

There are twelve of them. Different sizes, slightly different layout, but all basically the same thing. Scorebooks. Wire bound. Cardboard covers. Boxes to record hits, outs, errors, runs. Everything that takes place in a baseball game except the balls and strikes. They go back to 1970 and continue through today. Scorebooks have been my constant companion for virtually every baseball game I have attended since I was 15. They are more than just a record of games, despite what is going to sound like a trite cliché, in many ways these books are a record of my life.

My mother taught me to keep score. Aside from the birth of my baby sister Mindy (who is now 50), baseball constitutes my earliest memories. Both my parents loved baseball. Natives of the south side of Chicago, they each grew up White Sox fans. From the time I was old enough to go to games, they made me one, too. We had tickets down the third base line. Front row. In those days box seats were truly boxes. Seats were enclosed in groups of eight, barred off. My dad's business had a box. I am not sure exactly how many games it was for. I recall something about a night game package. In the fifties many games were still in the day time. Night games might have been less than half the schedule.

But no matter how rare or common, night games were special. The White Sox were owned and run by master promoter Bill Veeck. He installed an "exploding scoreboard" in Comiskey Park, which shot off fireworks whenever a White Sox player hit a home run. Unfortunately, those were known as the "Go-Go Sox," renowned for speed and defense, not power. I assume what happened was that Veeck had lots of fireworks left over since the Sox were last in the league in home runs. So he instituted what to a six-year-old boy was the most special and exciting nights of the year. Night baseball games meant fireworks. Every night game.

Of course, I was only allowed to go on Friday nights. I remember my mother would make me take a nap. I rarely slept, but lay in bed thinking about the game and the fireworks. Baseball was special. Always has been, always will be.

Part of its specialness was doing something as a family. My parents, for lack of a better term, were not terribly emotional. My father worked a lot, and my mother not at all. But even though she never had a job she was never home. We didn't go on a lot of family picnics, or spend vacations camping in the Tetons. We were together to go to temple and at baseball games. The rest of the time we did family things it was with extended family. Baseball is really my only consistent positive family memory (aside from the rare fun vacation).

Baseball is a special experience.

Once I got my driver's license I was free to go more. And more I went. With my friends, with my girlfriend, sometimes by myself. It was then when my love of baseball grew. This started when I played a board game called Strat-O-Matic with my friends when I was 14. The simplicity yet excitement of the game brought baseball from a revered temple populated by gods, to my living room where I could manipulate these superhumans. My first team was the 1968 San Francisco Giants, and if I wanted to bat

Willie Mays last, I could. This prompted my learning about the history of the game. I found a baseball encyclopedia in the school library and would peruse it between classes. By the time I could drive baseball had become the central passion of my life.

It was only natural that I would continue to keep score. Even once my mother stopped going to games when she got cancer, I loved the pleasure of recording what I had just seen. It made the game permanent in my mind. Not just a transitory event like the fireworks after a home run, but placed as indelibly on paper as the encyclopedia. If I wrote it down and saved the paper that game never died. And in 45 years, none ever has. Strangely, though until now I have never really looked at these. I don't know why now.

I was never much of a student in high school. Even aside from going to a private school populated by children of University of Chicago professors, I never stood out. I liked to read, but not to be made to read. I had no facility for math, science, or language. And from the fifth grade on, when I first started at Lab School, I was the dumb one. Seriously. IQs in the 115 level were the Lab School equivalent of the short bus. When it came time to go to college my choices were fairly limited. I applied to three schools, got into one—Boston University. As it turns out BU is a pretty good school, but to friends who were attending more prestigious institutions it was like community college. This didn't bother me much. So I went to visit BU. My stepsister was a freshman and lived in the freshman dorm. From her room I could see light towers. "The football stadium?" I asked. "Fenway Park," was the reply. I was sold; and never regretted that choice.

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I lived in Denver for 15 years without baseball. People ask how I did that. I really don't know. For whatever reason baseball was just not important to me, I guess. I didn't even go to the minor league team we had. I do remember, however, how happy and excited I was when we got our own team. I didn't go to the opening game, but I was there the opening weekend. From that point on baseball has been a significant part of my life.

I go a lot. Twenty-five times a year or so, but none mean as much to me as those I go to with my daughter Megan. She only went to a single game in 1993, the Rockies' first year, and she got heat stroke. We ended the game in the emergency room. But by the end of the next season Meg was a veteran. We have been to dozens of games together; every one a chance for a father and daughter to bond. Because baseball is a game of measured pace, we have time to talk. We have shared much during games, not the least of which was the game itself. Now we share memories of games we have been to; great plays, big home runs, and the little events which are not part of the box score but form the fabric of the experience. Fans hit by balls and bats. Rain delays and blistering heat. Life.

So the circle is complete. I went with my parents. I go with my daughter. Keeping score is the constant. I am sure that somewhere I have at least a couple of programs where I kept score with my mom, but they are buried in boxes and boxes of the hundreds of programs I have saved. Maybe my next book will be about them. This one

is about my scorebooks. They begin in 1970 and go through today.

The first ones were Wilson scorebooks. For some reason I picked up one of these at a sporting goods store when I was 15. Most baseball scorebooks have little representations of a baseball diamond. Lines are drawn to represent where the batter ended up with places to circle from the list of hits if the player got a hit or write the numerical representation of the play on the field. If you go to any baseball at any level you will see people keeping score in that kind of scorebook. I rejected that.

Instead I bought one which had a series of boxes for each at-bat. Four boxes, one for each base. And a diamond in the middle. When I first saw this I was intrigued. This was different and had more room. I had no idea how to keep score in such a scorebook, but there were directions on the back of the front cover. Frankly, the directions didn't make a lot of sense to me. It said that to denote a hit put a cross in the lower left box. I didn't know exactly what that would mean. But I thought, it must have meant an "X." I decided that for each base of the hit, the box would get an "X." So a single gets an "X" in the lower-right hand box; a double gets one in the two right boxes, and so forth. I have no idea if the creators of the Wilson scorebook intended that, but I have been doing that for 40 years and it works for me. I can easily see the hit.

Then as the runner progresses around the bases the directions said to indicate how that occurred. So the box will indicate which spot in the lineup caused the advance and how. For example, if the leadoff man singles, then goes to second on a sacrifice bunt by the second-place hitter, the upper right box would say "2 sac." If the next hitter singles him home I draw a line at a right angle through the upper left box, down to the lower left box which represents home plate. There I write "3H." In this way I can quickly tell who drove in which run.

But the Wilson books had some features I didn't like. Each sheet had 15 spots for hitters. I only need nine. And while it had two lines for each spot in the batting order, I often needed more. So I would use the unused lines at the bottom. This was no problem if it was the ninth spot which had extra hitters, but a pain if it was the second spot. And though the Wilson books had room for 12 innings, it also had tally boxes on the far right to indicate how many hits, walks, RBI, etc. for each hitter. I never used those. The Wilson scorebooks were good, and I searched and searched for new ones when each got filled, but Wilson stopped putting them out. I was cast adrift.

I was not about to go to a different way of scoring. I decided to take the Wilson scorebook style, fix it and make it my own. I designed a book with the same kind of boxes for scoring, but much bigger boxes. I kept it to 12 innings, but did not need the tally boxes so I used that space. The Wilson scorebook had lines to record the pitchers' information (innings, hit, walks, strikeouts and runs) but they were small. I enlarged them and made them boxes, like you see in the newspaper box score. And I made each page have lines for nine spots in the batting order, just like a real game, but each spot has three lines, except for the ninth spot with six. Fortunately, I used to be married to a graphic designer and even more fortunately we remain friends. She took my design and

made it into a page. Kinko's then made them into books for 50 games, with laminated covers front and back. So now, I keep score in my own unique scorebook. Geeky, I am sure. But all mine.

Now I want to go back and look at the past 40 years of keeping score. Recent years have many games, but from 1978 to 1993 there are almost none. Still, I am curious to see how many hall of famers I have seen, how many walk off wins, and who gave me the most dramatic and compelling memories of my life.