

M i d w e e k M o t i v a t o r

Wars He's Fought...

One morning in Sicily, while working near General George Patton, he witnessed a quintessential Pattonism. "Good morning sir," offered a junior officer. "Good morning my ass, get busy!" And so WWII opened for James H. Quello, eager Army lieutenant assigned to the African campaign in 1943.

Out of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan (a majestic, but rugged landscape that seems more Canadian than American) Quello found his way to Michigan State College in the 1930s; and admits mainly due to the uniform allowance offered by the ROTC at the time, made his way from lieutenant to lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army. Jim survived six beach assault landings with Patton in the Mediterranean theater and then advanced all the way up the hill to Chairman, Federal Communications Commission. Not bad for a kid from the far-North Copper mining town of Laurium, Michigan.

His War Had Only Begun

Over time, I've had the pleasure of being around Jim; and only weeks ago the two of us sat for a long, quiet dinner at a state broadcast association meeting where we jointly appeared on the program. It was a moment in time: the student and the sage...the admirer and the admired. Jim is eighty seven now, although you'd never know it. With a youthful step, rapier-quick wit and crystal clear awareness of the latest media evolution, its clear Quello hasn't lost a step.

His career march vectored him from a successful management post at Detroit's venerable WJR to commissioner at the FCC, including a year as chairman in the mid nineties. As we talked of industry changes and the condition of radio in 2002, Jim reflected on some of his battles at the FCC, and promised to send me his new book *My Wars: Surviving WWII and the FCC*. I've just finished it and give it an unqualified recommendation for anyone looking for a good read and a lot of inspiration.

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Among countless travails, Quello took on Howard Stern, fought a running gunfight with Reed Hundt over numerous media issues of principle, and remained his own man under the endless political weight brought upon those who accept national office, elected or appointed. It wasn't easy.

"Why do you want the damn job?" once asked congressman John Dingell. "You'll be beat-up by Congress and overruled by the courts." True enough but undaunted, Quello ground-on for twenty three years following his conscience and his values.

All's Well That Ends Well

Six WWII amphibious beach landings, six U.S. Presidents, twenty three and a half years in the FCC, forty two distinguished awards, from a few channels to thousands, from the peril of combat to helping create the digital future. Jim Quello thinks back on his time--which seems like a meteor across the night sky--and says looking back on a full life with its trials, its triumphs, its tribulations, its joys, its disappointments, and its accomplishments, he can appropriately quote an old classic: "all's well that ends well."

At a time when industry icons are a little short in supply and we rightfully question the values and ideals of those who serve in leadership anywhere, we media people can look to Jim Quello and the rare cadre of people like him for inspiration. If Tom Brokaw is right--and I believe he is-- that Quello and his WWII peers are indeed "the greatest American generation," then we're the beneficiaries. Appropriately unselfish and characteristic of Jim Quello, he ends his book with this thought: "To those in the coming great generations, good luck and Godspeed. I salute you."

If you're looking for a hero, find him in the pages of "My Wars."

*Jim Quello's book "My Wars" is published by the Alexis de Tocqueville Institution, Arlington, Virginia