

2018 MRP Hall of Fame

ROSCOE RIGHTER

Life would have been easier for Roscoe Righter if he had learned at an early age to say “no.”

But apparently that was not prevalent in his vocabulary, because the legacy we honor this evening results from 5 decades of saying “yes.” To just about every request, from just about everybody.

As a young adult, knowing full well what “yes” meant, he recognized value in formal education. After the School of the Ozarks said “yes, we’ll take you,” he graduated, but then said “yes” to the University of Missouri and the University of Georgia. After that, three years of NRPA Executive Development School might have been enough, but not for “yes-man” Roscoe.

Internships with Columbia and Springfield solidified Roscoe’s commitment to the profession of parks and recreation. When Sedalia was convinced this would lead to better things in their city, Roscoe said “yes” to becoming the first professional Recreation Director there. Then he said it again when the City of Blue Springs needed *their* first professional director. He served admirably there for 32 years, retiring in 2011.

His resume would be impressive as it is, but that’s actually less than half the story: the rest is about how many times Roscoe would continue to say “yes” whenever asked, well beyond his director’s desk.

- To the University of Missouri-Columbia, where he gives continually in tangible and intangible ways, pouring into the lives and futures of students for over 45 years.
- To the National Recreation and Park Association, serving on the Council of Affiliate Presidents, the Great Lakes Regional Council, and Congress Local Host Committees.
- To numerous civic organizations, voluntarily advising, negotiating, encouraging, donating, presenting, and attending thousands of meetings.
- To MPRA in virtually every available instance where help was needed in volunteer and elected roles: conference and constitution committees, professional certification, and Hall of Fame. His leadership in the huge initiative resulting in the acquisition of the Musco Lighting Building as MPRA’s “home” is unmatched. Roscoe counts this as his proudest moment, establishing a headquarters for the only statewide organization in support of the parks and recreation profession in Missouri.
- To human-kind. Meeting the needs of all people world-wide is impossible for any one man. Despite the odds, and all other rational reasons that perhaps he’d done enough, when a cry for help came from orphans in Africa, Roscoe said “yes.” Invited by Deana Belote, he followed in the footsteps of other MPRA members and made the trip to Africa. Even today, he continues to support these efforts.
- And who in their right mind would say yes to having their head shaved not once, but *twice* to raise funds for MPRA causes?

Yes to education, yes to small towns, yes to big cities, yes to individuals, yes to elected office, yes to other countries, yes to diapers, yes to thousands of miles on the road, yes to talking to politicians, yes to young people, and yes to “old Phartz.”

So one question remains: Will the legacy of Roscoe Righter endure? And the answer, most assuredly, is Yes.

Congratulations to the 2018 inductee into the Missouri Recreation and Parks Hall of Fame: Roscoe Righter.