

A Special Connection

Roselle's Impact Touched Community Members Of All Ages

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By Cameron Hurst, Post-Journal

EDITOR'S NOTE: Cameron Hurst is a senior at Jamestown High School, the author of the Rowdy Raider blog and an occasional contributing Post-Journal sportswriter.

When I was 7 years old, I was in downtown Jamestown with my grandparents for the annual Lucy Fest. It was there that I noticed two men standing on the side of the street with a microphone, stopping, and talking to the many people in town for the event.

My grandparents, who seemingly knew everyone, waved "hello" to the man as the older gentleman made his way over, with his microphone, and said, "And how are YOU enjoying the festival, young man?"



In this February 2015 file photo, WJTN Radio personality Jim Roselle, left, holds court with Steve Cass, middle, and Robert Daniels prior to the 34th annual Chautauqua Sports Hall of Fame Banquet at the Lakewood Rod & Gun Club. Roselle, who passed away Wednesday at 89, was one of 10 people who were inducted that night. P-J photo by Scott Kindberg

What I didn't know then was that I was talking to a living radio legend. What it didn't take me long to realize, and what I obviously know now the day following his passing, is that I was encountering one of the greatest men I would ever have the blessing to know. This was only the first of many encounters I

would have with Mr. Jim Roselle.

Several years later, during my involvement at the Lucille Ball Little Theater of Jamestown, I was asked to partake in a tribute to Jim at the theater, celebrating his 55th year on the air at WJTN. In this performance, I portrayed a "younger" Jim Roselle, miming Jim's first exposure to radio broadcasting, which was listening to Notre Dame football games on his family's old stationary radio. I was lucky to have this bond with him.

From that point on, no matter where I saw him, whether it was at Chautauqua Institution as a guest on his radio program from Bestor Plaza or walking into Lisciandro's for lunch, I was greeted with a bear hug, a handshake, a smile, and a "HEY BUDDAY!"

That was who Jim Roselle was.

His career highlights are countless. Among others, he was inducted into the New York State Broadcasters Hall of Fame in 2010 and the Chautauqua Sports Hall of Fame in 2015; and conducted interviews with President Bill Clinton, Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court Ruth Bader Ginsburg, baseball Hall of Famers Dick Williams and Robin Roberts, and boxer Muhammad Ali.

But, to understand why the man did all that he did, one must understand who the man was - the son of Italian immigrants, growing up on Franklin Street in Jamestown during the Depression era. He continually gave back to the city that bred him and the organizations that molded him. His 25-year membership on the board of directors at the Jamestown Boys and Girls Club is only one example. He also made sure every aspect of Jamestown High School was covered, announcing Jamestown High School football games, traveling with the JHS A Cappella Choir on several trips, and being there with a microphone when the JHS Marching Band returned from their first trip to Disney World in the early 1980s.

Through his influence in the media, Jim Roselle exemplified what serving one's community is. His motive to continually highlight the good in this area was one of the many reasons I found myself longing to have a career in some aspect of communications. If I, through my writing, can be half of the man in the influence and the audience I reach that he was, then I'll know I have done something right.



Cameron Hurst, then 12, poses for a photo with Jim Roselle at the Lucille Ball Little Theater. Photo courtesy of Cameron Hurst

One of my favorite Jim Roselle stories occurred when the A Cappella Choir celebrated its 90th

anniversary and 90th Vespers service in December 2014, an anniversary it shares with the birth of WJTN. In a live remote broadcast from the choir room at Jamestown High School, featuring both Jim and colleague Dennis Webster, Jim spoke to a room full of 10-12th graders on the importance of connections.

"You don't know who could be sitting in this room with you," he told the 80 students that day. "When I was your age, my class president was a man by the name of Charles Goodell. Charles Goodell became a U.S. Senator after Robert Kennedy died. During one of my broadcasts from Chautauqua, I was interviewing Charlie at the Refectory and a young man came by and swept up some garbage right by me. Charlie introduced him to me as his son, Roger, who is now the commissioner of the NFL. Value your connections. You never know who you're gonna meet."

You could hear a pin drop. It was a story that really hit home with the students.

Ironically, the legendary sports broadcaster Joe Garagiola also passed away Wednesday at 90 years old. Garagiola was considered by The New York Times as an "everyman" who broadcasted a game with verbiage comparable to the common man watching the game.

If Garagiola was that to sports and baseball, then Jim Roselle was the modest voice of Jamestown, broadcasting with the same verbiage as a common resident. That simplicity and love for his city is what made him unique. We simply need more media folks like Jim Roselle, who entered this career not for the glory, the fame or the exposure, but simply for the love of exposing the good around us if the spotlight shines just bright enough upon it.

May we all raise "a cup of happiness" to the man who brought us such happiness throughout his 60-plus years on the radio and may his spirit never be forgotten.

Rest easy, Mr. Roselle.