

The Peggy Browning Fund Honors Marvin Miller
Wednesday, January 28, 2004
Sheraton New York Hotel
New York, NY 10019

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Executive Director
Major League Baseball Players Association

We're very pleased to be part of this event. It is one of those causes that if you believe in you can see the results from. Tying the two of those together can be really difficult in this day and age, especially in the kind of profession that most of us are involved in.

I want to recognize a few of the people that are here tonight. There are four former players here - Brooks Robinson, Doug DeCinces, Billy Sample and Keith Hernandez. All of whom over various times and in a series of negotiations participated not just as players, part of the bargaining unit, but as decision makers in the room, and if you get a chance to chat with them afterwards about what it was like to be there, those are the kind of baseball stories that you don't hear very often, and you may find them more interesting than some of the others.

In the front row, there are a few people I'd like to point out - to my far left is Marvin's wife, Terry. Two seats over is his daughter, Susan. In between the two of them, in the prime seat of the evening is Richard Moss, who came with Marvin from the Steelworkers and was, in Dean Atchinson's phrase, "Present at the time of creation," back in 1966. A time I've heard a lot about, and still I'm a little jealous that I wasn't there. In many ways it was probably a bit more exciting than all the things that followed. Dick Moss. And my wife Stephanie in the front row, who shares with Terry the benefits (or the burden, depending on when you talk to them) of having lived through the period around 1966 and all the things that went on, and I suspect from time to time that has been a rather trying experience. We'll leave it at that. We are very thankful.

In the times that I've been asked to introduce Marvin before various groups I often struggle with how one can describe him. You have a few minutes, you are supposed to find a few wonderful phrases to convey exactly what you mean, and what it was like to be there, and to work with such an individual and come to understand what he is all about, and of course that's not possible to do - and every time I do it, whether I take five minutes or a half an hour (which is not what I am going to do tonight) I always end up feeling that it is inadequate somehow, and that you couldn't really express what you wanted to say.

So just a couple of comments to give you a sense of how people feel. Marvin was written about very frequently over the years, when he was Executive Director and thereafter, and even through today there are comments about him. He has often been referred to as an intellectual. I think that in the press that was a compliment 25 years ago to read in the newspaper, though I'm not so sure that it is anymore, but I suspect that is an accurate description.

He was referred to as a leader, or a visionary. That, I think, is not only accurate but very precise in a sense. I'll come back to it in a couple of minutes. He was referred to as a master negotiator and often referred to as an idealog, which is 180 degrees polar opposite of what he is or of the impression that anybody has when spending time with him or working with him. He's often referred to as "mustachioed." That was in every article, and all the pictures would show that.

But when I think about him, what occurs to me most when trying to describe him, is merely to point to the regard that the players would have for him. And I don't mean for his accomplishments, and I don't mean for his advances that were made during those years, but for the individual - his almost personal relationship with many of the players.

The question was, what's the basis of that regard? People often say to me, "Well, obviously players have regard for Marvin for what he did for them," and that usually means, in people's minds, some change in their material circumstances, except that's not really it. That was something that came along with what they did, because *what Marvin did, as best I can express it, was to teach the players the secret of being a successful organization - a successful union. Which is, he taught them not what he could do for them, but what they could do for themselves. And if there is any secret to the success of the legacy, I think that's it.*

Because as we have talked about it, as we talk with all the players that come through and assume the leadership positions, *it really doesn't matter what any paid staff member no matter how prominent says at the bargaining table. All that matters is that people understand that the players agree with, support and will take actions to defend those positions. And they don't do that because somebody asks them to. They do it only because they believe in it themselves, and they understand it and they take pride in it. And that's the vision that he tried to give them.* That certainly was the vision they had by the time I got there - and what I spend almost all my time doing is attempting to remind them of that. Not a bad task.

And I'll just give you one sense of that. I have a letter from an individual, a former player of some prominence (some of you may know who he is), that I've been asked to read:

January 28, 2004

Marvin:

I'm sorry I can't be with you and Terry on this special night. Our family vacation has us about five thousand miles from New York.

I want to congratulate the Peggy Browning Fund for having you as their honoree.

Marvin, your list of accomplishments is numerous both in and out of Major League Baseball. But they pale in comparison to the impact you've had on me personally. Your friendship and professional guidance during my years as a player have stayed with me. In fact, they play a big part in helping me deal with players and a boss who could be demanding at times.

I'd like to believe every Major League player is aware of how your intelligent leadership and strength in years past has enriched their lives.

Marvin, you are a man of great dignity and class and in my opinion a Hall of Famer.

Enjoy the night –

With love and respect,
JOE TORRE

Let me turn it back. I think the most entertaining set of remarks are about to come. Thank you very much.