

# Modest Lazzaro deserves to be honored

**M**Y FIRST-EVER SIT-DOWN meeting with **Sam Lazzaro** occurred on Jan. 2, 1997 — almost 14 years ago. I've had a few hundred meetings with him since and am looking forward to many, many more.

I was asked to sit in on the 1997 meeting by **Jim Lindsey**, then owner and publisher of the *Blue Ridge Business Journal*, where I once served as general manager.

Sam had just left the employment of the Salem Avalanche baseball club, where he had served as GM for 11 seasons. He was considering new career opportunities and the possibility of Sam moving into the media and working with Jim, whom he had known in the past, was attractive to both sides. Sam had a strong background in sales and marketing.

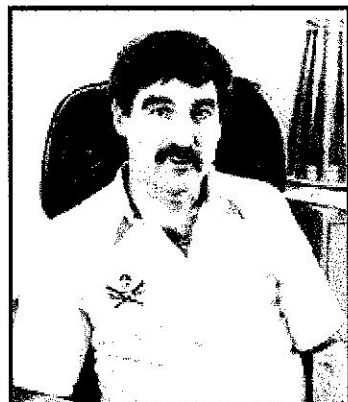
We talked for an hour, maybe 90 minutes, and covered a lot of water. The part I remember best, however, is the following exchange:

**Sam:** Have you all ever considered a sports publication?

**Jim (smiling):** John, have we ever considered a sports publication?

**John (wide grin, speechless):** ...

**Sam:** I think it's something we could do, and something I could help sell.



Sam Lazzaro, now an attorney, was the Salem baseball GM for 11 years



## JAM SESSION

by John A. Montgomery

Less than 90 days later, the first issue of the *Sports Journal* hit the streets. For most of the decade-and-a-half since, I have been immersed in various offshoots of that dream. Sam says I give him too much credit for launching the rest of my life, but I know better.

Sam and I worked together on a daily basis for six years and it's no mistake that Sam's name continues to appear in this publication's staff box. He is a lifetime consultant.

This background helps explain why I'm so elated that Sam will be inducted into the Salem-Roanoke Baseball Hall of Fame in February.

It's a testament to Sam's modesty that this year, the 20th annual banquet, is when Sam is being inducted. Sam is one of three individuals (along with **Posey Oyler** and **Bob Teitlebaum**, both deceased) who brainstormed the idea of starting the Hall and Sam's remained on the board of directors the entire time. The fact that more than 80 people entered the Hall ahead of him seems absolutely ridiculous until you understand that's the way Sam wanted it. *Others go first.*

Sam has been successful in many other ventures besides launching the Hall and local sports publications. At one time he was a broadcaster, a tad ironic since he's generally soft-spoken. For a period, he owned a restaurant. Today he is a prominent lawyer in Salem. It's been well-documented in several places, including these pages, that Sam passed the bar exam five years ago without going to law school, a feat that only about 1 percent of attorneys can claim.

**Abraham Lincoln** did it that way, but there are relatively few others. You see, when Sam has an idea, it usually happens.

Sam was named baseball executive of the year in both the New York-Penn and Carolina leagues and his teams broke attendance records in 11 of the 14 years he was on the job. He's written a book about his baseball experiences, "More than a Ball Game: An Inside Look at Minor League Baseball."

Sam is one of five inductees this year. The others include **Anthony Amos**, **Harold Brown**, **Budgy Clark** and **Art Price**.

Amos is a William Byrd graduate with an extensive background as a player, coach and administrator. He coached American Legion baseball starting in the 1970s and has played a major part in bringing AAU tournaments to the Roanoke Valley.

Brown, a native of Franklin County, was a great high school pitcher (team MVP who took the Eagles to the 1976 Group AAA state championship game). Brown, who went on to coach Little League, passed away within the last year.

Clark played baseball for Salem High School and Virginia Tech. He has established himself as an expert in turf management and has made trips to Sweden, Croatia, Italy and China to work on fields for World Cup and Olympic competition. He has served as head groundskeeper for the Washington Nationals.

Price has served as director of parks and recreation for the Town of Christiansburg since 1987. With 28 years of administrative experience, he has been a big supporter of baseball in the New River Valley, responsible for bringing in many tournaments and upgrading the community's baseball facilities.

Tickets for this year's banquet, which will be held Sunday, Feb. 13, at the Salem Civic Center, can be ordered from Hall President **Charlie Hammersley** (387-3626) or VP **Gary Walthall** (330-4155 or 427-1977). The featured speaker will be announced soon.

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## Roy Stanley Scholarship

Applications are being received through Dec. 3 for the Roy Stanley Scholarship, a program that honors the late WDBJ sportscaster and simultaneously helps aspiring college communication majors who can demonstrate need. At least three \$1,000 scholarships will be awarded to deserving seniors within the television station's viewing area.

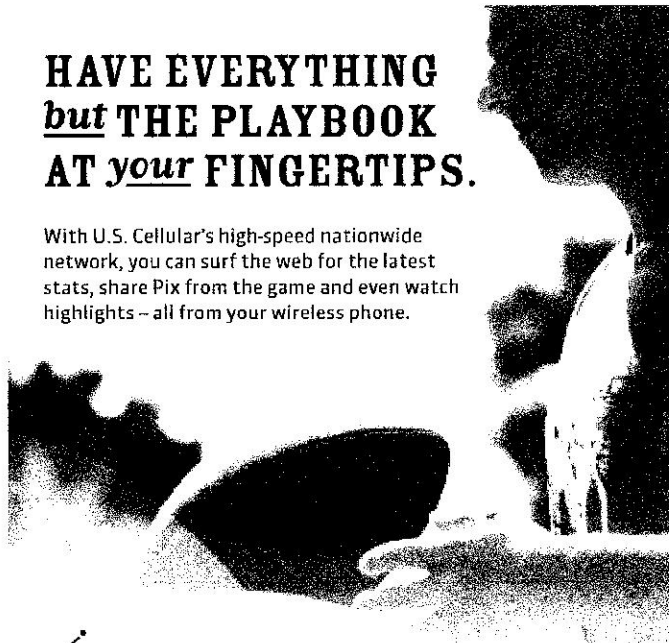
More than 40 scholarships have been awarded in the past seven years. Stanley, a Wytheville native, was a three-decade veteran of the WDBJ sports department. He died in 2002.

The recipients are chosen by a scholarship selection committee and will be announced in the coming weeks. The committee is chosen by the organization's board of directors, of which I am a proud member.

For access to the application form, go to [WDBJ7.com](http://WDBJ7.com).

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