

Why Rush Limbaugh Mattered

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By Tucker Carlson

BOCA GRANDE, Fla.—Rush Limbaugh passed away Wednesday [Feb. 17], as you doubtless heard. He had just turned 70 last month.

Literally millions of people listened to Rush Limbaugh faithfully every day for 30 years. Some of them cried when they heard the news. Others on the Internet gloated, revealing the depth of their cruelty and soullessness. We’re going to ignore them, since they have too much influence over our culture already. Instead, we’re going to tell you about what Rush Limbaugh did and why he mattered.

Limbaugh was a profoundly talented broadcaster, but that’s not why he endured for generations and single-handedly reshaped the media business. Rush Limbaugh actually believed things, and believed them with sincerity. That was his secret. What he believed most of all was that America is a good and decent place and worth preserving.

Here he is in 2009, explaining what he believes about Americans as human beings:

“We’re no different than the human beings anywhere else in the world. And there have been [people] thousands of years on this planet longer than we have. We’re barely 250 years old and we have outdone everybody in almost everything that . . . raises the standard of living in the history of the world. It’s not because our DNA is different, not because we’re special human beings. It’s because of our freedom. It’s because of the founding documents and those rights that we have, where they come from.”

Rush Limbaugh had actually read the founding documents. He really believed them. He wasn’t just saying it, and that was obvious when he spoke. That was a threat to the people who wanted to be more powerful than the Constitution allows, so they tried to silence him.

We think of corporate censorship as a new phenomenon, but Rush Limbaugh was fighting it 30 years ago, and winning. Here he is on *60 Minutes* in 1991:

“I think I just happen to be saying what a whole lot of people think, but don’t have a chance to say themselves. That’s why they call me the most dangerous man in America. Somebody’s finally saying this stuff.”

“The most dangerous man in America.” That’s what they called him. That’s what they call you when you’re brave enough to tell the truth.

Few people are better qualified to assess Rush Limbaugh’s life than his friend and frequent guest host Mark Steyn, who wrote a beautiful tribute Wednesday on his website. Here’s part of it, for perspective on his life:

“Usually, in this line of work, if you’re lucky, you get a moment—a year or two when you’re the in thing—and you hope to hold enough of that moment as it slowly fades away to keep you going till retirement.

“Rush did something unprecedented in the history of TV and radio. Commercial broadcasting began in the United States in 1920: *The Rush Limbaugh Show* came along two thirds of a century later, became the No. 1 program very quickly, and has stayed at the top all the way to today—for a third of the entire history of the medium.”

That’s remarkable, but, then, Rush Limbaugh was a remarkable man. He lived a life that mattered.