

MEMORANDUM

To: Gregg Rich
From: [REDACTED]
Date: October 12, 2016

Re: **Veeck As In Wreck: Extra Credit**

Summarization of *Veeck as in Wreck*

Veeck as in Wreck is the autobiography of baseball's greatest promotional mind, Bill Veeck. This book describes the love affair that Veeck had with baseball. Since his father, William, was the President of the Chicago Cubs, Veeck got an early start into baseball. From there, he took it and ran with it. Veeck became an advocate for promotions and many rule changes and innovations that we see in the league today. Veeck was not rich and given a team through inheritance like many of the owners did in that time. He had to go out and get loans. Veeck got his first real start in 1941 when he became the owner of the Milwaukee Brewers minor league team. From that point, Veeck went on to operate the Cleveland Indians, the St. Louis Browns, and the Chicago White Sox twice.

Veeck was able to establish himself as a promotional genius. He took clubs from last place to pennant winners in a matter of seasons. He was also able to fill the stands and break attendance records through his various "gags". Many people around the league did not agree with the way he did things, but Veeck continued to use his master mind to advocate for rule changes and make sure the customer felt important at every game. Through anecdotes and details, the book showed the tribulations that Veeck had to go through such as being underfinanced in St. Louis, having league officials blocking him from purchasing a team, and even being kicked out of the league. Veeck was simply a man of great integrity that could not be kept out of baseball. He treated his troubled players better than most other owners, and genuinely cared about the customers and community. "To me and the other players, you'll always be the No. 1 club executive of all time," Early Wynn told Veeck through a letter (p. 379).

Veeck's influence upon event promotions

Bill Veeck was a promotional genius. He was able to use his different promotions to break attendance records and keep the fans involved. Veeck knew the importance of team identification; he felt that fans wanted to identify themselves with a winning team which he why he put a lot of effort towards promoting (p. 121).

Veeck's most famous promotional stunt was sending 3'7" Eddie Gaedel up to bat (p.11). While this was not even the most extravagant "gag" that Veeck performed, it was what most people know him as even to this day through all his other achievements. "I would still be remembered, in the end, as the man who sent a midget up to bat," said Veeck (p. 23). Veeck also held several promotions catered to the women.

Veeck believed that once a woman became a fan, then she would be the best fan in the world (p. 126). Veeck held Women's Day (all women in free and receive cosmetic bags) and Mother's Day (all women that can show a picture of their kids got in free). Veeck also used fireworks and exploding score boards to give the fans a show and show them something different. He was also very big on fan giveaways. Veeck gave fans prizes ranging from 36 live lobsters, 1,000 cans of beer, 1,000 pies, 1,000 bottles of root beer, 1,000 cupcakes, and 100 free restaurant dinners (Corbett, 2012, para. 51). Veeck's most notable fan prize was after Joe Early wrote Veeck a letter complaining that Veeck honored everyone except the average, less fortunate fans. Veeck ended up gifting Early with a truck filled with a refrigerator, washing machine, luggage, a watch, etc. (p. 113).

Veeck was able to break the all-time attendance record in Cleveland. When the team won a pennant in 1948, Veeck was able to bring out 2,620,627 people (p. 104). The promotions and gags Veeck used changed the way that those around baseball looked at promotions in general. Veeck was one of the first owners to actually look at the financial aspect and ticket sales and actually care about what drove them. A lot of people around the league did not agree with Veeck's promotions, there were even some rules put in place against them. However, Veeck continued to use innovative promotions to break attendance records.

Building from Veeck's innovations utilizing current technologies

Veeck pushed and advocated for many of the major changes that we see in the game today such as the designated hitter, interleague play, a system of playoffs, free agency, and expansion of the league (Dickson, 2014, para. 10). Here are some innovations from Veeck that continue to be built upon utilizing current technology:

- **Instant replay:** Veeck placed disguised cameras in the outfields to expose the bad rulings that umpires made (p. 346). With today's technology, this can continue to be improved upon in the MLB today
- **Advertising:** Veeck used the exploding scoreboard as means for advertising. With today's technology, there are all types of ads everywhere
- **Marketing:** Veeck was the first owner that put such an emphasis on marketing, promotion, and ticket sales. Current technology allows for people to conduct research and analyze data
- **Exploding scoreboards:** Technology today allows for teams to have video boards built onto the scoreboards that can show visual effects to the crowds
- **Putting player's names on the back of uniforms:** Veeck was the first to put player's names on the back on uniforms. Today, the MLB gets creative with jerseys for special occasions

References

- Corbett, W. (2012). *Bill Veeck*. *Society for American Baseball Research*. Retrieved from <http://sabr.org/bioproj/person/7b0b5f10>
- Dickson, P. (2014). Bill Veeck: The Maverick Who Changed Baseball On The 100th Anniversary of His Birth. *The National Pastime Museum*. Retrieved from <http://www.thenationalpastimemuseum.com/article/bill-veeck-maverick-who-changed-baseball-100th-anniversary-his-birth>
- Linn, E. & Veeck, B. (1991). *Veeck as in Wreck*. The University of Chicago Press. (Original work published 1962).