

# The lost voice of Red Sox Nation

By Ted Weesner Jr. | June 4, 2007

THIS SEASON Red Sox Nation suffered an unexpected early loss. Though it's an absence that continues to haunt, no one in any official capacity wants to talk about it. Tune your radio to a game and you might have been taken by surprise.

A special voice, a voice we'd come to count on like Opening Day, had disappeared. Longtime broadcaster Jerry Trupiano's contract was not renewed by the organization, and many feel like a loved one has been stolen away.

The degree of unhappiness is both surprising and not hard to locate. Google "Trupiano" and you get a glimpse of live grief on display. And just as Entercom, the communications corporation that broadcasts games, made no mention of Trupiano's non-renewal when it announced his replacements, if you listen to the new team of broadcasters -- there are two who alternate with Jerry's old partner, Joe Castiglione -- there's been no mention of the missing personality.

This despite the fact that baseball announcers refer regularly to the past, both near and far. It's a little eerie. In the way that Lenin purged Trotsky's image from official photographs, it's as if Trupiano never existed. Fans are left to carry the burden.

And what a burden it can be. Radio baseball occupies a special place in many fans' hearts. Unlike television, where the action sits before your eyes for passive digestion, radio provides listeners the very active satisfaction of using one's imagination. Like a movie projector you get up and running in your head, you're responsible for springing the game to life. In this sense listening to baseball is like reading a well-paced novel.

A good broadcaster is also a good storyteller, providing sharp detail, colorful character, a lucid view of unfolding scenes, all the while trying not to get in the way of "our" picture. Though players come and go, announcers remain loyal guides. Trupiano had been calling Sox games for 13 years. For more than a decade, his voice sounded in our cars, kitchens, backyards, workplaces.

Like all baseball announcers, he was a lifeline to the game, but also a lifeline of a more significant sort. Flip on the radio and you could count on hearing his deep tones: playful, blustering, supremely in control. Something like the platonic ideal of the father. It may not be too much to say that Trupiano's paternal gravitas offered -- much like the experience of listening to baseball itself -- a kind of temporary shelter from life's storms.

I'll never forget the summer I had to drive across New England to visit my mother in the hospital. At the age of 24, I felt unequipped to handle what was coming my way, anxieties arriving from every direction. Desperate to escape my own racing mind, I flipped on the radio. Music didn't work; it only caused a pile up of more painful memories. But then, in the far corner of Connecticut, I had the good fortune of finding that afternoon's Red Sox game on the air. With some frantic turning of the dial, I kept it going all the way to New Hampshire.

There it was: the sweet enclosure of Fenway Park, the leisurely and sometimes high-stake action contained by lines of chalk, umpires on duty to keep any potential chaos at bay. This vividly green and soothing picture, filling the interior of my broken-tailpiped Jetta, July wind blowing through the open window as I barreled up Interstate 95, was rendered by the steady, certain voices of two play-by-play announcers.

And play by play was exactly what I needed. For the length of a three-hour game, my troubles drifted off. At such times, baseball on the radio provides excitement and reliable consolation.

The invisibility of the radio announcers is crucial to this emotional transaction. We listeners can't help but project our own ideas, feelings, and needs onto the blank screens the simple voices offer up. These unseen men in turn are invested with a meaning and importance that surely extends beyond whoever they are in real life. This may explain the disappointment one can experience in seeing a radio personality or favorite writer. What develops in the ether is not just a relationship with that voice, but with yourself.

Someone once told me we can never have too many mothers. The same can surely be said of fathers. For many of us, for a while, Jerry Trupiano was one, unseen but very much heard.

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