



It's 1939, and legend-in-the-making Ralph Hubbell has just taken to the microphone at WGR Radio after forging his status as a rising star at WEBR and WBNY. The WGR gig opened up when sports announcer Roger Baker departed Buffalo for Cincinnati. Hub already had made a name for himself starting in 1931, reading poems nightly on WEBR and performing with aplomb on a variety of other assignments at 'BNY. A charter-inductee into the Western New York Broadcasting Hall of Fame in 1997, Hubbell passed away nearing his 91st birthday in 2000.

Ralph Hubbell

In 1931 young Ralph Hubbell landed a job reading poems on WEBR . This was within a decade of the birth of what would become one of the most powerful means of communication in history,.....Radio! After a time Ralph moved to WBEN, where he would go on to become among the most respected sports broadcasters ever in Buffalo. He would team up with other sports icons such as Chuck Healy, Van Miller and Dick Riefenberg to add to the excitement of a burgeoning sports scene through a medium that brought the action on the field, or the rink , or the ring....into the living room. Ralph Hubbell will also be remembered for his warm and humorous conversations, on-the-air and in print, with his fictional alter-ego "The Oldtimer". His depth of knowledge and the genuine warmth of his personality will serve to leave an indelible mark upon the face of broadcasting in Buffalo

As It Was At My Beginning!

by Ralph HUBBELL

The man asked, "Why don't you write something that you have never written before?" His thinking was to go back to the beginning — the years before sportscasting and sports writing and MCing and speech making, etc., occupied my time from the distant then to the now. His invitation was accepted so that this visit with all of you will definitely be from the beginning — October twenty-seventh in the year 1909.

My birthplace was Duluth, Minn., and you can understand that I don't recall much of that city, inasmuch as my family moved to Hamburg, N.Y. when I was two weeks into this world. My father, Ralph Hubbell, Sr., worked for a telephone company and was transferred to Buffalo at that time. My first seven years were preceded by a move into Buffalo where my two brothers, Albert and Philip, resided with our parents on Norwood Avenue.



The Hubbell Family, Janet, Albert, Ralph Sr. and Ralph Jr. in 1910.



Ralph at age 8.

Tragedy for the Hubbell clan was soon upon us for my mother, Janet, contracted tuberculosis and was sent to a hospital in Saranac Lake where she died in 1919. The last time we saw her was three years before she passed away inasmuch as children were not allowed to visit in those years. Shortly thereafter, my father disappeared from our lives with the result that Emily Welch, Mother's sister, our beloved Tem, took over the dual parent role.

She was a traveling school teacher and when Tem traveled we traveled. Every school change resulted in our losing a year so that I graduated from high school at the age of twenty, having attended fourteen different schools. We schooled in Virginia, Ohio, New York and, finally, Brooklyn where graduation came in 1930.

Right here I pause to remember Aunt Emily — Tem. She was easily the most remarkable person I ever knew and, when she realized that raising three young lads would require more income than what she earned teaching, she started a small girl's camp in Maine — Camp Wabunaki. She started with ten campers in a senior camp and when she retired some twenty-five years later she had two camps, senior and junior, and was, herself, president of the National Camp Directors Association.



After I graduated I turned down Tem's offer to send me to college and joined the world of the unemployed, for it was in the middle of a deep depression. In succession I sold typewriters (one a portable to Tem), sold Quaker Oats, ran a YMCA switchboard for a place to sleep and finally worked as daytime boss of a cheap hotel on Sixth Avenue.

When Tem heard about that she contacted the Westminister Church in Buffalo and I was given the job of assistant boys worker at Westminister Community Center on Adams Street here in town.

My pay was \$27.00 a month but my rent was thirty bucks. So, to make up the difference, I hatched an idea. In school I had always been fascinated by poetry. Listening to a radio music program one day I heard the needle stick in a record groove. The sponsor was Frank Meyers Appliance Store and I called immediately and told him about the needle. When I suggested a poetry half-hour with music background he told me to drop by. Result? One week later I did a half-hour poetry show Monday through Saturday for five dollars a week. It paid the difference.

That was in 1931. In 1932 I took the job of boys worker in the Little Italy Neighborhood Association in the Red Hook section of Brooklyn and intended to make that my life's work. But one day, in visiting my brother Phil in Buffalo, I ducked into WEBR to just reminisce and say my greetings and was told that an announcing job was open. Three weeks later I said goodbye to Little Italy and Hello to Buffalo and the rest of my years you know all about — all 63 of them.

So there you have it, dear friends, and I want you all to know what else you have — the forever thanks of one Ralph Hubbell for your compassion and your loyalty, treasures that are mine to keep for always.

A Few of My Memories



During Jim Thorpe's world wide travels to visit children, he stopped in Buffalo in 1955 to help Ilio DiPaolo promote a wrestling event at the Aud.



*Joe McCarthy's
greeting,*

“To Ralph Hubbell...may I always prove myself worthy of your friendship”

*best expressed how
I, too, felt privileged to enjoy his company.*

*When Joe passed away on January 13, 1978—in Millard Fillmore Hospital—I was holding
his hand.*



*Sandy Hawley was indeed the finest jockey in all of Canada...and we enjoyed many interesting
interviews.*

BABE RUTH
NEW YORK

May 6, 1947



Mr. Ralph Hubbell
2, S. R. Broadcasting Corp.
Bank Building
Buffalo 3, N. Y.

Dear Ralph,

Thank you so much for your thoughtfulness in sending me the transcription of your broadcast which I have just received. I appreciate it much more than words can say.

Many, many thanks.

Sincerely,

It was exciting to have spent time with Babe Ruth.

Ralph Hubbell has "retired from the clock" and is now on his own time...writing for 2 community newspapers—speaking when asked—serving on 4 Hall of Fame committees—and writing his 7th book.

Ralph Hubbell **Sportscaster, Writer**

Ralph Hubbell's first sportscast was on WEBR in 1935. When he started at the station a short time before by reading poetry over the air ("the Wandering Poet," he was called) no one would've guessed that over half a decade later Hubbell would be considered the voice of Buffalo sports. Hubbell left WEBR a year later and after a short stint at WBNY, he landed at WGR in 1939. He did play-by-play of all Bison home games and recreated the road games from Western Union messages. At WGR he also did a nightly sportscast which rapidly became a Buffalo institution. His annual readings of letters to Santa were eagerly awaited each Christmas Eve, as were his flights of fancy with a mythical character he called "The Old-Timer."



In 1948 Ralph again changed stations, moving to WBEN where he would remain for 18 years. He would do a nightly sportscast, as well as cover Friday night wrestling matches at Memorial Auditorium, local college football and basketball, and help host a weekly sports show on Channel 4 with Chuck Healy, Dick Rifenburg and Don Cunningham. After leaving WBEN in 1966, Ralph went on to work at WHLD in Niagara Falls, WBTA in Batavia, and then back to WGR again. In 1986, at an age when most have retired to slippers and rocking chairs, Ralph undertook a nightly music and sports program on WECK. Now retired from WECK, Ralph still keeps active, writing a weekly column for the *West Side Times* and the *Buffalo Rocket*, as well as a monthly column for the *Buffalo Bisongram*. Hubbell is also a member of the Buffalo Baseball Hall of Fame committee. He is also a prolific author, with several books to his credit including *Three Strikes You're In* and his latest, *They Can Still Smell the Roses*.

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Ralph Hubble Sr. Obituary

(Archived)

Published in Naples Daily News on Oct. 28, 2009

First 25 of 75 words: IN LOVING MEMORY Ralph J. Hubble Sr. August 13, 1926 to October 28, 2006 I'd like the memory of me to be a happy one....

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