

***The Peggy Browning Fund Honors Marvin Miller
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Sheraton New York Hotel
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It's an honor to be here today to honor what I think is one of the great men of our time, Marvin Miller. I love this guy. He been a great teacher, a great inspiration and I think if the players today really understood how they got what they've gotten out of this game, this room would be filled with 10,000 ball players, all the players playing major league baseball since Marvin game into this game in 1966.

What I thought I would do here tonight is to give you a little history of the Player's Association because I was in on the creation back in 1966. You have to understand that before Marvin came along, players really didn't have a union, we had an association. Players didn't really want a union. Most of the baseball players didn't like unions, they hated unions, and they grew up in families in which unions were a bad thing. They wanted a club, a club of guys. We would ask the owners to do something once in a while and they told us to get out, and we'd hustle on out. A guy named Robert Cannon, a judge from Milwaukee, ran the association. He was not a great labor leader, and when we finally got rid of Judge Cannon, the first thing he did was apply for the job of baseball commissioner.

Just to give you some idea, I remember early on (this was also before Marvin), the minimum salary was \$6,500 for lifetime contracts. \$25 a day. Ridiculous figures. The players would go up to the owners every once in a while and ask them to please increase the minimum salaries by a thousand dollars, add another 5 dollars a day to the meal money on the road. The owners would tell us no. This is the history of the Players Association.

Finally a committee of guys - Robin Roberts, ... Jim Bunning - four guys went to the Wharton School of Business in Pennsylvania and said that they needed help with their union and would they recommend and screen some candidates to be the new Executive Director of the Players Association. The Wharton School of Business came back and said, "Well, we recommend Marvin Miller and Richard Nixon." The players were very excited, because hey, Richard Nixon, we knew him, but who is this guy Marvin Miller? And fortunately we ended up with Marvin, not with Nixon - we got Dick Moss instead.

So that brings us to 1966. Now we have Marvin. He's got to go around and convince the players that now we have the right man for this job. To campaign for this job, we had to visit every ball club from Florida to North Carolina, sometimes

two teams a day, one team in the morning, one team in the afternoon. The players had been well prepared for Marvin to come around, well prepared by the owners telling us what a terrible mistake this would be if we hired Marvin Miller because he was a union guy, that we would have strikes, picket lines and baseball bats and bicycle chains, and this was going to be a very dangerous development here for Major League Baseball. Yes, he was called "mustachioed." So the players were trying to figure out do we really want this guy, who is he? A lot of players were on the fence. The owners started telling us how bad things can be if we hired him, so we started thinking, "Hey, maybe this is our guy here."

A classic example is the St. Louis Cardinals, who were actually leaning against Marvin and just before the vote, the owner of the St. Louis Cardinals, Augie Busch, told the players flat out, "This man Marvin Miller, if you elect him, this will be the worst thing that ever happened in the history of baseball." And then the Cardinals voted for him unanimously. That was it. That did it. Then of course it spread from there and of course Marvin Miller was elected.

The owners welcomed Marvin by cutting off the dues, the check-off system, so that Marvin was going to have to go locker to locker collecting the dues from each player. That would have been an onerous task so Marvin, who was very smart, went to pay a visit to the Topps Chewing Gum Company, and went to the President of the company and told them to kick in a little bit more to the players than what they had been currently paying for the rights to the pictures on the baseball cards.

Just to give you an idea what the players got before Marvin - you gave the rights to the bubble gum company. Here's how it worked: Sy Berger, a fellow from Topps, would go around to the minor league rookie camp, and he would get the players to sign a contract - a lifetime contract giving Topps the right to use your picture and name on a baseball card if you ever got to the big leagues.

The way he would do it is, Sy would come into the minor league team, I remember was in Auburn, New York, in a Class-D New York/Pennsylvania League, the manager would introduce Sy Berger as a good man and tell us that he was going to talk to you fellas about the contract you would all sign - none of us knew then that that the manager was getting a television set from the Topps Chewing Gum Company. He gave a speech that Mickie Mantle was on the baseball card and that you guys might be lucky enough to be on a card, and so we're going to ask you to sign the same contract that Mickie Mantle signed, here it is and in exchange you get in cash - \$5.00. You got \$5.00! I'm not kidding you. And so everybody is signing this contract. It was like lining up for a flu-shot. He came to me and said, "So where's your contract?" and I said, "I'm going to mail it home to my Dad. You know, I want to take it home and take a look at it." He said, "You know, your Dad doesn't need to look at this. It's a simple thing, it's a one page thing." I responded, "Yes, that's all right, I don't think I'm going to sign. What do I need \$5 for?"

Anyway, I didn't sign the Topps contract. And then the Fleer Company found out about this and they called me up and said, "Hey, we understand you haven't signed your Topps contract. How would you like to be a Fleer's representative so that when new players are signed you can tell them at spring training that if they sign a Fleer's contract, which is non-exclusive, if they sign that one first, then sign the Topps contract, they can get money from two different companies instead of one." So that was my job for which they paid me \$150, which is considerably more than \$5.

So Marvin basically went to the head of Topps and told them that they were going to have to give the players more than they were currently getting. When you got to the Big Leagues and you actually got on a bubble gum card, you got to choose a gift from the S&H Green Stamp catalogue. You can get a bar-b-que worth \$50, you can get a suit from Robert Hall or Sears, a pair of shoes. You can choose something from this catalogue. Mickie Mantle got to choose two gifts from the S&H Catalogue.

Marvin Miller went in and said, "We want to improve the contract for the players." And they said, "It's too late, Marvin, we're sorry, they all have lifetime contracts." Marvin said, "They may all have lifetime contracts, but the new guys don't have lifetime contracts, and in about two or three years, you're gonna have some holes in your sets, and in about 10 years, you'll hardly have anyone." So they thought it over, and they decided to improve the situation and they went from a \$50 green stamp gift to \$1,000 a player. It funded the Players Association, so Marvin didn't have to go to locker to locker to collect the dues.

As I said earlier, Marvin's strength was that he was a great teacher. First of all, you have to understand that baseball players didn't like unions; they were very conservative guys, very headstrong, and oblivious to what was going on in the rest of the world. Most of them never read the front part of the newspaper, just the sports section. I had a manager of my team once who was reading the sports section, and I was reading the front section, and when we got done, I said, "Joe, do you want to switch?" and he said, "No, I don't read the first part of the newspaper."

So for Marvin to take this bunch of guys, from all different parts of the country, different age levels, different political philosophies and to meld them together he had to be a wonderful teacher. He certainly educated me. I remember when he was talking about free agency, and what it might mean to the players to be free agents, I said, "Marvin, if we have free agency, won't the richest teams buy up all the best players and the same teams would win the pennant every year?" Marvin said, "You mean like the Yankees?"

In Marvin's second year in business, in 1967, we said now we are going to have go up to those owners and say we will improve the situation and raise the

minimum salary from \$7,000 to some other number. Marvin asked for a consensus. He wanted to know what the players felt the new number ought to be. So there was a poll conducted in all the clubhouses. A player representative went around the room with all the players sitting on stools, writing down what each player thought the minimum salary should be. The representative asked, "What do you think it should be? 10, 11, 12 thousand, 9? About what do you think?" I said, "I think it should be \$25,000." He said, "Aw, Come on, we got to turn this in! What do you mean, \$25,000?" I said, "Well, you have to understand, we're not just the employees, we're the product." At the point, Jim Turner the pitching coach stood up and said "Boys, that's Communist thinking." And ever since then, I've been known as 'The Communist.' I owe it all to Marvin. Thank you, Marvin.

Now, of course Marvin, to me, is the greatest figure in sports history, because he has the most impressive winning streak. I believe Marvin was something like 48-0 against Major League Baseball in decisions in courtrooms, in arbitration hearings, you name it - he was 48-0. Of course, his opponent at the time was Bowie Kuhn, which takes a little bit of glamour off of it. I love Grant Smith's line about Bowie Kuhn. During the negotiation meetings at the Plaza hotel, Grant Smith wrote that an empty limousine pulled up and Bowie got out.

I was very honored after I retired in 1970. In 1975 I was asked to testify in an arbitration hearing, in the famous Andy Messersmith case. I was the only former player to testify, and I was asked to read passages from *Ball 4*, which I did. *Ball 4* was accepted as legal evidence because it was based on contemporaneous notes. *Ball 4* was not just locker room stories. *Ball 4* was the first book to tell people how difficult it was to make a living in baseball. I was playing on the Seattle Pilots, a collection of players from both leagues, and we all had stories of having been cheated and lied to from this general manager or that owner. The book was filled with those kind of stories, and I think the climate was ready for change, ready for people to understand that players were getting the short end of the stick. I would put it in the category of Curt Flood's book. He really put the wedge in the door and made it possible for the arbitrator to rule in favor of the players in the arbitration hearing.

And I know a lot of people are thinking that baseball players are making too much these days, but here's the way I look at it - for 100 years the owners screwed the players, for 25 years the players screwed the owners - they got 75 years to go!

Thank you, Marvin!