

Tribute to Jim Roselle

WJTN 75th Anniversary Book (1924-1999)

“Good morning hometown Jamestown and neighbors!

Join me in a cup of happiness!”

In 1971, local newspaper reporter, Robert Shelley titled his article, “Roselle – He is what he is for ‘the sheer joy of it...’” The article was not the first written about Jim Roselle and it will hardly be the last. Certainly there will be more in the new millennium.

On-air personality at WJTN for over 45 years, he knows everyone and everyone knows Jim. When asked to provide information about himself for this Seventy-fifth Anniversary publication, Jim showed the interviewer a pile of articles and said, “Please read about me and the ask me questions if you wish. I don’t want to talk about myself that much.”

The interviewer had known Jim for a few years and understood. Jim relented somewhat and did relate some information about the young Jim Roselle. “My parents worked hard so I could stray in school. I went to Love School and Washington Junior High. I had many jobs as a kid. I caddied at Moon Brook, sold newspapers at Second and main, was a camp counselor and worked at the Boys’ Club.” With that said, Jim handed the articles over the table and said, “The rest of the story is in these.”

And what a story those newspaper clippings tell. After graduating from Jamestown High School in 1944, Jim attended St. Lawrence College where he majored in business administration and minored in radio speech. While at college, Jim did play-by-play broadcasts of football, basketball and baseball games.

WJTN’s Si Goldman hired him in 1953 as a sportscaster. Thirty years later, when Jim received the 25th Brotherhood Citation from the local chapter of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, Si Goldman said, “He is really Mr. WJTN.” He went on to praise Jim for being talented and flexible enough to interview Lucille Ball, serve as MC at an Italian-American Festival and give good coverage of Swedish King Carl Gustaf’s visit in 1976 to Jamestown. Jim credits “Mr. Goldman” for giving him the chance to do what he loves to do. He gave Jim the opportunity to broadcast from London, the Soviet Union, Austria, Germany, Italy, the Macy’s Parade, and a week’s broadcast from Disney World.

Jim Roselle is known for his interviews. Many listeners, when thinking of Jim’s career, first think of his long relationship with Chautauqua Institution. Since the mid 1970s, Jim has interviewed Chautauqua guests including Margaret Mead, Tony Bennett and Bill Clinton. Jim will grimace when he reads this, but it is his brand of humor that we love him for it – *He’s an institution at the Institution!*

Whether to talking to famous people at Chautauqua or reminiscing with callers every weekday morning on his show, it is amazing how he puts people at ease. In a 1983 interview with Chuck Nalbone of Nite-Line Magazine, Jim revealed his secret. "Chuck, no matter what field people are in, no matter how famous they are, they're human beings who simply have had the pleasure of experiencing more than the average person. They have a talent they've been able to use and they have an intellect that they've been sharing. I feel my audience would like to have that person share that experience with them. I accept the challenge of wanting that person to share his life, thoughts, philosophy, talent and the fun things in his life – particularly the lighter side. I don't want to make my interviews sound heavy, even though that person may deal with weighty topics and subjects. They are people. They all have had comical events in their life, or have a philosophy about family, America and the world, and I just feel, Jim Roselle, you've got a chance to let an audience enjoy this personality."

Jim has stated in many newspaper interviews that as radio technology and the radio business changed, he often wondered when it might be time for him to leave. He thanks the management of WJTN for allowing him to remain committed to local events for local people. "Any change makes you think, is this the one that's going to make you change your mind about the business? Am I like a dinosaur in the business? I kept focused on the fact that the audience wanted to be involved in local radio."

Thanks, Jim, for 45 years of Good Mornings and countless cups of happiness!