



Manny Sanguillen

“The Smiling Panamanian”, as Manny was known, was and remains to this day, a hugely popular former Pittsburgh Pirate catcher. As talented as Manny was on the diamond, fans remember him for his unbridled enthusiasm for life, his ever-present smile that would light up the stadium even from beneath his catcher’s mask, and his boy-like love of the game of baseball.

And yes, Manny could play the game! He was the catcher on both the 1971 and 1979 World Champion Pirates. He batted over .300 four seasons of his career, a rarity for a catcher. In fact, Manny’s career .296 batting average is the highest for a catcher since WWII – higher than those of Hall of Famers such as Berra, Campanella, Munson, Fisk and all others. He finished 3rd in the NL batting race twice in his career, again a rarity for a catcher. And Manny was chosen as an All-Star in 1971, 1972 and 1975.

Fans will also remember Manny as the batter who could hit a line drive from a ball that bounced in the dirt at home plate or was thrown at his head. It has been said that Manny never saw a pitch that he didn’t like! He is also recognized for what was then an unorthodox, but highly effective, catching crouch which many catchers now use today. Only hardcore baseball fans will know that Manny was the catcher on the only team in MLB history to field an all-black starting lineup, which the Pirates did on September 1, 1971. And, of course, the starting right fielder on that day was the late, great Roberto Clemente, Manny’s best friend in baseball and a man who treated Manny like a brother.

Manny accepted Christ as a young man in his native Panama when a Canadian missionary who preached on street corners invited Manny to church services. It was here that he accepted Christ as his Saviour.



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