

Remembering Roselle

Longtime Radio Personality Jim Roselle Passes Away At 89

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By A.J. Rao, Post-Journal

Legendary broadcaster and longtime WJTN personality Jim Roselle passed away Wednesday at the age of 89.

Roselle, who spent more than 60 years on WJTN 1240 AM Radio and 40 years broadcasting from Chautauqua Institution, was an iconic fixture on the airwaves, known for his candid, conversational interviews, inquisitive mind and love for all things Jamestown.

Rick Brodowski, Media One Group station manager, said his entire staff is saddened by the loss.



Jim Roselle is pictured early on in his 61-year radio career with WJTN, beginning in 1953. He passed away Wednesday at the age of 89. Submitted photo



Jim Roselle is pictured in summer 1991 with Bill Clinton, then-governor of Arkansas. Submitted photo.

"No words can express how we are all feeling," Brodowski said. "We are truly mourning the loss of not just one of the best radio broadcasters the business has ever known, but one of the best citizens the Jamestown area has had the honor to call one of their own. Jim has touched not only the lives of our listeners over his 61-year career with WJTN, but has also touched the hearts of anyone he has ever worked with in our hallways."

"He was a gentleman that always made people feel involved in the conversation; whether it was one of his scheduled guests or someone he just met for the first time at a broadcast," Brodowski added.

Roselle hosted many shows on WJTN, including "The Jim Roselle Show" from 9 a.m. to noon, Monday through Friday. He also shared the microphone with his friend, Russ Diethrick, on "The Times of Your Life" program on Saturday mornings.

"You get a gift once in a while that's incomparable, and that was my friendship with Jim Roselle as far as I'm concerned," Diethrick said. "With Jim, there was never an 'I.' He never talked about himself. He talked about those around him, his family, his friends and what this community meant to him all these years. It was an awesome gift to have known him. His memories will go on forever."

Roselle spent the last 41 summers broadcasting daily from his Bestor Plaza studio at Chautauqua Institution, interviewing hundreds of renowned guests including Bill Clinton as governor of Arkansas, Joyce Carol Oates, Roger Goodell, Norman Lear and Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

In 2014, Roselle released a book titled "The Best Times of My Life," penned with the help of Walt Pickut, editor of The Jamestown Gazette.

"In the two years I worked with him, I found him to be one of the gentlest, kindest people I've ever known," Pickut said. "He had a powerful intellect and one of the things he always said was, 'Everybody has a story and it's worth telling.'"

Pickut said Roselle's book went on to be the 2014 best-seller at Chautauqua Institution.

"His books sold more than any of the world-famous guests' that were there all summer," Pickut

remarked.

Maureen Rovegno, associate director for religion at Chautauqua Institution, said a highlight of her tenure has been knowing Roselle and seeing how he engaged with guests. In fact, she joked that Roselle, though not a member of the institution's staff, was likely its most valuable goodwill ambassador.

"Everyone who knew Jim loved him," she said. "One of the things I've discovered over the years is that when people met him here and went back home, they would continue to tune in daily to his broadcast because it made them feel as if they were back (in Chautauqua). He had an amazing following around the country."

In 2014, Roselle was named one of "Five More Giants of Chautauqua" via the institution's Heritage Lecture Series. Also in 2014, he was presented the Key to the City of Jamestown by Mayor Sam Teresi.

"Like everyone in the Jamestown region, I'm feeling tremendous sorrow for the loss of a true community treasure," Teresi said. "My late father and Jim were close personal friends ... more like brothers. And Jim was more like a great, wise and steady uncle figure to me."

Teresi, who described Roselle as a mentor, said the late broadcaster was one of the best examples that anybody could ask for as to the importance of caring for people and selflessly loving and serving one's community.

"Jim always used to refer to 'having a cup of happiness every day,'" Teresi said. "(To Jim), I raise my cup to you as you're finally enjoying your eternal cup of happiness."

Roselle, a Jamestown native, was a 1944 graduate of Jamestown High School and 1949 graduate of St. Lawrence University.

He started working at WJTN as a radio announcer in 1953 and delivered his first broadcast at Chautauqua Institution in 1974.

Throughout the years, he has been an inductee to the New York State Broadcasters Association Hall of Fame and received multiple awards, including the Chautauqua Sports Hall of Fame award, Paul Harris Fellow award, Recognition Award from the Buffalo Broadcasting Association and Chautauqua Institution Old First Night award.

In honor of Roselle, WJTN plans to air special programming in the upcoming weeks highlighting Roselle's career.