

Proof that local TV news still matters

This past Saturday, Jim Vance died after being diagnosed with cancer back in May. Jim Vance was the long-time (45 years!) anchor at Washington's NBC affiliate, WRC (channel 4). His death created a tremendous outpouring of grief, from his colleagues, and from the many people in the area who watched him on TV. You can see how NBC4 reported it [here](#).

When I first read the news of Vance's death on Saturday morning I was not surprised (he had announced on air he had cancer and I hadn't seen him on the news desk in several weeks even though he had said he would work as his treatment allowed), but I was incredibly saddened. I've watched NBC4's evening news for many years, and liked watching him and his anchor partner Doreen Gentzler. I liked how they interacted, how genuinely friendly they were with each other and with the other reporters. I especially remember how Vance paid tribute to Doreen when she celebrated her 25 years of sharing the anchor desk with him.

Since his death, I have come to learn more about Jim Vance. He was incredibly active in his community—speaking at high school graduations, funding scholarships, mentoring others. Many of his colleagues said he lived life to the fullest. A friend of mine told me that as a teen, he met Vance. In other words, Vance was accessible. He was not a distant celebrity, but was part and parcel of his community.

Every night on NBC4 this week, they have paid tribute to Vance. You can see how deeply they feel his loss. And what is interesting is how the community misses Vance too. What's more, his competitors at other TV stations also paid tribute to him. The news community in DC is tightly-knit. Many reporters have worked at more than one local station. Bruce

Johnson, who now anchors at the CBS affiliate, WUSA-9, had been friends with Vance. He devoted his show, Off Script, on Monday night to Jim Vance and to helping people quit smoking, an addiction which most likely caused Vance's cancer.

Local TV news still matters. Whether you watch at 6:00 a.m. to get a read on the day's traffic and weather, or at 11:00 p.m. to see what happened in your community, you watch the local TV news to connect to where you live. And because you probably do this habitually, you connect to the people who deliver the news to you. They also live here. They know how hot or how cold or how rainy it is, because they too had to deal with it on their way to work. Local news anchors care about traffic and construction and local crime, because it affects them personally and their families. And because they care about what is going on here, we care about them.

In this age where it seems social media dominates, it's important to realize that people still watch TV news, and they connect with the people they see on the anchor desk.