



BRUCE WYLIE

The Man Behind the Mic: A Community Icon

By Russ Disotell

How much can one person's efforts impact a community? Well, if you are talking about Brockville and area, and the person is Bruce Wylie, the answer is plenty, with a capital P. His fingerprints can be found all over any number of events that have grown to become part of the fabric of the community.

Fresh out of Ryerson, he applied for a job at Toronto radio station CKFH. He was told the position would never lead to an on-air job and Bruce had his heart set on being a sports or news announcer. He was told of another position at the radio station in Brockville. He arrived in Brockville on April 7, 1971 to interview for a position as the evening announcer. The next evening, he was behind the mic. The rest, as they say, is history. This year, 2017, marks 46 years at the station. When Bruce eventually had a chance to switch to news announcer, he noticed the tenure in the position was short, so he deferred. Eventually he moved to mornings and has been there for 40+ years.

By July, that first year, Bruce was involved in the community. Friends mentioned, Brockville needed a competitive golf tournament,

so Bruce pitched the idea to the station manager. The Bruce Wylie Golf Tournament was born. "We used a poster to attract entrants for the first 3 years. After that we used a mailing list, because people enjoyed it so much." Bruce was all of 22 years old and golfers coming out were a little surprised, as they expected someone much older.

The Bruce Wylie Tournament ran for 20 years, then morphed into the Brockville Sports Hall of Fame Golf Tournament, which is still running after 25 years. "I wanted to offer the best value for the dollar," Bruce says, "I wanted everyone to be involved. People will still say it was the best tournament." Early in its existence it was commonplace to have 300 to 400 people on the 18th hole on the Sunday. There were radio updates, leader boards and the CB club on the course relaying scores.

Later, he also got involved with Riverfest. Everyone remembers Riverfest fondly. For 10 years Bruce did the Golf Tournament and Riverfest. He admits it was a busy time, but says he always had lots of help. "You don't do these things without a great group of volunteers."

In the early 80's, he served on the Board of the YMCA. He recalls it was his second year on the Board and Canarm's owner, David Beatty's first. There was talk of being forced to sell the building, which Bruce and David were against. "People had started raising money, but \$10,000 was still needed. David was the financial man and I was the promotional guy." Bruce ended up doing a radiothon on a Saturday, starting at 8 am, raising the needed money by the end of the day.

Bruce is especially proud of his involvement with both the Brockville and Area Sports Hall of Fame as well as the Brockville and Area Music and Performing Arts Hall of Fame. "In both cases, I didn't want it to be a one-night affair. We always invite past inductees back to welcome the new class." Both Halls have professional categories, because he thinks it is important to recognize "those who made it", so to speak.

Bruce's involvement with the Annual Palliative Care Telethon began with a visit from Bob Crowder to the station. "I knew Richard Crotty and the Musician's Union wanted to help, so I brought the two groups together." Five weeks later Bruce hosted the first Telethon. "It raised \$65,000, I wanted to raise \$250,000. Though it did take a while, it has become part of the fabric of the community, and shows the generosity of the area." Bruce recently resigned as Chair of the Telethon, but still acts as host and will for a while longer.

Many in the community would point to his work during the infamous Ice Storm as having the most impact on the area. He says it was a spur of the moment decision, "to just stay on the air." Bruce was awarded Broadcaster of the Year for 1998 for his efforts. In an ironic turn, Bruce got stuck in a snowstorm and couldn't pick up the award!

Bruce's outlook on his career of community involvement is, "You, as a volunteer, get more from it than you put in. I've been part of many wonderful teams. God has guided my life and without him in it, I would not have been able to do what I've done in Brockville". **LH**

Editor's Note: We should all be grateful that we have such a community oriented individual such as Bruce Wylie in our area. With radio stations constantly changing formats and on-air personalities in cities and other communities across Canada, we are lucky locally that Bruce is on the air every morning on 104.9 JRfm. Thank You Bruce Wylie for your community spirit and involvement to make our area such a great place to live!