

## **FIFTH ANNIVERSARY FIVE FOR FIVE PATRON TRIBUTE**

**I**n the beginning, God created Jim Murray. Dave Anderson, Pulitzer Prize winning sports columnist for the New York Times once wrote: “Jim Murray is not merely a great sportswriter. He is a great American writer who deserves to be thought of with Mark Twain, Ernest Hemingway and John Updike as well as Red Smith and Jimmy Cannon.”

When Jim passed away on August 16, 1998, the literary and sporting world lost a friend and gifted writer. I am not one to hear “voices” but I responded to a sudden urge to “Perpetuate the Legacy.” I realized it was not my responsibility to come up with a solution, but rather to be a part of the solution.

Jim Murray covered every sport from auto racing to horse racing, from billiards to martial arts. Of course there were Super Bowls and World Series, the NBA Finals and Stanley Cup Finals, the Grand Slam events in golf and tennis, championship fights and the Olympics, not to mention volleyball and soccer and even rodeos. Readers weren’t the only ones to come out ahead — every “Jerry McGuire” in Southern California won a title when Jim Murray did a column for his client. To be sure, corporate America smiled on Monday morning after the big event when Jim Murray wrote of the Hope Chrysler Classic, the AT&T, the Nissan Open, or mentioned Pepsi or Coke, Budweiser, Evian or Kleenex. Indeed, Jim did for four decades what Oprah is doing today — except Jim’s were subtle endorsements, dropped in the beginning, middle or the end of a column.

Publications from universities arrive in my office on a quarterly basis and it is clear that the common thread that binds these institutions of higher learning is financial support from generous donors. As a nonprofit organization, the Jim Murray Memorial Foundation strives to meet the financial commitment for its seven \$5,000 journalism scholarships each year, while maintaining a low operating budget.

In 2001, my darling friend, the late Nancy Whitaker, suggested I pick up the phone and call her friend John Madigan at the Chicago Tribune for financial help. “Nancy, I can’t just pick up the phone and call the Publisher & CEO of the parent company of the Los Angeles Times!” I exclaimed.

“Sure you can! Just tell him you’re a friend of mine!” Nancy said in her take-charge voice. Instead of phoning, I sent a letter. And that, I’m pleased to say, was the beginning of a marvelous relationship between the McCormick Tribune Foundation and the Jim Murray Memorial Foundation.

The McCormick Tribune Foundation became our first “Five for Five” Patron, providing the JMMF with a \$25,000 grant — payable over a period of five years — ensuring one scholarship annually for the next half decade.

If we had one scholarship covered, why not all seven? Enter the St. Louis Rams — and Bobby April, a special teams coach for the organization and a huge Jim Murray fan. Bobby often quotes Jim Murray in his motivational speeches to the team, and to the public. “If there’s anything I can do to help the Foundation, just let me know,” Bobby offered. That remark prompted a renewed acquaintance with John Shaw, president of the St. Louis Rams, and subsequently we proudly announced our second “Five for Five” patron.

Fate smiled again when I bumped into NFL Commissioner Paul Tagliabue at a 2001 St. Patrick’s Day party in San Marino, California. Was it destiny or, perhaps, a little Irish luck? Well, after nearly two years — and after much persistence — in January 2003, the JMMF received a “Five for Five” patron grant from the NFL Charities, thanks to Commissioner Tagliabue, Joe Browne, Jack Kemp, Mr. Ralph Wilson, Jr., Mr. Lamar Hunt and Mr. Wellington Mara. These great men had tremendous respect and admiration for Jim Murray, the man and the writer.

Establishing, and valuing, relationships are the key to the success of any business. Importantly, Jim’s impact on fans - be they truck drivers or CEO’s — across this country, and abroad, through his syndicated sports column, keeps the relationships alive even today.

Is it fair to say we all owe Jim a tremendous debt for entertaining us for so many mornings and for giving us a higher standard to strive for in our lives; for helping us to cherish the written word and to be inspired by his character and courage? Integrity is not just a virtue, it was Jim’s way of life.

As we turn the corner and head to the back nine, so to speak, of the first JMMF decade, I am open and receptive to ideas that will bless the lives of many young men and women who aspire to the ideals of Jim Murray and his lasting legacy. Won’t you join the “Five for Five” patrons team and “Perpetuate the Legacy?” Thank you.

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