

Sports

Atlanta Braves announcer Skip Caray visits Guilford

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STAFF WRITER

"I'm in the unique situation of saying I'm not even the best broadcaster in my family," said Skip Caray shortly after stepping to the podium on Feb. 25, at the New Garden Friends Meeting.

Skip has announced for the Atlanta Braves since 1976. His late father, Harry, broadcasted baseball for 53 years and was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1989. His older son, Chip, currently announces for the Chicago Cubs, and his younger son, Josh, a Guilford freshman, hopes to broadcast sports one day as well.

Skip's brief speech preceded a long period of questions and answers, which covered topics ranging from revenue sharing to succeeding as a broadcaster to John Rocker and more. With insight and humor, he delighted his audience of roughly 150 with anecdotes and opinionated one-liners. Here are some of them:

On how he succeeds at his job: "You have to broadcast within your personality....I have a knack of seeing something and getting it from my eye to my brain to my mouth very quickly. It's a God-given knack."

On his father: "My father was the life of the party wherever he went. I miss him every day of my life. I know he got his money's worth....Before his stroke, to listen to him broadcasting a baseball game was really something."

On his father's advice to him: "He said, 'Follow the ball and tell the truth.'"

On he and his father first getting into the business: "My father was a creature of radio, as was I when I first got started."

On rooting for the Braves while he broadcasts: "The people in New York think it's terrible that I refer to the Braves as 'we' and act happy when they win....I pride myself on being honest. I believe I should root for the

Braves. If I didn't, I'd be a phony."

On being critical from the booth: "You can't lie. If a guy is 0 for 27, it says so right on the screen....Years ago, it wasn't tough to criticize because we were so lousy....I don't knock the teams unless I think they need knockin'....I've had players from other teams come up to me and thank me for being fair."



Skip Caray (center) chats with Guilford Psychology Professor Richie Zweigenhaft (left) and his son, First-Year Josh Caray (right). Zweigenhaft helped arrange Caray's visit to Guilford to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the college's communications concentration.

On what it takes to get into broadcasting: "Hit .300 or win 20 games. So many ex-jocks are hired to do our job."

On why broadcasters must get along: "It's a long summer, and it's a small booth."

On revenue sharing: "The owners have really screwed it up....Baseball is headed for another potential tragedy."

On appreciating his job: "I'm very well paid for what I do, and I'm very thankful for it."

On the difficulties of his job: "You don't get much time with your family during the season...The travel is brutal."

On who his favorite announcer is: "Me!"

On John Rocker: "He's a little bit goofy. I don't think he's the sharpest knife in the

drawer....I think he deserved every bit of [the criticism]. I like him -- I really do -- but I don't know what he was thinkin'....I just wish he would do his pitching with his arm and keep his lips firmly sealed."

On George Steinbrenner: "He's good for baseball. He likes me, so I like him. He has a lot of money and spends it."

On a 250-watt radio station: "You have to drive into their parking lot to hear them."

On Monday Night Football's coverage: "I have never understood why it takes three announcers to tell me what I just saw....I honestly think that in television, we all talk too much."

On the uselessness of certain statistics: "I don't care how many Thursdays Chipper Jones hits pop flies to left field."

On pursuing a career in broadcasting: "Immerse yourself in the English language....Journalism school can help, but there's something to be said for actually going out and doing it....Get as close to it as you can. It's a very, very competitive business, but if it's your dream go for it."

Caray's audience responded positively. Vice President of Enrollment Randy Doss, a four-year varsity baseball player and graduate of Guilford, said, "It's refreshing that with Skip Caray, what you see is what you get. I was touched by his obvious passion for his father and his humbleness in the footsteps, if you will, of one of the great broadcasters of all time That was probably one of the most genuine kind of experiences I've ever had."

Chris Solas, a Guilford freshman and starter on the baseball team, added, "Anyone who didn't go definitely missed something special."

On the day after his speech, Skip visited Richie Zweigenhaft's mass media class for a more intimate discussion. Zweigenhaft, a baseball fan and psychology professor, helped arrange Skip's visit to Guilford both for his students' benefit and to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the communications concentration.

Said Zweigenhaft, "It was a totally successful visit ... and it worked for us in lots of ways. He brought a wealth of experience to us, and we were fortunate to have him."

On Pete Rose's ban from the Hall of Fame: "If he's not there, should there be a Hall of Fame? I don't know the answer -- it's a tough one."

On Dale Murphy: "He is what every father wants his son to be."

On Deion Sanders: "Deion is not my favorite guy."

On ratings: "I let that stuff get worried about by the people that are paid to worry about it....Our ratings are good because our team is successful and because our announcers are so good. Ha!"

On producers: "I don't pay any attention to producers. When I got started, there was no such thing as producers....I just do it my way."

On why he has no plans for a book: "I've made enough lawyers rich, thank you very much."

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