

Vin Scully's greatest gift? Bringing people together

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By Israel Fehr

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It was, of all places, on the back deck of my high-school girlfriend's house where I began to grasp Vin Scully's greatest gift.

We were preparing for a barbecue on an early summer's night when an issue arose with the grill, so we called the next-door-neighbor to see if he could help and he was more than happy to trudge over and do so. Feeling like it was the right thing to do, Al was invited to stay for dinner.

Still in the getting-to-know-the-family phase of the relationship, I stayed relatively quiet throughout the dinner, but it didn't take long for Al, who was probably close to 60 years old, and I, a few weeks away from turning 18, to bond over a mutual love of baseball.

After the table was sufficiently fed, the conversations broke into smaller groups and Al and I really got going. There were even some disagreements – he had Mantle, I had Griffey – but when the discussion turned to broadcasting there would be no disagreeing.

There was no one — not now, not ever — better than Vin Scully. How could there be? He was simply the best to have ever done it. I grew up in Vancouver, British Columbia, watching the occasional late-night Dodgers games we'd get on Canadian TV and later seeking them out on MLB.TV. Scully's legend was not lost on me.

Listening to Scully on TV made it easy to see why he was so revered – the clarity of the delivery, the depth of the storytelling – but it wasn't until I went to Los Angeles that I could truly understand the Scully experience.



Just the summer prior I sat in the bleachers for a series at Dodger Stadium while on a family road trip. What I remember most — other than a monster home run hit by a Marlins rookie named Mike Stanton — was the wave of fans that clutched pocket radios or hauled in large boomboxes to listen to Scully's broadcast as a group.

What struck me most about it was everyone, regardless of age and race, was captivated by every word Scully spoke out of those speakers. It was not at all unlike Al and I, even as we sat there more than 1,000 miles from the man just chatting about him, he was the common link between us.

A few weeks later I moved across the country to Toronto to start college and didn't think twice about the night when the neighbor saved the barbecue.

When I came home for Christmas, though, there was a gift for me from someone I was not expecting. Al had left a copy of "Pull Up a Chair: The Vin Scully Story" by Curt Smith with my girlfriend's parents to give to me.

Merry Christmas! And, more importantly, pitchers and catchers report in less than two months.

I saw Al a handful of times after that. Always a smile and a wave and maybe a comment or two about whatever the hot topic of the day was in baseball. But it's been years since I saw him. Eventually the girlfriend and I were no more and I've spent most of that time living away from home, chasing my own sports journalism dreams.

But we'll always have that night on the back deck, talking baseball and swapping Scully stories. And I've got the book to prove it.

Because from behind his microphone with his eyes on the diamond, whether it was for one night, one year or a career, Scully has been bringing baseball lovers — even those with a 40-year age difference — together. What an incredible legacy to leave behind.

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