

Transcript

Wynne Leon

Welcome to the Sharing the Heart with Matter podcast, where we celebrate authors, storytellers and creators. I'm Wynne Leon and in this episode Vicki Atkinson and I are delighted to talk with author and publisher Rick Kaempfer about his book EveryCubEver. This is the second game in our baseball doubleheader. As we talked with the hilarious and engaging Rick about his labor of love every cup ever. He swears this 7th edition of the book is the last time he's going to update it until the Chicago Cubs win the World Series. There are 2600 Cubs in this book, 2296 players and the rest are managers and back office. Rick provides the storytelling in each entry, so it's a great read for history buffs as well as baseball fans. He tells, who became a dentist and who ended up in jail, who was on the beaches of Normandy, and he went on to become a governor. As an example of the engaging storytelling, he tells us why manager Frank Chance traded for pitcher Jack Harper just to ruin his career. He gives us the background on the 200 pictures that are included in this edition of the book and where he found him. Rick tells us the touching story of how he got invited to go to the baseball Hall of Fame induction ceremony this year. Such a fantastic way to round out a year that included publishing this 7th edition of every cup ever. Join us as we explore the scenic and beautiful places we go when we tell baseball stories. You won't want to miss this great conversation with the amazing and entertaining Rick Camper we know. You'll love it.

Vicki Atkinson

Hello, Rick Kaempfer

Rick Kaempfer

Hello how are you 2?

Vicki Atkinson

We're doing good.

Wynne Leon

So happy to see you.

Rick Kaempfer

Thanks for having beyond.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah, yeah, this is the second time. The first time we talked to you, can you guys see this? I think it was a year or so ago when you were talking about loop files which you know as people are thinking about really good reading.

Speaker

Ohh you know.

Vicki Atkinson

It's a fabulous book about iconic Chicago radio. Love it. But that's not what we're here to talk about today. Today, we're going to play ball. Ohh yeah.

Speaker

So I was.

Rick Kaempfer

Holding books up. I thought, you know.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah. Yes, yes. We're gonna talk about that. Every cub ever. And there is no. Yes. And there is no false advertising here. This is every cub ever. And I think I just scooped you because I told you before we hit record that I think it's no longer in pre-order. I think it's available.

Wynne Leon

The 7th edition.

Vicki Atkinson

For sale starting today, April second, yeah.

Rick Kaempfer

1st.

Vicki Atkinson

But umm, we're we're so excited to spend time with you. I was telling when you have been kind of all over the Chicago media just in the last couple of days and your tour as you get to you know meet with all the like the the big names right to promote the book. We're so thrilled that you would make time for our little podcast. So thank you. Again.

Rick Kaempfer

Happy to do it.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah, but this title is no joke. This is every, every cub ever from 1871 through 2024. And it's, you know, BIOS and its history, and it's about the managers. And like when said, this is the 7th edition. So I mean we would love for you to just tell us a little bit about the book and then we've got some questions for you.

Rick Kaempfer

Yeah. OK. Well, as you mentioned, it's about every cup ever. So it's a little mini bio. About every single player that ever played for the Cubs, including people that were there for just one day or one inning or one pitch or or, you know, any any manager I tried to cover all of the broadcasters that ever worked for the Cubs. You know a lot of front office people. There are 2600. Entries in this book, I think 22196 of them are players and the rest are, you know, other Cubs related BIOS, but you know it it's a it was a labor of love. I've worked on it for the better part of this century. When when I first turned it into my publisher, Dave he. Said to me, have you ever kissed a girl? Which I think it was his way of saying I'm kind of. A nerd which I am.

Wynne Leon

Is this like taking baseball cards and then just stepping it up 15 notches?

Rick Kaempfer

Kind of. I I used to. I used to have a website called just one bad century, which I started because I was trying to figure out how the Cubs had gone 100 years without you winning a World Series. And then one year, I decided to do this feature called today's Cubs birthdays, and by the end of the year I I realized that I must have done every single cup because I did every single birthday, there were still 50 or 100 that nobody knows what their birthdays were. So I went back and I wrote about them. And and then I was telling Dave about he's like, that's a book. And he's right. It's a book, and it's now 7 editions.

Vicki Atkinson

It's crazy. And so they're the was the last one I saw the 5th edition. Right was the last one I think I touched, but there was a 6th right and this is the 7th and this one you.

Rick Kaempfer

Yeah. Then what? Well, that's the thing. I honestly didn't think through between us when I turned it in the first time I thought, oh, this is going to be great. I can just update it, but then I I didn't think about how many new players come every year and you know, one year there were like 75 players or something like that.

Wynne Leon

Wow.

Rick Kaempfer

They've set a record for most in one. Season and at some point I'm like this is crazy. I I can't spend two to three months of my life every year writing this book and so this is the last edition until they win the World Series.

Wynne Leon

It. Well, that's what you said on the promo. This is the last one until they win the World Series, yeah.

Speaker

Yeah.

Rick Kaempfer

That's right.

Vicki Atkinson

But I mean maybe. That's gonna happen. I mean, what Carson Kelly? Did this week.

Rick Kaempfer

Yeah, that's pretty cool.

Vicki Atkinson

Like it did I I know first cycle like not just for the Cubs for this season, but for cycle period. Did I get that right?

Rick Kaempfer

The first cycle for the Cubs since the 90s, or something like that, so.

Vicki Atkinson

But has any other team done that any other player yet?

Rick Kaempfer

I think he was the first catcher to do it.

Wynne Leon

OK, OK. You're gonna have to tell us. Non Cubs. What the story is.

Vicki Atkinson

Counting.

Rick Kaempfer

So the Cubs won the other day. Like, I don't know, like 14 to three or something like that. And then they.

Vicki Atkinson

Yes, 18 to 3.

Rick Kaempfer

18 to 3 and their backup catcher, who doesn't play very much. I got the I got the start and he hit for the cycle which is.

Vicki Atkinson

I yeah, I think so, yeah.

Speaker

Yeah.

Rick Kaempfer

Getting a single, a, AA triple and a home run in the same game.

Wynne Leon

Wow. Wow.

Vicki Atkinson

Crazy.

Rick Kaempfer

And the last one he hit was the triple, which is the hardest 1 to get, and he's slow. He's a catcher. So he, you know, the whole team was cheering for him as he slowly trudged his way around the bases. It was kind of a fun thing to. Watch.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah, well, it was amazing, right? And and I think the thing that everyone was talking about was not since Mark Grace, right, which is, you know, that's a heyday.

Rick Kaempfer

Correct. Yeah.

Vicki Atkinson

Thinking about that.

Rick Kaempfer

Right. But that's the story that's not in the book because it's it's already passed my deadline though.

Wynne Leon

Right, right, right, right.

Rick Kaempfer

This is the. Frustration. I feel I'm sharing with you.

Vicki Atkinson

Yes. Well, and I think you're being threatening about, you know, give me a World Series or I'm out. But I I don't.

Rick Kaempfer

Yeah, 4 out. Yeah.

Vicki Atkinson

Know I think so. I don't think so.

Speaker

OK.

Rick Kaempfer

Yeah, that's a a little bit of my frustration talking there, but you. Know. It was the labor of love. It's no longer a labor of love, but it's still great stories in there.

Wynne Leon

Yeah, well, you know, we talk about, you know, writing a book is sort of like birthing a baby. But, you know, they never stay static either. So.

Rick Kaempfer

True.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah, yeah, absolutely. Well, and and such a a labor of love. And that the thing that I've loved as I've listened to you talk about the book a little bit. This week is, you know, it's great for baseball fans, but it's also amazing for people that are history buffs. And so, yeah, tell us.

Rick Kaempfer

Yeah, there's a lot of. So I you know, I intentionally when I wrote this book, I didn't want it to be, you know, about stats. You know that that there are so many books out there. There he hit 14 homers and 35 RBI's or whatever.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah.

Rick Kaempfer

I I was not as interested in that as I am in the stories, and so I went through to try to find at least one little nugget about each of these players and it goes all the way back to 1871. I mean, so there were, there were teams, there was a one season before the Chicago Fire.

Wynne Leon

Yeah.

Rick Kaempfer

Which then burned down the city and burned down their stadium. And so they didn't play again for a couple of years. So I went all the way back and, you know, went to the Chicago Historical Society and went through their microfiche. Remember, microfiche.

Vicki Atkinson

MHM. Yeah, I don't want to, but I do, yeah.

Rick Kaempfer

And found these and found the articles about those players and found some really cool stories. I mean, there are players that were, you know, heroes. There were players that were civil war heroes, there was a club that. Wrote up San Juan Hill with Teddy Roosevelt. There was a cub who was on on the beaches of Normandy on D-Day. You know the and there. There was a cup that became a.

Speaker

1.

Rick Kaempfer

Governor of the State of Pennsylvania. And there were also Cubs that became, you know, crooks. And there was a jewel thief. There was a, you know, a a murderer. There was someone who hired a A a hitman to kill his.

Speaker

Hey.

Rick Kaempfer

Wife, I mean and.

Wynne Leon

OK.

Rick Kaempfer

There was another one who slashed the throat of a of another person. I mean, they're really. Harsh stuff, and especially in those early days. But fascinating stories.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah. But it colors it all up, right? Like you said. So it's not just, you know, a statistics book about baseball, but it shows how baseball cuts through culture, you know, time periods, all of that. Yeah.

Rick Kaempfer

Yeah, there were a lot of, I probably like a dozen. Native American Cubs and all of their nicknames. Each one of them. I'm not kidding. We're called chief. So, I mean, it was a there

were, you know, politically incorrect times. There was a catcher on the 1908 Cubs which won the World Series.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah.

Rick Kaempfer

He was his name was Johnny Kling. His nickname was the Jew.

Vicki Atkinson

Ohh man. Oh my gosh. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Rick Kaempfer

You know what I mean? So and it it was, it was a different time, but it was, you know, legitimate history. The other big story.

Wynne Leon

Yeah.

Rick Kaempfer

Is that there was a Cubs player named Cap Anson who was a Hall of Famer who was the reason that there was a color line. You know, the whole Jackie Robinson breaking the color line and black players were not allowed to play cat. Anthony is the one that installed it. He was a cub and he did. He would not play.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah. No kidding.

Rick Kaempfer

On the field, if there was a black player and the whole league decided to. Kowtow to him.

Wynne Leon

Wow.

Rick Kaempfer

And that's why that happened. Wow, gosh, yeah.

Vicki Atkinson

Ohh and I'd.

Rick Kaempfer

So.

Vicki Atkinson

Forgotten about this until you just mentioned it, but you're going to the Hall of Fame this year. You were invited to the induction ceremony, right?

Rick Kaempfer

I I am. I am but here's so we yeah. So we published a book. I'm also a publisher. In addition to being a writer called Chili Dog MVP. And it was about a Chicago White Sox player actually named **** Allen, who this year.

Vicki Atkinson

Tell us about that.

Wynne Leon

Yeah, you get invited to that.

Rick Kaempfer

Is being inducted into the Hall of Fame and the the family of **** Allen was so. Appreciative of this book because they believe that it actually helped the voters realize that he belonged in the Hall of Fame that they sent us all personal invites to come and be there when he's inducted, which is a big thrill. I can't wait.

Vicki Atkinson

And he's still alive, right? Yeah. Ohh, really. Ohh man.

Rick Kaempfer

No, he just passed away. That's the sad part, yeah. Yeah.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah, that's amazing.

Wynne Leon

I love the storytelling aspect of what you do, though here. I mean, it's it's because baseball, you know, we're talking about some go to metaphors. You know, baseball really has it all.

You know, from the home runs to the curveballs, you know, to the strikeouts, all those metaphors that we just. We live and breathe, and then you know, you take that it even further with the stories that you've you've developed here.

Rick Kaempfer

Yeah, I just was reading one this morning that I was reminded of and that's. There was a picture named Jack Harper, who pitched for the Cincinnati Reds, and he beamed, you know, hit hit the Frank Chance. Who was the Cubs manager hit him in the forehead a couple of times with fastballs and one time knocked him out cold.

Speaker

Oh.

Rick Kaempfer

So so Frank Chance traded for Jack Harper just to ruin his career. He he traded for him, put him on the end of the bench and never played him again. And then again the guy never pitched in the big leagues again after that.

Wynne Leon

Wow.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah, but it's like a microcosm of, like, real life grudges, right? It it, you know, covers sort of like all of humanity. Yeah.

Speaker

Right.

Wynne Leon

Yeah, yeah.

Vicki Atkinson

But there's also something that I think is just so even if you're not a baseball fan, there's something inherently hopeful about baseball, right. It's just things start, at least where we live when things. Start to green up a little bit and it's something to look forward to and I think the sights, the sounds the you know, all of that, yeah.

Wynne Leon

Right.

Rick Kaempfer

There's something to that for sure. And you know, being a Cubs. Man, which I have sadly been since 1968, that. That gave you hope, even though we lost every year. You know, we, the Cub fans on on the first day of the year. Every year we're like alright, this is our year.

Speaker

Yeah.

Rick Kaempfer

You know how many times do you need to be punched before you realize it's not going to work out, but one time it did so you know, there we go.

Wynne Leon

Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah. And I don't know if this is true for, you know, other beleaguered sports teams. But I think for Cubs fans. Plans. There's like, this intergenerational thing, you know, where moms and daughters, fathers and sons across the generations, you still go to the games, you go when it's raining, you stay till the end. The extra innings don't throw you you you take it all in and you remain hopeful that I think it's that's something, at least in my experience. Of, you know, being a baseball fan, it's unique to being in the Chicago area and being a Cubs fan.

Rick Kaempfer

And you know, they've been around for 150 years, which is another thing, you know, and my uncle Manny was the one that turned me into a Cubs fan. And my family just moved here in the late 50s. So we're, you know, new. New Americans, and he immediately was taken with the sport and became a Cubs fan. Even though the Cubs were terrible in the 50s. I mean, really, really terrible. But he turned me into a Cubs fan, and then I have now turned my three sons into Cubs fans, too.

Vicki Atkinson

Ohh yeah. Ohh.

Rick Kaempfer

It does carry on.

Wynne Leon

Yeah. Well, we were talking before we started recording about Little League and coaching your three sons through Little League and. My son starting Little League and there's it's so again that feeling of spring, the sound of the bat, the the playing in the dirt, it's just it's such a fun.

Rick Kaempfer

Yes.

Wynne Leon

Outing for everyone.

Rick Kaempfer

It I I would do that again if I could, you know, go back in time. That was my favorite part of being a dad. Was those years like between age 5 and 10 when they were just learning the sport and and just, you know.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah.

Wynne Leon

Yeah.

Rick Kaempfer

Embracing it, you know, sucking it in. They're just loving every second of it. You can see the big smiles on their faces when they made a play or hit the ball. I I would do that again in a second.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah. Gosh, would that be cool?

Wynne Leon

Yeah, there's a great quote. I can't think about from whom. But you know, kids never tell you what's wrong. They just. Asked to go throw, you know, go play ball. You know, it's when they work. You work all day. Yeah, yeah.

Vicki Atkinson

Well, I wanted to know one of the things that in the promo for every hub ever, you know, they're like 500 new entries, which is kind of like mind blowing. But also there's a reference you make to like 200 new photos or is it 200 photos? Total how do? You choose when you've got that much to work with, what to include. And what makes the cut and?

Rick Kaempfer

Well the first. 6 additions had no photos because you had to. You have to pay for them, you know. They're.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah.

Rick Kaempfer

They cost money, but I discovered through the Library of Congress that there are all sorts of photos that are available that are now in public domain because they're over, I think 95 years old.

Vicki Atkinson

Ah.

Speaker

Hmm.

Rick Kaempfer

And so I had. So a lot of them are very old pictures of some of the, you know, very first players that ever played for the Cubs. And then there were two. 2 baseball card companies that went out of business and they put all of their photos in public domain too. And so I that's how I got the pictures. I I didn't have the opportunity to get those in the first six additions, but now they're in there.

Speaker

Hmm.

Vicki Atkinson

Just it adds so much, right? Right.

Rick Kaempfer

It does. I think it does, yeah.

Vicki Atkinson

Well, you know the the book is out starting today. So we want to know, you know, because I'm I'm sure you were working really hard to hit this like opening day. We gotta get to like the first week in April. I'm I'm sure right. All cylinders were firing to do that. But now you're there. So tell folks.

Speaker

Yes, exactly.

Vicki Atkinson

How they can get it where it's available?

Rick Kaempfer

So here's an easy way to remember it every cup ever.com if you if you type that in, it'll go right to my page on the Eckhart Press web.

Vicki Atkinson

I like it.

Rick Kaempfer

Site it. It'll also be on Amazon I think, but don't go to Amazon. Go to, go to Eckhart's press a humble little publisher and uh.

Wynne Leon

Hey, Harry. Great, great. Yes.

Vicki Atkinson

The port our, our our publishers, we need that please. Absolutely. Yeah. Well and while people are there you've written is it 14 books and you were just talking about you and your boys when. And I love Father knows nothing.

Rick Kaempfer

Exactly.

Vicki Atkinson

Right, but you've written a lot. Yeah, there are, but you've you've written lots of other things.

Rick Kaempfer

There's some good baseball stories in that one, too.

Vicki Atkinson

So we we've got to poke you a little bit and ask what you're going to.

Rick Kaempfer

I have that.

Vicki Atkinson

Be working on next.

Rick Kaempfer

Boy, that's a great question. You know, finally exhaling after having written this one. So I'm not 100% sure where I'm going next, but in the meantime, I'm publishing other people's books. I don't know if you've heard of a book called *Surviving Sue* that is also available on that website.

Speaker

Hmm.

Vicki Atkinson

Sound familiar? I don't know.

Rick Kaempfer

Uhm, I recommend that one. That's a good that's. A.

Wynne Leon

A good one.

Rick Kaempfer

Book.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah. And I hear that author was invited to go to a couple of libraries coming up this summer. Yeah.

Rick Kaempfer

I'd like to hear more about that in a future episode of this podcast.

Wynne Leon

Yeah, yeah. Ohh, look at you. Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, we can see. Yeah, yeah. In this 7th edition. Is there one story that sticks out? That was your favorite story to to write for this?

Rick Kaempfer

I'm a professional. I've been doing that for a long time. That's a good one. Let me think. Alright, here's one I found out about this. This man named Oscar Bileski. Oscar balaski. He was in the on the Cubs in 1875 and 1876. And it turns out that he was a civil war hero and fought in, you know, the New York Regiment or something like that. And and when he died, he was buried in Arlington Cemetery. He's the only cub that is buried in Arlington Cemetery. But here's the thing that I just found out.

Vicki Atkinson

Ah.

Rick Kaempfer

His son. Became the director of the FBI. As shortly I think the year after his father died and his son was became a very important figure in the United States government. So you just never know where these stories are going to lead. My favorite thing to do, and this sounds kind of depressing, but. My favorite thing to do is to read their obituaries, because in their obituaries you find out what they did after their baseball career, you know, and and some of these guys have some great stuff. I mean that everything from became a dentist to, you know, became a, you know, a ran a a Mortuary.

Speaker

Hmm.

Wynne Leon

Yeah.

Rick Kaempfer

Or. And then there was one that, you know, was sent to prison and escaped prison and killed a cop. And and just all kinds of really interesting stories.

Wynne Leon

Yeah. Yeah, but OK, that surprises me about the story that you just told us because I I my assumption when you said that you had a new addition was that you just added all the people since you published last. But you're updating stories. From from.

Rick Kaempfer

I'm constantly, constantly looking for new stuff.

Wynne Leon

Amazing.

Rick Kaempfer

And and that's. That's just because I'm interested in it.

Wynne Leon

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Rick Kaempfer

You know that's. My my nerdness whenever I see like a a mention of a cub and now I've kind of got an encyclopedic knowledge of the players that play for the Cubs. Something snaps in my head. I'm like oh.

Wynne Leon

Right. Right.

Rick Kaempfer

I gotta write that.

Wynne Leon

Down.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah, yeah. Do you? I think that adds so much richness, yeah.

Wynne Leon

Have some. Right. It does. Do you have some sort of like Google Alert that says, you know, that searches for any like so and so?

Speaker

Was.

Wynne Leon

Brought up from the miners to play for the Cubs. Like, do you get? Some sort of.

Rick Kaempfer

Yes, I have several Google alerts that I use, yeah.

Wynne Leon

Amazing. I like it. That's brilliant. Like it. Brilliant as is the book.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah, but I think all those things that you do to add richness, you were thinking about Mother's Day coming up, you know, gift giving obviously for Father's Day. But I think you don't have to be a baseball fan or a die hard Cubs fan. Because of everything that you two were just talking about, there's a historical kind of richness and a storytelling about people's lives. Like you said, you know, if you made it to the majors, you wanted to stay. But the guy who became a dentist and.

Rick Kaempfer

Well, here's the Mother's Day. One you on a Mother's Day.

Wynne Leon

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Rick Kaempfer

Story. The Cubs center fielder this year, Pete Crow Armstrong, his mother, is an actress.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah.

Rick Kaempfer

And she starred in, I forget, which baseball movie. I don't have it here in front of me. They're angels in the outfield or a little big man or something like that as she starred as the mother of a major of a of a kid who wants to be a.

Speaker

Ohh.

Vicki Atkinson

Wow.

Rick Kaempfer

Major. Leaguer in the movie and then her real son became a major leaguer.

Vicki Atkinson

Do you have her phone number? I feel like she's maybe like she's got connections we could use.

Wynne Leon

You know what, Vicky? I think Rick just hit it out of the park with that one.

Rick Kaempfer

Another one. That's great.

Vicki Atkinson

Over the fence, past the not quite yet. Ivy, right? Yeah, yeah. Ohh. That's amazing. Yeah. Yeah, I think it's good stuff. And we're like, so happy that you put the time in. And like when said, it's not just kind of adding to the end going and here's you know what? You need to know you know about who's been on the roster. It's adding, you know, all that flavoring it up, which makes it super cool.

Rick Kaempfer

Thank you. I appreciate that.

Vicki Atkinson

Yeah, well, all the best. It's so nice to spend time with you and we'll promote and encourage and just grateful for your friendship and grateful for your effort. This is a great book.

Wynne Leon

OK.

Rick Kaempfer

Thank you. I appreciate it.

Wynne Leon

Thank you, Rick. So nice to talk. To you.

Wynne Leon

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