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Up Close: Gregory L. Peterson

Lakewood resident and prominent Chautauqua County attorney Gregory L. Peterson, aka Greg, enjoys interviewing visiting sports celebrities on Time – Warner Cable Channel 8. A self-described “amateur historian” Peterson said, “Everyone has a story.”

That includes Peterson himself. His story could be the stereotypical ‘local boy makes good’. “Good” is frequently translated to mean financial success. Peterson’s impressive and lengthy legal resume suggests financial success. It includes Jamestown firm Phillips Lytle LLP partner, listing in the *Best Lawyers in America*, and New York State Bar Association Empire State Counsel Program for Pro-Bono work for the past five years.



Except that definition would ignore the chapters of Peterson’s story which translates “good” as a commitment to “giving back and leaving the world a better place.” That narrative tells the story of a sportsman, a writer, and a man who sees possibilities and works to build a healthy community. The cherry on the sundae, Peterson is an optimist.

“I see the glass half full!”

He is an unabashed supporter of the Robert H. Jackson Center, which memorializes the life and legal heritage of the U.S. Supreme Court Justice who presided at the Nuremberg trials after WWII. Inspired by US Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O’Connor’s speech at the unveiling of the Jackson statue in 1996 Peterson joined Carl Cappa and Betty Lenna and four years later the Jackson Center opened.

Peterson explained why he worked to create the Jackson Center.

“Being a lawyer and proud of the profession and an amateur historian, Robert H. Jackson is the biggest name to come out of the area. He was known here, hazily, as having something to do with Nuremberg, practiced in Jamestown and is buried in Frewsburg.”

The Center is devoted to understanding Jackson's life and legal legacy. In a January, 2016 Buffalo News article Peterson described Jackson's work establishing the London Charter which, "established the laws and procedures by which the Nuremberg trials were conducted."

He believes that the Center must continue to expand programming that highlights Jackson's legacy today and makes his life story relevant to today's students. The fall 2016 announcement of the partnership between the Jackson Center and St. Bonaventure, Olean, NY, is designed to do just that. The Memo of Understanding between the college and center includes the development and sharing of digital archives and creating opportunities for student research and internships. It also suggests the possibility of collaboration between the Russell J. Jandoli School of Journalism and Mass Communication and the Jackson Center.

Peterson's take on this arrangement is illustrative of his conviction that the county's economic and social health requires accenting the significant manufacturing base, the Lake, Chautauqua Institution and various educational resources and museums.

"This understanding creates a unique opportunity. It creates a four year university presence in Jamestown and should positively affect Jamestown Business College and Jamestown Community College."

Sports have been one of Peterson's perennial interests. He played basketball and football at Jamestown High School and football at Allegheny College, Meadville, PA. According to his bio, written by the Chautauqua Sports Hall of Fame, he was instrumental in bringing minor league baseball back to Jamestown in the 1970's and the Jamestown Jammers here from Niagara Falls in 1994. Add to this his role as catalyst developing Jamestown as the home of the Babe Ruth World Series, publication of *Across the Seams* and two documentary films on auto racing in the county. He was named to the Chautauqua Sports Hall of Fame in 2012.

Peterson has accomplished much, not only personally, but for the community as well. Certainly the expected attributes of his success are energy, intelligence, imagination, and effort. However, the list of local organizations to which he has contributed his time and expertise from S.U.N.Y. Fredonia to the United Way and the NYS Association of Retarded Children, Inc. suggests his secret attribute is simply a generous spirit.

Case in point - at the end of the telephone interview he said, "I applaud the efforts of this start-up, this forum. It should be commended."

Peterson and his wife Cindy have lived in Lakewood for 15 years. Daughter Amy is attorney with the Detroit Tigers, daughter Megan an attorney with Hershey Chocolate and son Brent is singer/songwriter residing in Washington, D.C.