley</td>
<td>Jim Lydon</td>
<td>Gary Swenson</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Schedule

November 11-12: Anchorage Wolverines
November 25-27: Victoria Maple Leafs
December 2-3: Anchorage Wolverines
December 16-17: Seattle Indians
January 6-7: Juan DeFuca Merchants
January 13-14: Anchorage Wolverines
January 18-19: Vermillion Night Hawks
January 27-28: Whitehorse
February 3-4: Spokane Expo’s
February 10-11: Anchorage Wolverines
February 24-25: RCMP Islanders

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YES, VIRGINIA, THERE IS A semi-pro hockey team in the Golden Heart City, and it’s about to graduate from its semi-city-league status in the guise of the Fairbanks Gold Kings.

Don’t believe it, huh?

Well what if it was reported that a nucleus of 11 stockholders met Friday of last week at the Traveler’s Inn to lay the groundwork for a corporation under that name. And what if it they’ve already released a schedule for a 29-game season that includes 21 home dates?

Suddenly the story becomes more believable, particularly among those of the persuasion that it’s a crying shame Fairbanks has neither a college or bonafide city team to brag about despite the absence of a first-class rink.

WELL THERE IS SUCH A GROUP ready to put its best foot and sports dollar forward to promote a team in Fairbanks. The details came out Tuesday over a hot beef sandwich in the company of former Teamsters hockey coach Roger McKinnon, who has been named player-coach for the new team.
In October, stockholders Gary Atwood, John Rosie, Joe Jackovich, Thomas Paskvan, Jim Laiti, Charles Freeze, Wayne King, Bob Durkee, Ed Joss and Jim Lounsbury met at the Traveler’s Inn (where the Westmark Hotel now stands) to form the Gold Kings corporation. Most of the Gold Kings players came from the predecessor team, the Teamsters, but the roster was finalized after tryouts.78

With a few new faces and many returning players, the newly formed semi-professional hockey team known as the Fairbanks Gold Kings opened their inaugural season on the road against the Anchorage Wolverines. The team had a 31-game schedule, lending legitimacy to the organization. While the Wolverines had been practicing for three weeks, the Gold Kings were limited to just one week on the ice before facing off against Anchorage.79

In an early December match-up between the Gold Kings and Anchorage Wolverines, a massive bench-clearing brawl broke out in the second period. Both teams were assessed 22 penalty minutes and sent to the locker rooms prematurely. Note the fans, egging on the brawlers, hanging from the chainlink fencing that once encircled the rink at the Big Dipper.80

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Gary Swensen, left, and Chuck Cartier, right.  

The Gold Kings swept the Governor’s Cup with three wins against the Anchorage Wolverines. In the photograph below, Gold Kings players celebrate the victory on the ice.  

In April, the Gold Kings, thanks to a community fundraising effort, advanced to Roseau, Minnesota for the U.S. National Senior Intermediate Hockey Tournament. The team placed second to R-K Design of Redford, Michigan.  

**1978-1979 Season**  
In October, team management and Roger McKinnon debated making the head coaching position a salaried job. Eventually a decision was reached to leave the position unpaid, given the unpaid status of the entire team, and McKinnon agreed to stay on as head coach. Later, in November, the Gold Kings raised adult ticket prices from $4.00 to $5.00 to help keep the organization afloat financially. Perhaps one of the most infamous moments in Gold Kings history occurred when the team met with the Burnaby Lakers in Fairbanks in January of 1979. A Burnaby player punched head referee Gary Whitley in the face. The Gold Kings retaliated, and the officiating crew ended the game early as a result of the confrontation. Following the game,  

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83 Olson, “Kings face Dakovans Saturday.”
Gary Atwood harangued and berated Whitley and the other officials for ending the contest so soon. Tired of the physical and verbal abuse endured that evening, Whitley and his co-officials stormed out of the locker room, vowing there and then to never officiate another Gold Kings game.

The Gold Kings set another organization landmark this season as they posted their first shutout in team history, beating the Victoria, B.C. Athletics 11-0. At the conclusion of the season in their second National Tournament appearance in Detroit, the Kings again took second place. The Blue Line Club was continuing to promote a multi-use arena, collecting donations, and hoping to open the structure by the winter of 1979 for hockey and skating.

Roster

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Gary Swenson</td>
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<td>Tim Waggoner</td>
<td>Sandy Imlach</td>
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<td>Dave Teets</td>
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<td>Jim Ozimkoski</td>
<td>Joey Behling</td>
<td>Matt Stephl</td>
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Schedule

November 10-11: Anchorage Wolverines
November 17-18: Anchorage Wolverines
November 24-26: Vancouver Pharaohs
December 1-3: Victoria Maple Leafs
December 8-10: Juan DeFuca Merchants
December 15-17: Seattle Indians
January 5-6: Anchorage Wolverines
January 12-14: Vancouver North Shore Winterhawks
January 19-20: Anchorage Wolverines
January 26-28: Vancouver Burnaby Lakers
February 2-4: Victoria Athletics
February 9-11: Vancouver Pastimes
February 16-18: District 69 Golden Eagles B.C.
February 23-25: Seattle Indians
March 2-4: Simon Fraser University
March 9-11: Vancouver Burnaby Timbers
March 16-17: Governor’s Cup Playoffs
March 23-25: Governor’s Cup Playoffs
In November the Gold Kings prepared to open the season against the Anchorage Wolverines.\footnote{Olson, “Gold Kings prime for season opener,” News-Miner, November 8, 1978.}

In the photograph to the left Gold King Tim Waggoner and Anchorage Wolverine Emelio Beaver battle for the puck. Beaver is considered a pioneer of Alaskan hockey, breaking down the race barrier as an African-American player.\footnote{Muehling photographer, “Wrist Action,” November 18, 1978.}
The Gold Kings helped start new teams for adult and youth players alike. To satisfy the growing popularity of the sport in Fairbanks, McKinnon and the Gold Kings created an intermediate men’s team known as the Polar Bears for those who did not make the cut for the Gold Kings. For teenage players ages 15-16 who either attended a school without a squad or failed to make their high school team, they created a Midget team.86

January 1979: A News-Miner article captured an on-ice brawl after an attack on a game official by the Burnaby Lakers.87

After being harangued by Gary Atwood for ending the game prematurely, referee Gary Whitely and co-officials quit officiating Gold Kings games.88

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In February, the Anchorage Wolverines folded for financial reasons. The disbanding of the Anchorage team, due to ever-increasing debt, put a strain on the Gold Kings to keep competitive hockey alive in the state of Alaska.89

The Gold Kings set a team landmark, posting the team’s first ever shutout against the Victoria, B.C. Athletics in 50-below weather.90

In April, the Gold Kings placed second again at the National Tournament.⁹²

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⁹² Ibid., “Gold Kings come up on the short end of stick again,” April 2, 1979.
1979-1980 Season

In September 1979, John Rosie discussed the greatest challenges for the Fairbanks Gold Kings organization in an interview with Fairbanks Daily News-Miner sports writer Keith Olson. Rosie reported high operating costs, finding more competitive opponents, securing adequate ice time, needing to grow fan support, and negotiating player contracts as the main challenges. Also adding to Rosie’s headaches for the 1979-1980 season was the temporary absence of coach Roger McKinnon, who returned to his native Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan to help his family after his father suffered a stroke in November. McKinnon returned in December to reclaim his position from Bruce Laiti who took over the role in his absence. Furthermore, unseasonably warm weather and the uncompleted UAF Patty Rink left the Gold Kings painfully short of ice time for practices.

The Gold Kings played several highly anticipated and competitive matchups over the course of the season. They competed with Pueblo, Colorado, a team that won the Aspen Cup as the best Colorado squad, and put the trophy on the line against Fairbanks. The hometown heroes also competed for the Mayor’s Cup during Anchorage’s Fur Rendezvous, and their own Governor’s Cup during the Winter Carnival against an all-star team comprised of Anchorage’s best. In March, one of Michigan’s top teams, Houghton, put their Copper Cup up for grabs against the Kings. On the heels of Houghton, the St. Paul Parkers, a senior men’s league dynasty and perennial powerhouse, competed with the Gold Kings for the Anderson Cup. The Gold Kings proved victorious against Houghton, but lost to the St. Paul Parkers. These matchups would continue to define the Gold Kings’ schedule over the coming years. The Kings did not play in the National Tournament this season, but several of their opponents from this season including Pueblo and Houghton placed high in the tournament, proving the Gold Kings’ caliber.

Roster

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mike Roy</th>
<th>Jim Lydon</th>
<th>Ronald Muir</th>
<th>Chris Fagan</th>
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<td>Bruce Laiti</td>
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<td>Dave Teets</td>
<td>Pete Larsen</td>
<td>Jim Dufford</td>
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Schedule

<table>
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<th>November 22-25: Thanksgiving</th>
<th>February 8-10: Port Alberini, B.C.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tournament</td>
<td>February 15-17: Portland Royals</td>
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<td>December 7-9: Trail, B.C.</td>
<td>February 22-24: B.C. Tournament</td>
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<td>December 15-16: Anchorage Visa</td>
<td>February 29-March 2: Seattle Indians</td>
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<td>December 21-22: Boise, ID</td>
<td>March 7-9: Casper, Wyoming</td>
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<td>Winterhawks</td>
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In a September interview with News-Miner sports editor Keith Olson, John Rosie discussed the challenges the organization faced in the coming season. He cited high operating costs, scheduling tougher teams, securing sufficient ice time, the need to increase fan support, and negotiating contract terms to alleviate player discontent as the greatest challenges.93

To the right is a 1979 advertisement for Sport King, Roger McKinnon’s sporting goods store that was considered “Hockey Central” in town. While now permanently closed, the building is located on Kalakaket Street behind the Safeway on the West End of Fairbanks.94

The UAF Patty Ice Rink neared completion in the late autumn of 1979. John Rosie and the Gold Kings had to negotiate ice time at the rink, something not easily done, given the competition for fans between UAF and the Gold Kings that would materialize over the years.95

Rod Chiupka battles against a player from Campbell’s Catering in the Gold Kings’ inaugural four-team Thanksgiving Tournament held at the UAF Patty Ice Arena.96

In March, the Gold Kings bested Houghton, Michigan in the Copper Cup. Over the years this would become a defining event for the Gold Kings.97

At the end of March the Gold Kings lost to the St. Paul Parkers in the Anderson Cup. Like the Copper Cup and Governor’s Cup, this would become a landmark title the Gold Kings chased over the years against the St. Paul Parkers.98

1980-1981 Season

During the course of the 1980-1981 season, extremely cold weather forced the Gold Kings to cancel some matches because of the Big Dipper’s primitive conditions. In January, the Gold Kings beat Superior, Wisconsin in Fairbanks for the Great Lakes Cup. The Vancouver Pharaohs cancelled their January match with the Gold Kings for financial reasons. The Gold Kings played the renowned Flying Fathers, a team of Canadian Catholic priests who put on exhibition games around Canada and the United States in an effort to raise money for local charities.

More scheduling problems plagued Rosie and the Gold Kings in March. The Aspen, Colorado team fired its coach earlier in the year, resulting in a loss of talent that left the team rudderless and ill-prepared to fly to Fairbanks to face the Kings. Fairbanks was slated to compete for the Mayor’s Cup as a part of the Fur Rendezvous in Anchorage. The mid-week start of the tournament was problematic for the working Gold Kings players, however, and Anchorage was not willing to pick up the tab for the Gold Kings, as the Fairbanks organization had done when the Anchorage All-Stars traveled north to play. In late March, on the heels of sellout crowd home games against the Redford, Michigan Stars, came unfortunate news that the Borough filed a lawsuit against the organization for back taxes. When asked about the matter by a News-Miner reporter, Rosie said, “the matter would be discussed at the next board meeting and then the Borough would be contacted to resolve any differences.” The Gold Kings placed third at the National Tournament.

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<tr>
<th>Mike Roy</th>
<th>Rich Hayward</th>
<th>Mike Miscovitch</th>
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Schedule

November 8: UAF
November 14: UAF
November 21-22: Seattle Indians
November 28-30: Lansing, MI
December 5-7: Juan de Fuca Merchants
December 12-14: Lloydminster, Alberta
December 19-22: Colorado
January 16-17: Vancouver
January 23-25: Superior, WI

January 30-31: Anchorage
February 6-8: Flying Fathers
February 13-15: Victoria
February 20-22: Mayor’s Cup in Anchorage
March 6-8: Pueblo, CO
March 13-15: Anchorage
April: National Tournament

Roger McKinnon and the Gold Kings will long be remembered for helping prepare Fairbanks youth to take to the ice. This photograph captures a June 1980 hockey clinic.100

In November the Gold Kings opened the season with two contests against the University of Alaska Fairbanks Nanooks. The photograph below depicts action during one of the games.101

Jim Greiner, author of the newspaper piece below and father of a hockey player, provides advice on equipping children for hockey. Greiner says, “Of all the aspects of finding that my youngest aspires to the likes of ‘The Rocket’ Richard, Bobbie Hull, and someone named Laiti, perhaps the gear that he wears is most baffling.” Further along in the article, Greiner states, “All youth hockey players, my son included, hold the Gold Kings in high esteem, and our own local semi-pros are well represented on most of the practice jerseys worn by the kids. In fact, so intense is this esteem that one runs the risk of being high-sticked should the Gold Kings’ name be taken in vain.”

In March, the Gold Kings took on the Redford, Michigan Stars in a three-game home contest. Redford was considered one of the strongest teams in the country. Redford beat Fairbanks in all three games.

April, 1981: Gold Kings placed third at nationals.

1981-1982 Season

In December 1981, the team underwent an organizational restructure, becoming a non-profit corporation, with John Rosie serving as president. The Kings were scheduled to open the season against defending Minnesota State champions Duluth, but the later canceled their visit due to players quitting in the weeks leading up to the match. In late February and early March, the Gold Kings earned two big wins against the Redford (Michigan) Stars, a team that had previously dominated the Fairbanks players. Near the end of the season the Gold Kings out-

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scored the Anchorage All-Stars, which allowed the team to retain the coveted Governor’s Cup. As the Gold Kings did not compete in the National Tournament this season, their year concluded on a high note of trouncing the Anchorage All-Stars in the contest for the Governor’s Cup.

Roster

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ron Olund</th>
<th>Bill Duquette</th>
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<th>Paul Beckman</th>
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<td>Jim Ozimkoski</td>
<td>George McVittie</td>
<td>Gary Swenson</td>
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</tbody>
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Schedule

January 29-30: Anchorage
February 5-7: Chicago
February 26-28: Redford, MI
March 5-7: Minneapolis Bruins
March 12-14: Minneapolis Bar Flies
March 23: Governor’s Cup (Fairbanks)
March 26-27: Governor’s Cup (Anchorage)

October, 1981: A letter sent to the News-Miner urges the community to financially support the team, claiming that the team faces dissolution, putting all of Fairbanks hockey in jeopardy.105

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The Gold Kings had a tough go of it in their first games against Anchorage, losing a few of the contests against a team they traditionally dominated.\textsuperscript{106}

The photograph to the right captures the intense rivalry between the Gold Kings and the Anchorage All-Stars as the two teams frequently played one another, often ending the season with a contest for the Governor’s Cup.\textsuperscript{107}

The Gold Kings did not compete in the National Tournament, but ended their season on a high note with a three-game cleanup of the Anchorage All-Stars, which gave the team a wide berth to the Governor’s Cup.

\textbf{1982-1983 Season}

This was a milestone year for the Gold Kings as they beat the Griffin Sporting Good Stars of Michigan for their first national championship title victory in April of 1983. Such a monumental victory opened up new avenues for the Gold Kings such as increased recruiting success (men wanted to play for national champions) and gave the team the credibility and respect needed to begin hosting international teams. The regular season docket was filled with high-caliber teams, as the Gold Kings battled several Canadian squads and perennial


powerhouses from Minnesota. The Kings even competed against the Minneapolis-based Team USA, comprised of former professional and national team players. After spending most of the last couple of seasons at the Patty Ice Arena on the UAF campus, the Gold Kings finally moved back to a newly renovated Big Dipper, a rink they would call home for the remainder of their stay in Fairbanks, with the exception of some minor repair closures over the years that forced the Kings to the Carlson Center. The rink was equipped with a new artificial ice system, clear plexiglass allowing easy viewing of the action, new seats replacing the wooden bleachers, and indoor heating to protect spectators and players alike from the winter elements. In 1983 Rosie and the organization made a successful bid to host the 1984 U.S. Intermediate Senior Men’s National Ice Hockey Championships in Fairbanks. The Gold Kings earned the support of the City Council, Borough Assembly, and Chamber of Commerce.108

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<td>Charlie Freese</td>
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<td>Mark Sanford</td>
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<tr>
<td>John Haddad</td>
<td>Ron Olund</td>
<td>Tim Waggoner</td>
<td>D.J. Olund</td>
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Schedule

November 12-13: Nanaimo, B.C.
November 19-20: Calgary, Alberta
November 25-27: St. Paul Parkers
December 3-4: Fort St. John, B.C.
December 10-11: Seattle Indians
December 17-18: Sun Valley
January 21-22: Bonneyville, Alberta
January 28-29: Warroad, MN Lakers
February 4-5: St. Paul Saints
February 11-12: Kimberly, B.C.
February 18-19: Innisfail, Alberta
February 25-26: Bonneyville, Alberta
March 4-5: Hastings, MN Merchants
March 18-19: Sun Valley
April 7-9: National Tournament in St. Louis

The Gold Kings had their best schedule yet in 1982-1983, with several Canadian teams and top Minnesota teams coming to Fairbanks to play. In the photograph, Dave Teets and John Haddad take the puck from an Anchorage All-Star player from the 1981-1982 season.\(^\text{109}\)

In the annual competition for the Anderson Cup, the Gold Kings achieved their first win against the St. Paul Parkers on home ice in late November. The Gold Kings went on to beat the St. Paul Parkers in a best-of-three to clinch the Anderson Cup.\(^\text{110}\)

In the photograph to the left, Gold King Ron Muir battles along the board for the puck with a Fort St. John’s player. \(^\text{111}\)

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The photograph to the right shows Gold Kings head coach Roger McKinnon as the Gold Kings prepared to vie for the national championship in St. Louis.112

In April, the Gold Kings beat the Griffin Sporting Goods Stars of Michigan for their first national title, a feat that raised the Gold Kings’ international profile and enabled the organization to attract higher-caliber players.113

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1983-1984 Season

Thanks to the trademark perseverance of John Rosie and the Gold Kings, Fairbanks was awarded the American Hockey Association of the United States 1984 Senior National Invitational Ice Hockey Tournament in the summer of 1983, months before the season’s opening. In May, a feature article in the opinion section of the News-Miner analyzed the positive economic impacts of the Gold Kings on Fairbanks. John Rosie had reported to the Chamber of Commerce that:

60,000 people attended the games
this year. Three local high schools that handled the ticket
sales split the profits 50-50, and organizations that
manned the concession booths did
well too. Visiting teams spent about
$5,000 per weekend, plus what they
spent on hotel or motel rooms.\(^\text{114}\)

Before the opening game of the season against the Killum, Alberta Indians, before a roaring Fairbanks crowd, Rosie presented the Gold Kings with the national trophy they had won the previous spring. The Gold Kings played another impressive season, racking up victories against a variety of highly ranked Midwest and Canadian teams.

Roster

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>John Haddad</th>
<th>Dave Teets</th>
<th>Bill Duquette</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tim Waggoner</td>
<td>Jim Ozimkoski</td>
<td>D.J. Olund</td>
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<td>Joey Behling</td>
<td>Chuck Catier</td>
<td>Ron Olund</td>
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<tr>
<td>Keith Behling</td>
<td>Mark Weber</td>
<td>Ron Muir</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mark Sanford</td>
<td>Jim Lydon</td>
<td>Rod Chiupka</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tim Lawson</td>
<td>Tim Lee</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Schedule
November 11-12: Killum, Alberta Indians
November 18-19: Anchorage All-Stars
November 24-26: St. Paul Parkers
December 2-3: Minneapolis Bucks
December 9-10: Lloydminster, Alberta
December 16-17: Stony Plane, Alberta Eagles
January 13-14: Bonnyville, Alberta Warriors
January 20-21: Innisfail, Alberta Eagles
January 27-28: Regina, Saskatchewan

February 3-4: St. Paul Saints
February 10-11: Fort St. John, B.C. Flyers
February 17-18: Hastings, MI Merchants
February 24-25: Detroit O’Leary Hawks
March 2: Bonneyville, Alberta
March 3: Llyodminster, Alberta
March 9-10: Sun Valley, Idaho Suns
March 16-17: Alberta Major All-Stars
March 23-24: Anchorage

The Gold Kings started the season against the Killum, Alberta Indians at the Big Dipper. The team received a standing ovation from more than 2,400 fans in the tightly packed Big Dipper for their first home game of the season since winning the senior men’s national championship the previous season. In the photograph to the right, John Rosie hands the national trophy to captain Rod Chiupka before the game.  

Around Thanksgiving time, Bob Eley wrote an article defending his choice of never watching the Anchorage-based late November basketball tournament known as the Great Alaska Shootout over the Gold Kings. He argues that on a per capita basis, the Gold Kings are far more popular, and that their brand of hockey is more enjoyable to watch than college basketball.116

Chuck Cartier and Rod Chiupka scramble for the puck in a December contest against the Minneapolis Bucks.117

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The Minneapolis Bucks displayed their deep gratitude for the warm atmosphere of Fairbanks and the helpfulness of the Gold Kings staff during the Minneapolis Bucks’ December visit to Fairbanks.\(^\text{118}\)

To the Editor:
Early this month the Minneapolis Bucks were invited to play a two-game ice hockey series in Fairbanks against the Gold Kings. Few of our players had ever been to Alaska, and we would like to “take off our hats” to the city of Fairbanks, which we found to be friendly beyond imagination.
All of our dealings from the beginning with the Gold Kings staff, reflected the sociable atmosphere we found so special in Fairbanks.
Thank you, for a great weekend!
Yours truly,
Roger J. Buck
Buck’s Hockey Club

In February, the Gold Kings swept the visiting Detroit O’Leary Hawks. In the photograph below, John Haddad and Joey Behling confront some of the visiting players in front of the net.\(^\text{119}\)


In pursuit of another national hockey title

Since the Senior Men’s National Ice Hockey Tournament opened Thursday morning at the Big Dipper, the intensity on the ice and in the stands has been high, but it has been especially high when the defending national champions Alaska Gold Kings are on the ice. On Friday night about 1,200 fans turned out to watch the Gold Kings skate to a 7-7 tie against Superior. When in what many observers felt was one of the most exciting hockey games played at the Dipper.

The crowd went wild when Kyle Larson scored the game tying goal with less than three minutes to play. The referee had to hold up play for almost a minute because of the uproar.

The enthusiasm was much the same Friday night when the Gold Kings faced the Niagara Falls Warrior in a must-win game.

When the Gold Kings finally won ahead of Superior Falls, 3-1, with a Timmy Lee goal late in the first period, the crowd went berserk. It was the first time the Gold Kings had won a game this tournament, and the crowd continued to make its presence felt throughout the evening as the Gold Kings edged to a 2-1 victory.

The intensity level will get even higher tonight when the tournament semifinals take place at 6 p.m. and 9 p.m. at the Big Dipper. The national champion will be determined at 4 p.m. Sunday.

By BOB ELEY
Sports Editor

Chicago Alumnus forward Dave Brevoort rests in the locker room between periods during Chicago’s match against the Seattle Indians.
The article above displays the action for the 1984 national championship tournament, which the Fairbanks Gold Kings had the honor of hosting. The Kings, again, went far in the tournament, posting a second-place finish to the Minneapolis Bucks.120

1984-1985 Season

This was another landmark season for the Gold Kings as they hosted their first World International Invitational in which Austria, Japan, and the Netherlands participated. This was the opening for the Gold Kings into the international hockey world. The Gold Kings competed in the National Tournament where they finished second to their rival the Minneapolis Bucks.

Roster

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rod Chiupka</th>
<th>Tim Lee</th>
<th>Mark Weber</th>
<th>Mel Bailey</th>
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<tr>
<td>Timbo Lawson</td>
<td>Ron Muir</td>
<td>Paul Burke</td>
<td>Joey Shawhan</td>
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<td>Bruce Laiti</td>
<td>Joey Behling</td>
<td>D.J. Olund</td>
<td>Peter M. Larsen</td>
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<td>Kyle Larson</td>
<td>Mark Sanford</td>
<td>Fred DeVuono</td>
<td>John Bergo</td>
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<td>Jordan Wolter</td>
<td>Tim Waggoner</td>
<td>Chuck Cartier</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jim Lydon</td>
<td>John Haddad</td>
<td>Ron Olund</td>
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Schedule

November 9-10: Le Duc Bruins
November 16-17: Superior, Wisconsin
November 22-24: St. Paul Parkers
November 20-December 1: Grand Center Grizzlies
December 7-8: Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan
December 14-15: Anchorage
December 3-January 3: Trip to Holland
January 18-19: Killum Alberta Indians
January 25-26: Stony Plain Eagles
February 1-2: Minneapolis Bucks
February 8-9: Regina
February 15-16: Figure Skaters Show
February 22-23: Sacramento Rebels
March 2: Austria
March 5-6 and 8-9: Fairbanks World Invitational
March 15-16: Hastings Merchants
March 22-23: Open
March 29-31: U.S. Nationals

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In March of 1985 the Gold Kings played the Austrian, Japanese, and Dutch national teams in the inaugural World Invitational Tournament held in Fairbanks.\textsuperscript{121}

In April, the Gold Kings concluded the season with another second place finish to the Minneapolis Bucks in the National Tournament.

**1985-1986 Season**

The Gold Kings had a slightly new look after the retirement of several seasoned players and the recruitment of new icemen.\textsuperscript{122} In February, the team made its first ever trip to Canada, where they took on Alberta’s Stony Plain Eagles. The Gold Kings set the bar high for themselves again with another Gold Kings International Invitational where they played the national teams of Norway and Yugoslavia, and the Canadian representative, the Moose Jaw Generals. Fairbanksan Horace Royal wrote an opinion piece published in the *News-Miner* in which he chastised Bob Eley for what he termed his glorification of the Gold Kings, and criticized the Gold Kings for their style of play, which he considered too frequently violent. This was emblematic of the city schism between Gold Kings and Nanooks fans. The Gold Kings’s style of play, however, with fights often interspersed throughout games was customary for senior men’s hockey at this time. The team had planned to attend the Men’s National Tournament, but was forced to abandon their plans after several players left for employment on the North Slope oil fields.\textsuperscript{123}

\textsuperscript{121} John M. Sweeney, “Austrians are here and they are BIG!,” *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, March 1, 1985; Sweeney, Sam Winch photographer, “Kings lose early lead to powerful Japanese,” March 6, 1985.


Roster

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Joey Behling</th>
<th>Timbo Lawson</th>
<th>Fred Devuono</th>
<th>John Haddad</th>
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<td>Bill Duquette</td>
<td>John Berko</td>
<td>Jerry Howard</td>
<td>Chris Cahill</td>
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<td>Ward Wallin</td>
<td>Jordan Wolter</td>
<td>Bill Barton</td>
<td>Todd Lawson</td>
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<td>D.J. Olund</td>
<td>Mark Maroste</td>
<td>Jim Barton</td>
<td>Shane Hinada</td>
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<td>Steve Murphy</td>
<td>Tim Lee</td>
<td>Ron Muir</td>
<td>Dave Hall</td>
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Schedule

November 8-9: Calgary Hawks
November 15-16: St. Paul Parkers
November 22-23: Leduc, Alberta Bruins
November 29-30: Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan Generals
December 6-7: Edmonton
December 13-14: Stony Plain, Alberta Eagles
December 20-21: Sun Valley, Idaho
January 10-11: Detroit O’Leary Hawks
January 17-18: Lloydminster, Alberta Border Kings
January 24-25: Killam, Alberta Indians
January 31-February 1: Regina Bruins
February 7-8: Edmonton
February 14-15: Portland Royals
February 21-22: Fresno Falcons
March 1: Yugoslavia National Team
March 4-8: Gold King World Invitational: Yugoslavia, Norway, Moose Jaw Generals

In October, Bob Eley wrote a piece about the coming Gold Kings’ season, calling it a new era. Eley notes that the gradually attained prominence of the Gold Kings, beginning in 1975, put them in a position where they could invite players from outside of Alaska to come north and try out for the team.124

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November 1985: Eley reminisces about the original Gold Kings, termed the “Old Kings,” noting that had it not been for them, the current Gold Kings likely would not exist.125

December 1985: Horace Royal writes an opinion piece criticizing *News-Miner* sports writer Bob Eley for his praise of the Gold Kings.126

In February, the Gold Kings embarked on the team’s first trip to Canada.127

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To the right is an advertisement for the second Gold Kings Hockey International Tournament.¹²⁸

To the left is a photograph of the captain of the Yugoslavian national team in Fairbanks as a part of the International Tournament.¹²⁹

In late March, the Gold Kings had decided to embark on a trip to the National Tournament despite the departure of several players to the North Slope. The team was later forced to abandon their trip because too many players were unavailable due to work commitments.130

1986-1987 Season

On par for the course, the 1986-1987 season marked another spectacular performance by the Gold Kings. In October, prior to the season starting, Chuck Cartier assumed the role of coach as Roger McKinnon moved to the general manager position. During the middle of the season the Gold Kings announced their new mascot in the form of a personified skating hockey puck. The Gold Kings accomplished what many consider their greatest hockey feat, tying the Soviet National B Team 4-4. The title “Soviet National B Team” belied the caliber of the players, who hailed from the best Soviet club teams such as Moscow Dynamo, the Red Army, and the Moscow Wings. The Gold Kings concluded the season with their Third World Invitational in which they placed fourth out of four teams, losing to Norway in the third place game. Canada beat Sweden in Anchorage to capture the crown. Some local fans expressed discontent over the season ending, as they saw it, prematurely without a trip to the U.S. Senior Men’s National Tournament.

Roster

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Player Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John Bergo</td>
<td>Dirk Anderson</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jordan Wolter</td>
<td>John Haddad</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tim Lee</td>
<td>Brad Corbett</td>
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<td>Chris Cahill</td>
<td>D.J. Olund</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paul Burke</td>
<td>Buddy Bender</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oey Behling</td>
<td>Rick Trupp</td>
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Schedule
November 7-8: Kenai
November 14-15: Calgary Hawks
November 21-22: Stony Plain Eagles
November 28-29: Kenai Mic-Macs
December 5-6: St. Paul Parkers
December 12-13: Whitehorse
December 19-20: Calgary
January 9-10: Detroit O’Leary Hawks
January 16-17: Calgary All Stars
January 23-34: Grand Prairie Athletics
January 30-31: Lloydminster Border Kings
February 6-7: Moose Jaw Generals
February 13-14: Kimberly
February 20-21: Whitehorse
February 27-28: Minneapolis Moby Dicks
March 6-7: Moose Jaw Generals

In early October, Chuck Cartier became the new coach of the Gold Kings as Roger McKinnon moved to the role of general manager.131

The laudatory piece to the right highlights McKinnon’s deep roots in hockey and passion for the game, which he began playing at the age of five in his hometown of Sault Ste. Marie on Michigan’s Upper Peninsula.132

In December, the Gold Kings unveiled their new mascot, an anthropomorphized hockey puck on skates.133

The Gold Kings played the Soviet National B Team in early January. The Soviet team was comprised of players from Russian clubs Moscow Dynamo Club, the Red Army, and Moscow Wings. The Gold Kings lost the first game and tied the second match.134

February, 1987: The Gold Kings renewed their rivalry with Anchorage’s new team the Anchorage Shooting Stars.

March, 1987: The Gold Kings participated in the third World Invitational Tournament split between Anchorage and Fairbanks, with Norway, Sweden, and Canada competing. NHL scouts from several NHL organizations were on hand to identify potential talent.

Canada beat Sweden in Anchorage to win the tournament. The Gold Kings ended the 1986-1987 season losing to Norway in the third place game.135

1987-1988 Season

The Gold Kings had another strong season over the course of 1987-1988. They hosted the 1988 Olympic Hockey Preview, playing against the national teams of Austria, Poland, Norway, France, and Switzerland. While they dropped their first three games during the Preview, they enjoyed a dramatic win over the Norwegian squad. The relationship between the Kings and Nanooks convalesced under new Nanooks’ coach Don Lucia. In November, the two teams put on a light-hearted hockey match in the “Nanooks-Gold Kings Jamboree” where players mixed up the teams. The two Fairbanks squads competed again in February to the delight of local hockey fans.

In April, the Gold Kings won their second national championship in Sun Valley, Idaho five years after winning the tournament for the first time in 1983. Post-season, the organization received word from Juneau that the state government was considering funding the Gold Kings to travel abroad and bring more international competition to Alaska. During Fairbanks’s annual tradition of Golden Days in July, the Gold Kings sponsored a visit by Edmonton Oilers’ defenseman and Stanley Cup champion Steven Smith to participate in the parade.

Roster

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jim Barton</th>
<th>Ken Haman</th>
<th>Dave Olsen</th>
<th>Jordy Wolter</th>
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<tr>
<td>Bill Barton</td>
<td>Curt Franklin</td>
<td>Alan Morton</td>
<td>Jay Weaver</td>
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<td>Alba Brice</td>
<td>Curt Jennings</td>
<td>Jamie Smith</td>
<td>Kory Wright</td>
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<td>Chris Cahill</td>
<td>Tim Lee</td>
<td>Mark Reinikka</td>
<td>John Roehl</td>
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<td>Steve Charbonneau</td>
<td>Kevin Milles</td>
<td>George Thiel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bill Duquette</td>
<td>Ryce Miller</td>
<td>Mike Cuzak</td>
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Schedule

November 7: UAF Jamboree
November 13-14: Seattle Indians
November 21-22: Banff Hawks
November 26-28: Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan Generals
December 4-5: St. Paul Parkers
January 8-9: Yukon Arctic Winter Games
January 15-16: Sault Ste. Marie, MI
January 22-23: Fort Qu’Appelle Lakers
January 29-30: Wayburn, Saskatchewan Devils
February 4-10: Alaska Gold Kings 1988 International Olympic Preview featuring Austria, Poland, Norway, France, and Switzerland
February 26-27: UAF
A *News-Miner* article, on the right, from September 1987 illustrates the cultural importance of the Gold Kings to Fairbanks.136

November, 1987: The Gold Kings and UAF displayed the ability to cooperate and coexist. The two organizations exhibited greater amiability towards one another under first-year UAF coach Don Lucia. They even mixed up rosters in a lighthearted “Nanook-Gold Kings Jamboree.” Don Lucia told the *News-Miner* that “There is definitely room in town for a university hockey team and the Gold Kings.”137

To the right is an advertisement for the Gold Kings 1988 Olympic Hockey Preview Tournament.138

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The Gold Kings began looking to the Whitehorse (Yukon Territory) Taku Stallions, for a new northern rival, given Anchorage’s inability to maintain a consistent senior men’s team.\(^{139}\)

In early February, excitement was brewing for the Olympic Hockey Preview, which brought France, Norway, Austria, Poland, and Switzerland to Fairbanks to play the Gold Kings.\(^{140}\)

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After dropping the first three contests of the Olympic Hockey Preview, the Gold Kings shocked the Norwegian Olympic Team with a 3-2 victory.\textsuperscript{141}

In April, the Gold Kings won their second national championship in Sun Valley, Idaho.\textsuperscript{142}


\textsuperscript{142} News-Miner, April 4, 1988.
May, 1988: The Gold Kings continued to make their mark in Alaska as Juneau considered funding the team to help bring more international competition to Alaska.143

Gold Kings may get trip at state’s expense

By SAM BISHOP
News Miner Bureau
JUNEAU— The Gold Kings hockey team may get state money next winter to help take a trip abroad and to bring international hockey teams to Fairbanks.

The money would arrive via the annual state reappropriations budget. Gov. Steve Cowper has not yet decided what projects to veto from the bill, but has said he sees plenty to draw his red pen.

The Gold Kings hosted Olympic teams from France, Poland, Austria and Norway this past winter. The $30,000 from the Legislature would act as seed money for the team’s efforts this coming winter.

Part of the program would be a team trip to Japan next February to compete against the Japanese national team and two teams from the Soviet Union.

In December, the team hopes to host teams from Finland, Sweden and Czechoslovakia. Teams from Norway, West Germany and Canada or Finland may participate in a March tournament.

Sen. Bettye Fahrenkamp, D-Fairbanks, submitted the request for the Gold Kings money. She said the Gold Kings are beginning to gain international recognition but they need a boost.

“I try to respond to my constituents’ needs,” Fahrenkamp said. “When it gets to that stage, they need help.”

Fahrenkamp successfully pushed a list of reappropriations for various groups in the Fairbanks area.

The money was sprung loose by repealing money left over from spending in previous years. Those included $250,000 for the planning and design of a courthouse in Fairbanks and $1.4 million for innovative placer mining grants. Most of the placer mining money was spent, but the courthouse money was not.

Fahrenkamp said a new courthouse in Fairbanks is years away.

“Troy Wingfield      Billy Barton      John Haddad      Brian Kraft
Jimmy Barton         Greg Evans       Kevin Milles     Dave Wilcox
J.P. Brown           Jeff Evans       Mark Nason      Scott Wilheim
Chris Cahill         Curt Franklin     Dave Olson      Jordy Wolter
Don Daniels          Ken Haman        Haydon O’Rear
Doug Desorcie        Tim Lee          John Roehl
Bill Duquette         Ryce Miller      Keith Swarner

1988-1989 Season

The Gold Kings opened the season as the defending U.S. champions. They lost the title to the Minneapolis Bucks in April of 1989, in a 3-2 upset at the Bloomington Ice Garden in the championship round of the U.S. National Tournament. Along the way to the National Tournament the Kings faced the junior national teams of Czechoslovakia and Finland in the World Invitational Tournament, and played against the Japanese national team in Japan. Timmy Lee became the all-time leading scorer for the club.

Roster

Schedule
November 4-5: Seattle Indians
November 11-12: St. Paul Parkers
November 18-19: Calgary Hawks
November 24-26: Thunder Bay Twins
December 2-3: Quesnel Kangaroos
December 9-10: Minneapolis Bucks
December 21-23: World Invitational
January 6-7: Whitehorse
January 13-14: N. St. Paul Blades
January 20-21: Ft. Qu‘Appelle Lakers
January 27-28: Philadelphia Wings
February 3-4: Saskatchewan Southern Rebels
February 10-11: New York St. Nicks
February 17-March 4: Japan Trip
March 10-11: UAF
March 17-18: Old Kings
March 30-April 2: U.S. National Tournament Minneapolis, MN

October, 1988: Gold Kings open season as defending national champions.144

December, 1988: Timmy Lee became the Gold Kings all-time leading scorer.145

February, 1989: Gold Kings traveled to Japan to play the Japanese Men’s National Ice Hockey Team.

March, 1989: Fairbanksan Bill Gordon, while on a business trip to Japan that overlapped with the Gold Kings’

hockey tour, watched some of the action, and praised Rosie and the team for their laudable, diplomatic behavior.146

In March, the Gold Kings competed against the UAF Nanooks in the KSUA Cup, providing well-received hockey entertainment for Fairbanks fans.147

April, 1989: The Gold Kings lost to the Minneapolis Bucks 3-2 at the Bloomington Ice Garden in the championship game of the U.S. National Tournament.

1989-1990 Season

The Gold Kings cemented their hockey friendship with Europe this season. In December the team played the Danish and Norwegian national teams in a European tour. Through the

People to People Sports Exchange Commission the Gold Kings and Khabarovsk, USSR established a three-week long series of hockey games in both locations. This made the Gold Kings the first American sports team to play in the Russian Far East. The two squads connected, and over the years continued to play one another. The Gold Kings even added some Khabarovsk players to their rosters when they entered the West Coast Hockey League. When the Khabarovsk team members played on American soil in Fairbanks, they were exposed to new cultural experiences as mundane as accessing certain magazines, such as *Playboy*, unavailable in the Soviet Union.

In an article titled “Alaska-Soviet League isn’t that far fetched,” writer Tim Mowry discussed the possibility and feasibility of such a league. John Rosie told Mowry that in five to ten years down the road it could well be a real hockey partnership.¹⁴⁸ Finally, in April the Gold Kings made history yet again when they won their third national title over their rival the Minneapolis Bucks in Seattle.

### Roster

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alba Brice</th>
<th>Greg Evans</th>
<th>Lance LaJiness</th>
<th>Rick Pitta</th>
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<td>John P. Brown</td>
<td>Curt Franklin</td>
<td>Tim Lee</td>
<td>Rod Poindexter</td>
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<td>Chris Cahill</td>
<td>Greg Fritze</td>
<td>Ryce Miller</td>
<td>Kevin Sullivan</td>
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<td>Steven Castelletti</td>
<td>John Haddad</td>
<td>Kevin Milles</td>
<td>Keith Swarner</td>
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<td>Eric Cline</td>
<td>Ken Haman</td>
<td>Steve Murphy</td>
<td>Jordy Wolter</td>
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<td>Bill Duquette</td>
<td>Kirk Haman</td>
<td>Mark Nason</td>
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### Schedule

- October 27-28: Gold Kings v. Old Kings
- November 3-4: Whitehorse
- November 10-11: Seattle Indians
- November 17-18: Calgary Hawks
- November 23-25: Wild Turkey Classic-San Diego Surf
- December 1-2: Philadelphia Wings
- December 8-9: Anchorage Team
- December 15-16: Norwegian Team
- January 12-13: N. St. Paul Blades
- January 19-20: Whitehorse
- January 26-27: Toronto Selects
- February 2-3: Alberta Aces
- February 9-10: Assinaboisque Southern Rebels
- February 16-17: The Boston Hockey Club
- February 23-24: Abottsford Blues
- March 2-3: St. Paul Parkers

March 9-17: International Tournament in Fairbanks
March 23: Old Kings
March 29-April 1: National Tournament

August, 1989: Gold Kings help with the restoration of the Riverboat Nenana at Alaskaland.¹⁴⁹

WHAT A GREAT IDEA—The Alaska Gold Kings showed that they can get things done even without hockey sticks in hand. Some members of the team recently volunteered time to help with the restoration effort on the Riverboat Nenana at Alaskaland the other day. They sanded part of the deck and the sides of the deckhouse.

The photograph on the right captures the action during the Seattle-Gold Kings game.¹⁵⁰

Donations help make Christmas

The Fairbanks Gold Kings are taking a shot at helping Santa make it a merry Christmas for needy families in Interior Alaska.

The Gold Kings helped families in need during the Christmas season.¹⁵¹

In December, the Gold Kings played the new Anchorage team, the Aces, renewing the rivalry between Alaska’s largest and second largest cities.  

Later that month the Gold Kings faced off against the national teams of Denmark and Norway as a part of their European Tour. 

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In December and January, through the People to People Sports Exchange Commission based in New York, the Gold Kings and a Soviet team from Khabarovsk put together a multi-week series of games and cultural exchange. Bob Eley wrote, “Despite the language barrier, a three-week series of games between the Gold Kings and Khabarovsk, Soviet Union has been set up.”

The visiting players from Khabarovsk in the Russian Far East were enthralled by the new cultural opportunities presented to them in Fairbanks.155

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154 Ibid. “Speaking Russian via fax machine is no easy task,” January 11, 1990.
The Gold Kings’ rivalry with the St. Paul Parkers continued into the 1990s as the Kings won back the Anderson Cup, a trophy held between the two teams, in the 1989-1990 season.157

In April, the Gold Kings beat their rivals the Minneapolis Bucks in Seattle for their third national title.

1990-1991 Season

This season, several new players joined the Gold Kings, forming another strong team. In late November, around Thanksgiving, the Kings played Khabarovsk Red Army in a five-game series keeping the teams’ hockey friendship alive. From late December to early January, the team embarked on a European playing tour in which they competed against France, Switzerland, and Czechoslovakia. Finally, in late March, the Gold Kings lost the U.S. Open national title to their rival the Anchorage Aces.

Roster

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<td>Alba Brice</td>
<td>Greg Fritze</td>
<td>Matt Koleski</td>
<td>Steve Murphy</td>
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<td>Chris Cahill</td>
<td>John Haddad</td>
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<td>Scott Nelson</td>
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<td>Antonio Catani</td>
<td>Ken Haman</td>
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<td>George Stetson</td>
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<td>Greg Evans</td>
<td>Kirk Haman</td>
<td>Ryce Miller</td>
<td>Craig Stephens</td>
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<td>Curt Franklin</td>
<td>Brian Klanow</td>
<td>Kevin Milles</td>
<td>Joey Love</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Schedule

October 26: Blue/Gold Scrimmage
October 27: Old Kings/Gold Kings
November 2-3: Philadelphia Wings
November 9-19: Calgary Hawks (Alberta AAA champs)
November 16-17: St. Paul Parkers
November 22-24: Wild Turkey Classic-Khabarovsk Red Army Team
November 20-December 1: San Diego Surf
December 7-8: Whitehorse
December 14-15: Anchorage Aces
December 19-January 2: France Tour-France, Switzerland, Czechoslovakia B
January 11-12: Fort St. John, B.C.
January 18-19: St. Paul Metros
January 25-26: Abbotsford
February 1-2: Southern Saskatchewan Rebels
February 8-9: Edmonton Paul Band
February 15-16: Pueblo Ravens
February 22-23: Chicago Alumni
March 1-2: Whitehorse
March 8-9: Anchorage Aces
March 15-16-21: Japan National Team
March 22: A League All Stars
March 23: Old Kings/Gold Kings
March 28-31: U.S. Open National Tournament
This season, Fairbanks was introduced to several new faces on the team.\textsuperscript{158}

The Gold Kings maintained the hockey exchange with the Soviet Union as they played another five-game series against the Khabarovsk Red Army in late November.\textsuperscript{159}

From late December to early January the Gold Kings toured Europe playing France, Switzerland, and Czechoslovakia.\textsuperscript{160}

In early April, the Gold Kings lost the national championship title to their reinvented rival the Anchorage Aces.

1991-1992 Season

While the season ended on a high note as the Gold Kings won their fourth national title, the team met several obstacles in the summer of 1991. In June, the team joined the Pacific Northwest Hockey League alongside the Anchorage Aces, Soldotna Mic-Macs, and Whitehorse Knights. After losing their sponsorship, Soldotna had to drop their position in the Pacific Northwest Hockey League, forcing Rosie and league officials to quickly replace the Mic-Macs with two Canadian squads. In August, Rosie and the Gold Kings filed a lawsuit against their pull-tab vendor who countersued and demanded the immediate dismissal of Rosie from the organization. Due to renovation of the Big Dipper, the Kings had to play the first half of the season at the Carlson Center.

Roster

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
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<td>Bill Duquette</td>
<td>Rob Proffitt</td>
<td>Corey Metro</td>
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<td>Chris Cahill</td>
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<td>Rick Recla</td>
<td>David Holmes</td>
<td>Kevin Nohe</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ken Haman</td>
<td>Bruce Laiti</td>
<td>Matt Koleski</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Schedule

November 1-2: Whitehorse Huskies
November 7: Anchorage Aces
November 8-9: Anchorage Aces
November 15-16: Chicago Chargers
November 23-24: Whitehorse Huskies
November 26-28: Wild Turkey Classic with the Khabarovsk Red Army Team
December 6-7: St. Paul Parkers
December 20-21: Assiniboia Southern Rebels
January 17-18: Stoney Plain Eagles
January 24-25: New England Wings
January 31-1: Whitehorse
February 7-8: Abbotsford Flyers
February 20-22: Anchorage Aces
February 28-29: Whitehorse
March 6-7: Assiniboia Southern Rebels
March 13-14: PNHL League Championships
March 20: Old Kings
March 26-29: U.S. Open Nationals in Stanford, Connecticut
Gold Kings happy to go back to Dipper

By TIM MOWRY
Staff Writer

Who says bigger is better. Despite bigger crowds and bigger ice at the Carlson Center, Alaska Gold Kings president John Rosie can't wait to move back to the smaller confines of the Big Dipper Ice Arena.

After a preliminary inspection on Wednesday, Fairbanks North Star Borough officials said the Big Dipper is on schedule to re-open to the public on Dec. 21.

Heavy snow last winter weakened the roof and forced the arena to close in June for a $2.1 million repair job.

The re-opening of the Big Dipper is good news for Rosie, who estimates the Gold Kings lost $45,000 in revenue by playing their first 11 games in the Carlson Center.

"I can show it to you in black and white," said Rosie.

Not only is ice time more expensive at the Carlson Center and University of Alaska Fairbanks Patty Center—$100 an hour at the Carlson Center, $80 an hour at UAF and $36 an hour at the Big Dipper—but the Gold Kings were not able to sell concessions or beer at the Carlson Center, which has its own concessionaire in Ogden Enterprises.

"We had our lunch handed to us (See DIPPER, Page B-3)

December, 1991: The Gold Kings played the second half of the season at the Big Dipper after completion of its renovation. They had been playing at the Carlson Center.

March, 1992: Gold Kings won their fourth national championship title.

---

June, 1991: Rosie announced that the Gold Kings were to play in a four-league Pacific Northwest Hockey League made up of the Gold Kings, Anchorage Aces, Soldotna Mic-Macs, and Whitehorse Knights.

In the photograph to the right, skilled stickhandler Chris Cahill works the puck past a Chicago Chargers player.

In the photograph to the right, skilled stickhandler Chris Cahill works the puck past a Chicago Chargers player.

March, 1992: Gold Kings won their fourth national championship title.

---

1992-1993 Season

The Gold Kings had another strong season as Ryce Miller and Steve Murphy took over the coaching position while Roger McKinnon moved to general manager. The Kings had a diversified schedule, playing new teams from Washington, D.C. and Penticton, BC. They again hosted the Khabarovsk Red Army Team as a part of their “Wild Turkey Classic.” The Gold Kings cemented their rivalry with the Yukon Territory with several games against the Whitehorse Huskies over the course of the season. The Gold Kings-Aces rivalry ratcheted up when the latter knocked the Gold Kings out in the semifinals of the U.S. National Tournament.

Roster

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<th>Name</th>
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<td>Wess Wilson</td>
<td>Arthur Carroll</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rob Proffitt</td>
<td>Tim Krogan</td>
<td>Alba Brice</td>
<td>John Blankenship</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Schedule

October 30-31: Whitehorse Huskies
November 6-7: Anchorage Aces
November 13-14: Washington D.C.
November 20-21: Anchorage Aces
November 26-28: Wild Turkey Classic with Khabarovsk Red Army Team
December 4-5: Whitehorse Huskies
December 11-12: St. Paul Parkers
January 8-9: Whitehorse Huskies
January 15-16: Penticton Silver Bullets
January 22-23: Chicago Chargers
January 29-30: Warroad Warriors
February 5-6: Stoney Plain Eagles
February 12-13: Whitehorse Huskies
February 19-20: Penticton Silver Bullets
February 25: Anchorage Aces
February 26-27: Anchorage Aces
March 19: Old Kings
March 25-28: U.S. Nationals
October, 1992: Ryce Miller and Steve Murphy took over as co-coaches of the Gold Kings as Roger McKinnon became general manager.  


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Action shot of Gold Kings forward Tim Krogan, a native of Edina, Minnesota.\textsuperscript{167}

A March \textit{News-Miner} article examines the Fairbanks-Sault Ste. Marie hockey connection, noting that as of 1993, eighteen Gold Kings players had come from Sault Ste. Marie. This does not include other Michigan players such as John Haddad (Port Huron) and Matt Koleski (Detroit). This pipeline was fueled by a growing hockey scene in Fairbanks and the construction of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline, which provided employment opportunities for Fairbanks semi-professional hockey players.\textsuperscript{168}

March, 1993: Gold Kings come up short in the National Tournament, being knocked out in the semifinals by the Anchorage Aces in a 3-0 shutout.

**1993-1994 Season**

In the summer, plans were confirmed for the 1993 Arctic Challenge Olympic Hockey Preview to be held in September with Fairbanks and Anchorage serving as co-hosts. Team Alaska, comprised of Gold Kings and Aces, played the national teams of Russia, Canada, and the

U.S.A., colloquially known as the “Big Three.” The games were split between the Carlson Center in Fairbanks and the Sullivan Arena in Anchorage. With the “Big Three” in town and $20,000 on the line, this was a major milestone for Fairbanks and Alaska hockey.

For regular season play, the Gold Kings joined the newly formed Pacific Coast Hockey League or PCHL alongside the Anchorage Aces, Abbotsford-Bellingham Flyers, Fresno Falcons, Los Angeles Lightning, and Covina California Hawks. Over the course of the season the Fairbanks-Anchorage sports rivalry was charged by the continuous matchups between the Gold Kings-Aces and UAF-UAA. In March, the Fresno Falcons eliminated the Kings from the U.S. National Championship Tournament.

Roster

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Matt Koleski</th>
<th>Charlie Henrich</th>
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<th>Ron Stadem</th>
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<tr>
<td>Rob Proffitt</td>
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<td>Brad Deweese</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Schedule

October 21-22: Anchorage Aces
October 29-30: Detroit Ultra Air Kings
November 5-6: Bellingham Flyers
November 12-13: California Hawks
November 19-20: Whitehorse Huskies
November 26-27: Bellingham Flyers
December 3-4: St. Paul Parkers
December 10-11: Los Angeles Lightning
January 7-8: Whitehorse Huskies
January 21-22: Stony Plain Eagles
January 28-29: Bellingham Flyers
February 4-5: Anchorage Aces
February 18-19: Fresno Falcons
February 25-26: Chicago Chargers
March 4-5: Fresno Falcons
March 11-12: Anchorage Aces
March 18: Old Kings
March 24-27: U.S. National Championship in Fresno

In June, the Gold Kings and all of Alaska hockey received big news of the opportunity to host the national teams of Russia, Canada, and the United States, colloquially
known as the “Big Three” in the September 1993 Arctic Challenge Hockey Preview. Team Alaska was comprised of players from the Alaska Gold Kings and Anchorage Aces, and the Preview was split between Fairbanks’s Carlson Center and Anchorage’s Sullivan Arena.

October, 1993: The Gold Kings opened up the regular season playing the Anchorage Aces at the Sullivan Arena in Anchorage as a part of the newly formed Pacific Coast Hockey League. The PCHL was comprised of the Alaska Gold Kings, Anchorage Aces, Abbotsford-Bellingham Flyers, Fresno Falcons, Los Angeles Lightning, and Covina California Hawks.

The Gold Kings-Aces and UAF-UAA kept the Fairbanks/Anchorage hockey rivalry fueled.
January, 1994: The Gold Kings did their part to make Fairbanks a hockey playing and spectating haven. In this article, the News-Miner claims that “ice hockey is the most popular spectator sport in Fairbanks,” and the Gold Kings are a major reason why.171

March 1994: Fresno Falcons eliminated the Gold Kings from the U.S. National Championship Tournament.

1994-1995 Season

Under first year head coach and former standout player John Haddad, the Gold Kings had a terrific season. They opened the season as a member of the Pacific Hockey League with talk of going professional in the near future. Soon, the Gold Kings received an influx of Russian players, including some from the same Khabarovsk Red Army team that had toured Alaska on three past occasions. In January, John Rosie announced that the Gold Kings would be going pro as members of the West Coast Hockey League. Months later in early April the Gold Kings took home their fifth national championship title, beating their in-state nemesis the Anchorage Aces 7-6 in overtime.

Roster

| Bond Sutton    | Tony Toth | Lorne Kanigan | Jim Scott |
| Todd Henderson | Kevin Milles | Matt Koleski | John Blankenship |
| Damian Fenton | John Lee | Shawn Ulrich | Jesse Lundgren |
| Oleg Filimonov | Chris Cahill | Scott Keyse |
| Mike Finke | Tim Lee | Tim Krogan |
| Eric Cline | Igor Alechine | Rob Proffitt |

Schedule

October 15: L.A. Rockets (exhibition)

October 21-22: Whitehorse
October 28-29: Seattle Indians
November 4-5: Anchorage Aces
November 11-12: Vancouver Thunderbirds
November 18-19: Anchorage Aces
December 2-3: Detroit Raiders
December 9-10: California Hawks
January 6-7: Whitehorse Huskies
January 13-14: Molson Ice
January 20-21: L.A. Rockets
January 27-28: Fresno Falcons
February 3-4: Anchorage Aces
February 10-11: Chicago Chargers
February 17-18: Fresno Falcons
February 24-25: California Hawks
March 3-4: Anchorage Aces
March 10-11: Anchorage Aces
March 12: Anchorage Aces
March 17-18: Vancouver Thunderbirds
March 24: Old Kings
March 30-April 2: U.S. Nationals

When the Gold Kings opened the season against the Los Angeles Bandits in the Pacific Hockey League, the organization was one step closer to professionalization, and Rosie even mentioned the possibility of going pro in the next couple of years. The plan would turn the senior men’s Pacific Hockey League into a professional hockey association.172

November, 1994: Randall Zarnke submits a “Guest Opinion” piece to the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner expressing what the Gold Kings mean to Fairbanks and Interior Alaska. Zarnke comments on the volunteer spirit of players, coaches, and management that explains the

success of the Alaska Gold Kings. He notes that this success is a reflection of the Fairbanks community.173

As Russian players began their surge into the National Hockey League in the wake of the fall of the Soviet Union, the Gold Kings also welcomed talented Russian players. Oleg Filomonov joined the team midseason as a former goalie for the Khabarovsk Red Army team that played the Gold Kings on three separate occasions. Rosie said that there were plans for other Russian players to join as well.174

Gold Kings versus the Whitehorse Rapids in a January 1995 match.175

January 1995: Rosie announced that the Gold Kings franchise would go professional next season as a part of the West Coast Hockey League.176

174 Eley, “Kings head out on trail to Whitehorse: Russian goalie Filomonov joins the team” October 21, 1994.
176 Eley, “Gold Kings are shooting to go pro next season,” January 30, 1995.
A February article in the “Local” section of the News-Miner provides a bio of legendary Gold Kings coach/player and Sport King Owner Roger McKinnon.\(^{178}\)

April, 1995: Fairbanks Gold Kings beat the Anchorage Aces 7-6 in overtime for their fifth national championship win.\(^{179}\)

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1995-1996 Season

Former UAF player and Monroe Catholic coach Wayne Sawchuck was selected as the head coach of the professional West Coast Hockey League Gold Kings. On October 27, the Gold Kings officially started playing professionally as they took to the ice against their rival the Anchorage Aces. The team received a facelift as well; the new logo became a menacing lion clutching a hockey stick. At the end of the season the Gold Kings were eliminated in the semifinals by the eventual champions, the San Diego Gulls.

Roster
For the extensive roster visit

Schedule
Played Anchorage, Reno, Bakersfield, Fresno and San Diego multiple times from November through March.

June 1995: The Alaska Gold Kings officially go professional, joining the minor-league West Coast Hockey League (WCHL). The California cities of Bakersfield, Fresno, and San Diego, and Reno, Nevada are expected to join. The Anchorage Aces were uncertain early on, but would eventually join the league.180

On October 27, the Gold Kings opened their first professional season against the Anchorage Aces at Sullivan Arena in Anchorage.

The new Alaska Gold Kings’ logo for the West Coast Hockey League, a lion clutching a hockey stick, can be seen on the white jersey sported by Derek Linnell in the photograph on the right.181

The Gold Kings visited local elementary schools to promote education and Gold Kings hockey. ¹⁸²

At the end of the season in late March and early April, the San Diego Gulls won the WCHL championship. They defeated the Gold Kings in the semifinals in a best-of-five contest 3-2.


¹⁸⁴ John Rosie, “It was go pro or die: Fairbanks can look forward to a growing league,” *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner Guest Opinion*, February 11, 1997.
Roster
For the extensive roster visit

Schedule
The Alaska Gold Kings played Anchorage, Reno, Bakersfield, Fresno, and Sand Diego multiple times from November through March.

November, 1996: Gold Kings played the Khabarovsk Red Army Team in West Coast Hockey League play. Khabarovsk was an exhibition team.¹⁸⁵

December, 1996: The in-state rivalry between the Gold Kings and Aces continued well into the minor leagues. In the photograph below the two teams battle it out.\textsuperscript{186}

January, 1997: Mike Stetson had choice words for Gold Kings management in a \textit{News-Miner} piece in which he ridicules the heads of the organization for professionalizing and monetizing the Gold Kings in their two seasons in the WCHL instead of staying with their humble yet successful roots in senior men’s hockey.\textsuperscript{187}

\textsuperscript{186} Ibid, “Two-Front Battle,” December 27, 1996.
\textsuperscript{187} Stetson, “Bring back the real Gold Kings,” January 9, 1997.
Later that month, in an article written by Bob Eley, John Rosie poignantly addressed the current despair of the Gold Kings, and what it would have taken to have kept the team in Fairbanks. He quelled rumors of the team moving to another expansion city, and made it known that just as he predicted, senior men’s hockey became nearly obsolete with only three teams competing in the 1997 championship. Rosie was disappointed by the criticism he received for a team to which he had devoted 21 years of his 24 years in Fairbanks.

Rosie: “I can assure you, the Gold Kings will either play here or nowhere next season.”

Eley: “Rosie said that he is having trouble understanding some of the criticisms leveled at him and the Gold Kings this season.”

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188 Eley, “Kings’ owner upbeat about expansion: Rosie says team will play here or it will fold,” January 23, 1997.
February, 1997: The Gold Kings continued to be topped by the WCHL’s best team and the Kings’ biggest rival the Anchorage Aces.189

In February 1997, Rosie published a long opinion piece in the News-Miner that responded to Stetson’s January 9 article titled “Bring back the real Gold Kings” and the many Fairbanks hockey fans who turned their back on the professional West Coast Hockey League version of the Gold Kings.190

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190 John Rosie, “It was go pro or die: Fairbanks can look forward to a growing league,” Fairbanks Daily News-Miner Guest Opinion, February 11, 1997.
In May, the team suspended operations, hoping to return after a year-long break.  

After suspension of operations:

June, 1997: Roger McKinnon and Rob Proffitt started the Junior B Hockey Program that would become the Fairbanks Ice Dogs and fill the void left by the Gold Kings.

In late June, Rosie said that as the West Coast Hockey League branched and expanded into more populated markets, a reemergence of the minor league Gold Kings was unlikely.

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192 Eley, “Gold Kings move to suspend operations: Owner optimistic that team may return after year hiatus,” May 31, 1997.
Through their first six games, the Ice Dogs averaged almost 1,200 fans at the Big Dipper, quickly establishing themselves in the community sports scene.195

February, 1998: Rosie and the Gold Kings packed their bags and officially moved to Colorado where they became known as the Colorado Gold Kings. Eley noted that “With little fanfare and no official notification of the local media, the Alaska Gold Kings officially left Fairbanks on Wednesday.”196

Epilogue

After relocating to Colorado Springs in the winter of 1998, the organization became known as the Colorado Gold Kings, playing in Colorado Springs as a member of the West Coast Hockey League until folding in 2002. As a professional team the Gold Kings found more success in Colorado, going to the playoffs each of their four remaining seasons. The success of the team in Colorado Springs did not parallel the height of achievement the Gold Kings attained between 1975 and 1995 in Fairbanks, however. The Fairbanks Ice Dogs were a natural replacement, starting their history off strongly with an excellent first season from 1997-1998 when they often filled the Big Dipper to capacity. Many of the characters covered in this timeline still live in Fairbanks. They are husbands, fathers, businessmen, hockey coaches, and contributing community members. The Gold Kings built the foundation for hockey in Fairbanks today, beginning in 1975.

4. John Rosie Gold Kings Collection

The following sections contain a sampling of the material recently donated by Randy Zarnke to the University of Alaska Fairbanks. The collection is officially known as the *John Rosie Gold Kings Collection*. At the University of Alaska Museum of the North, Ethnology and History Lab director Angela Linn and I have been the first to handle and catalogue the more physical items such as pucks, jerseys, hockey sticks, and commemorative pins. Thus far, the Alaska and Polar Regions Collections & Archives at the Elmer E. Rasmuson Library has not had the resources to organize and catalogue the paper materials donated, an assemblage of ten boxes full of season programs, photographs, letters, and other written materials. There are also audio tapes and films of hockey games now held at the Alaska Film Archives. Section 4.2.2 briefly identifies the audio tapes. These are mostly recordings of National Tournament game broadcasts, and a copy of the official “Alaska Gold Kings Theme Song” by Bruce Innes.

I am fortunate that Rachel Cohen and Becky Butler gave me the opportunity to handle this side of the collection prior to its being officially catalogued. To the best of my ability I have given items from the Alaska and Polar Regions Collections & Archives citations. Also, I am very grateful to Angie Linn for her guidance at the Museum, and Angie Schmidt for allowing me to access the portion of the collection at the film archives.

4.1 Museum Collection

The portion of the *John Rosie Gold Kings Collection* housed at the University of Alaska Museum of the North contains an array of hockey and hockey-related items. Through the spring of 2020 I have catalogued 63 of these objects. Among them are collectible beer steins, commemorative pucks and pins, hats, jerseys, and hockey sticks. A considerable amount of time goes into cleaning, documenting, and storing objects according to museum protocols, so with a large collection donated, only a portion of it is in the official records thus far. Below are photographs of these objects.

For the virtual museum exhibit, visit https://akethnogirl.wordpress.com/.
The photograph to the left is of one of the collectible beer steins collected by Gold Kings fans over the years. The distinct season-by-season mugs were a trademark of the Gold Kings and coveted by fans.197

The beer stein below has the logo of the 1984 U.S. Senior Men’s National Tournament, commemorating the event that was held in Fairbanks.198

To the left are collectible stickers that say “Fairbanks Alaska Gold Kings” with the team’s logo of two hockey sticks intersecting at a golden crown.199

When the Gold Kings went professional in 1995, joining the WCHL, SplitSecond Manufacturing made trading cards for the team. Cards can still be purchased on Amazon and Ebay.200

This is an official resolution from the Fairbanks city mayor, honoring the Alaska Gold Kings for winning the 1988 national championship.\(^{201}\)

This is a watch made by Vostok Watch Makers, Incorporated based in Christopol, Russia. The company is known for designing military and diving watches. This item was most likely given to the Gold Kings either during a trip to Khabarovsk, or when Khabarovsk Red Army visited Fairbanks.\(^ {202}\)

The two photographs below are of a Gold Kings jersey. The player is unknown. Best guess, given the logo and the wear on the jersey places it in the mid-to-late 1980s.\(^ {203}\)

\(^{202}\) Ibid, UA2019-011-0030AC.
This is a commemorative puck from the 1993 Arctic Challenge, in which Team Alaska (Gold Kings/Anchorage Aces) hosted the “Big Three” of Russia, Canada, and the United States.  

This pin commemorates the 1988 Alaska Olympic Hockey Preview in which the Gold Kings hosted the national teams of Austria, France, Switzerland, Norway and Poland just before the 1988 Calgary Winter Olympics.

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4.2 Library Collection

4.2.1 Alaska and Polar Regions Collections & Archives

It should be noted that all items below are from the “John Rosie Gold Kings Collection-unprocessed.” No official citations are available.
Warren Carter
24 yrs old
6'0" 195 lbs
Salmon Arm, BC

#27 CENTER

Carter joins the Gold Kings after spending a successful four years with UAF’s hockey team. As an excellent face-off man and defensive specialist, the responsibility of shutting down the other team’s top line will most likely rest on his shoulders.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<td>22</td>
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H & H CONTRACTORS
ВИЗА
К-П № 391410

Въездная-выездная –

Гр. США

Фамилия МАК КИННОН

Имя, отчество РОДЖЕР

Дата рождения 13.06.46

С детских до 16 лет – Один

Цель въезда Спорт

В учреждение КОМИТЕТ "СПОРТ ДЛЯ ВСЕХ"

В пунктах ВАШИНГТОН, ХАБАРОВСК

Действительна для въезда в СССР __________ 19 _______ г.

Въезд в пункт __________ 05.02.90 __________ 19 _______ г.

В пункте __________ 23.01.90 __________ 19 _______ г.

Фотография

Въезд

В пункт __________ 08.01.90 __________ 19 _______ г.

В пункте __________ 031122522

К визу №
Bud Sands "Voice of the Gold Kings"

A special thanks to Bud from the Gold King organization for his efforts in the game officials box and commentary during the games.
4.2.2 Alaska Film Archives

Below is a list of the National Tournament game broadcasts recorded on audio tapes. The collection also holds a recording of the “Alaska Gold Kings Theme Song” made by Bruce Innes, which I transcribed.

- “Gold Kings versus Bemidji Blues U.S. National Championships,” April 8, 1978, Roseau, MN.
- “Grand Forks Wheat Kings versus Fairbanks Gold Kings,” April 8, 1978, Roseau, MN.
- Gold Kings versus Minneapolis Bucks tapes.
- “Alaska Gold Kings Theme Song,” Bruce Innes Music:

“Great hockey action is here
Gold Kings!

Super excitement it’s right here!
Shoot Gold Kings!
Go for the Gold!
Score Gold Kings!
Go for the Goal!

It’s the Alaska Gold Kings’ year
And they’re comin’ on strong.

A tradition doin’ the best we can do,
Hockey action is waiting for you.

We are the champions!
The Gold Kings bring the action home to you!

Competition is here!
Gold Kings!

Look for the action, it’s right here!
Shoot Gold Kings!
Go for the goal!
Score Gold Kings!
Go for the Goal!”
It’s the Alaska Gold Kings’ year
And they’re comin’ on strong!

A tradition doin’ the best we can do,
Hockey action is waiting for you!

We are the champions!
The Gold Kings bring the action home to you!
5. Conclusion

On paper, the Gold Kings existed in Alaska from 1975 to 1997, but for former players and fans the memories and legacy still carry on. The Gold Kings were an amateur senior men’s hockey team for most of their history. The organization started out as the Teamsters for the first two seasons. It was the brainchild of community leaders such as Gary Atwood hoping to give local youth a higher level of hockey to aspire to. In 1977, the stockholders met to incorporate the team as the Fairbanks Gold Kings, later changing the name once more to the Alaska Gold Kings. At the amateur level the Gold Kings were remarkably successful, winning five national championships, and competing on the international stage several times. The team in its early years was often comprised of upper Midwest and Seattle transplants who came north for employment, typically along the pipeline, and the opportunity to continue playing hockey. By the mid-’80s the success of the Gold Kings enabled coach McKinnon and management to recruit new players more persuasively, with many new Gold Kings still coming from American hockey hotbeds such as Minnesota and Michigan.

The first natural rivalry for the Gold Kings was with the Anchorage Wolverines, a team that gave the Gold Kings stiff competition in the late ‘70s until folding in 1979 due to insolvency. Early rivalries also formed with the Seattle Indians and other Pacific Northwest-based teams. As the Kings continued to garner success, they began competing against highly touted upper Midwest and Canadian teams. The Twin Cities metro area produced two of Fairbanks’ most acknowledged contenders in the St. Paul Parkers and Minneapolis Bucks throughout the 1980s. Following the dissolution of the Wolverines in 1979, Anchorage continued to develop various senior men's teams, but none endured to become a challenger to the Gold Kings until the emergence of the Anchorage Aces in 1989. Over the years a rivalry formed much closer to home than Anchorage. While the University of Alaska Fairbanks had produced ice hockey teams since the earliest days as the U of A, the construction of the Patty Ice Arena on campus in 1979, and relocation of Nanooks hockey to the NCAA Division I in the ‘80s made the university team a business threat to the Gold Kings. While the Gold Kings and Nanooks played several series, even competing for the KSUA Cup in the late 1980s, the competition off the ice for fans and media attention were perhaps more contentious.

A hallmark of Gold Kings hockey were the international contests in which they participated in Fairbanks and abroad. In the early ‘80s, John Rosie accompanied the president of USA Hockey to an International Ice Hockey Federation meeting in Vienna, Austria. With characteristic intellect and purpose, Rosie began pitching the idea of various European teams coming to Fairbanks, Alaska for hockey tournaments to the heads of national ice hockey federations, some of whom were royalty. Rosie’s persuasiveness worked, and in March of 1985 the Gold Kings hosted their first international Tournament, vying against the Dutch, Austrian, and Japanese national teams at the Big Dipper. Beginning in 1990, the Kings struck up a
relationship on and off the ice with Khabarovsk Red Army throughout the early years of the decade. Their visit to Khabarovsk made the Gold Kings the first American sports team to ever step foot on Far Eastern Soviet soil. The Gold Kings continued to host international tournaments and teams over the years, playing a total of 16 national and Olympic teams. Three of these teams, Yugoslavia, U.S.S.R., and Czechoslovakia no longer exist. John Rosie and the Alaska Gold Kings left an indelible mark on the hockey lore of Fairbanks, making it an international hotspot for the sport in the ‘80s and ‘90s.

While the recruitment of top tier players, fierce rivalries with perennial American and Canadian powerhouses, and international contests are among the Gold Kings’ most distinctive qualities as an organization, their socio-cultural impacts on Fairbanks are as significant as the hockey achievements. In sub-section 2.1 “Socio-Cultural Impacts of the Gold Kings on Fairbanks,” I argue that the team affected Fairbanks in five ways. First, many of the Gold Kings such as Roger McKinnon served as coaches for youth hockey teams, providing a high-level of instruction, and passing on knowledge of the game to younger generations. Second, as an integral component of the Fairbanks community, the Gold Kings performed community service, such as visiting schools to inspire children, restoration of the SS Nenana, and Christmas donations. Third, the Gold Kings depended on the goodwill of Fairbanks to operate. The amateur status of the team until 1995 necessitated that local residents fill volunteer roles such as transportation for visiting teams and running ticket sales. Fairbanksans supported the Gold Kings through these acts, truly making the team the community’s. Fourth, the Gold Kings’ competitions against international hockey teams expanded Fairbanksans’ exposure to other cultures. These cultural exchanges likely would not have occurred had it not been for the Kings. Finally, many Gold Kings such as Rob Proffitt and John Haddad elected to settle down in Fairbanks after hanging up their skates. These individuals continue to contribute to the social fabric and economy of Fairbanks by staying involved in the local hockey scenes and running businesses. As Shirley Schneider articulated in her 1989 guest opinion piece published in the News-Miner, “there is no other non-profit organization which returns so much to the community.”

Unfortunately for the players and the community, the Gold Kings’ run in Fairbanks came to an end in 1998. By the early 1990s, the National Hockey League had expanded into nontraditional markets in Sunshine Belt states such as Florida, California, and Texas. Along with such expansion at the top tier came aggressive growth of minor league hockey and junior hockey into more cities. At the end of the Gold Kings’ Alaskan era in ‘97, John Rosie pointed out that the Gold Kings were trying to compete in a time when hockey could be played in any climate in any major city with far more financial backing than in a town less than 200 miles south of the Arctic Circle. Also on the rise in the 1990s was junior hockey, a fast and hard-hitting brand of hockey that enabled local youth to aspire to higher, more competitive levels of play. Fortunately

\[206\] Schneider, “Gold Kings provide much to city,” June 7, 1989.
for Gold Kings fans reeling after the relocation of the team to Colorado Springs, the Ice Dogs, Fairbanks’ junior hockey team, filled the void left by the Gold Kings’ departure. For those interested in the history of hockey and sports, and even the intersection of sport with culture and economics, the Gold Kings are a worthy case study of amateur senior men’s hockey in the late twentieth century. The team rose to prominence when senior men’s hockey still meant something in cities and small towns across Canada and the northern United States. As a relatively small town with plenty of cold weather for hockey, and a hard working blue collar attitude that embraced the tenacious playing style of the Gold Kings, Fairbanks was a perfect fit. This blue collar attitude was accepting of hockey players who busted tail working construction by day, and practiced outdoors at 20 below at night. Gold Kings were not pretentious professional athletes with massive salaries and mansions, making them a natural fit for Fairbanks. While the city’s allegiance to the Gold Kings waned when they went pro in ‘95, playing hockey against squads from sunny, pampered California, the team’s legacy is still deeply embedded in the town’s sports culture.

Like that of any legendary sports team, the history of the Gold Kings endures, partly through projects such as my own, the team reunions, and the collection donated to the university. More importantly, the Gold Kings’ legacy lives through the players, many of whom reside in Fairbanks, and have passed on their knowledge of the game to others. It endures through the die-hard fandom of many Fairbanksans for whom best memories were made watching the Gold Kings in the Big Dipper in the middle of an Interior Alaska winter. The Gold Kings are an essential piece of Fairbanks’ social fabric, and the town’s history. While the team reunion on March 8th, 2020 may be the last, the Gold Kings will always be a part of the Golden Heart City.
6. Bibliography


