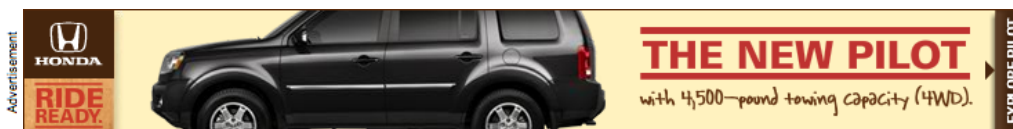


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Enlarge By Alex Wong, Getty Images for Meet the Press

Moderator Tim Russert is seen during a taping of "Meet the Press" at the NBC studios in Washington in Oct. 2007.

NBC's Tim Russert dead at 58

By Jill Lawrence, USA TODAY

WASHINGTON — Tim Russert, the award-winning NBC political pundit who communicated his love of campaigns and elections to audiences of millions, died Friday of a heart attack at 58, after collapsing in the network's Washington bureau. He had been recording voiceovers for *Meet the Press*.

A shaken Tom Brokaw, the former NBC anchor and Russert's longtime colleague, announced the death. He called Russert "one of the premier journalists of our time ... This news division will not be the same without his strong, clear voice. He'll be missed, as he was loved, greatly."

Brokaw said Russert had just returned from a trip to Italy with his wife, writer Maureen Orth, and their son, Luke, to celebrate Luke's graduation from Boston College. "This was one of the most important years in Tim's life for so many reasons," Brokaw said. "He loved this political campaign. He worked to the point of exhaustion so many weeks."

Russert was "a true child of Buffalo," Brokaw said, adding he had been back there just last week to help move his father — Big Russ, the subject of one of his books. "Tim loved his family, his faith, his country, politics. He loved the Buffalo Bills, the New York Yankees and the Washington Nationals."

As host of *Meet the Press* since 1991, Russert interviewed the major figures in American politics. He was a fixture on election nights. In a high-tech age, what many remember from Election Night 2000 is Russert writing on a whiteboard, "Florida, Florida, Florida." He turned out to be so right that *TV Guide* eventually picked that as one of the "100 Most Memorable TV Moments" in TV history. He also originated the "red-state, blue-state" description of the nation's partisan divide, according to *The Washington Post*.

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Network executives and Russert's colleagues said they were heartbroken. "We have lost a beloved member of our NBC Universal family and the news world has lost one of its finest. The enormity of this loss cannot be overstated," said Jeff Zucker, CEO of NBC Universal.

Steve Capus, president of NBC News, called Russert's death "a loss for the entire nation. Everyone at NBC News is in shock and absolutely devastated."

TIM RUSSERT TIMELINE

- **1950:** Born in Buffalo, N.Y. Eventually graduates from Canisius High School, John Carroll University and with honors from the Cleveland-Marshall College of Law.
- **1977-1982:** Aide to the late senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan of New York.
- **1983-1984:** Counselor in the New York governor's office in Albany.
- **1984:** Joins NBC News.
- **1985:** Supervises NBC's *Today* program's live broadcasts from Rome, negotiating and arranging an appearance by Pope John Paul II, a first for American television.
- **1986 and 1987:** Leads NBC News' weeklong broadcasts from South America, Australia and China.
- **1990:** Oversees production of prime time special *A Day in the Life of President Bush*.
- **1991:** Becomes managing editor and moderator of *Meet the Press*.
- **1993:** Oversees production of *A Day in the Life of President Clinton*.
- **1994:** Senior vice president, Washington bureau chief, NBC News. Also anchors CNBC's *The Tim Russert Show*.
- **2004:** His book, *Big Russ and Me: Father and Son - Lessons of Life*, is a New York Times No. 1 bestseller.
- **2005:** Wins an Emmy for his role in the coverage of the funeral of President Reagan.
- **2006:** His second book, *Wisdom of Our Fathers: Lessons and Letters from Daughters and Sons*, is also a New York Times No. 1 bestseller.

Source: *Who's Who in the Media*

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President Bush is interviewed by Tim Russert, left, during an Oval Office pre-taping of 'Meet the Press' in Feb. 2004. This was the first network television interview of Bush after his victory in the 2000 election.

RISK FACTORS AND GUIDELINES

The risk of a heart attack rises for men after the age of 45 and women over 55, says cardiologist Sidney Smith, of the University of North Carolina, chairman of the American Heart Association and American College of Cardiology committee on guidelines for treating cardiovascular disease.

"Men in their late 50's and early 60's are at an age where a heart attack is a problem they need to be concerned with," Smith says. "If they have risk factors -- high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, history of smoking, excess weight -- the risk goes higher."

Unfortunately, Smith says, for all of medicine's success at identifying heart attack and cardiac arrest risk factors, the science still falls short at predicting when trouble's "just around the corner." He says it's impossible to figure out what happened in Russert's case without knowing more about Russert's medical history and risk factors for heart disease.

Smith says that current CPR guidelines say that rescuers who are not trained in rescue breathing should concentrate on chest compressions, which help circulate blood to the brain and thus keep the victim alive until paramedics arrive. Trained rescuers should apply both to oxygenate the blood and keep it flowing.

By Steve Sternberg, USA TODAY

NBC plans a special edition of *Meet the Press* Sunday anchored by Tom Brokaw that will serve as a tribute to Russert.

CBS Chief Washington correspondent Bob Schieffer vied with Russert for Sunday morning viewers as host of *Face the Nation* and described him Friday as a close friend. "He asked the best questions and then he listened for the answer," Schieffer said. "He delighted in scooping me and I felt the same way when I scooped him. When you slipped one past ol' Russert, you felt as though you had hit a home run off the best pitcher in the league. I just loved Tim and I will miss him more than I can say."

Another competitor, host George Stephanopoulos of ABC's *This Week*, said "Tim loved everything about politics and journalism — because he believed in it. Every day he brought Washington home to his viewers and made all of us better."

Russert was born in Buffalo on May 7, 1950. He was the first person in his family to go to college. He went to John Carroll University, a private school in Cleveland. He received a law degree from Cleveland-Marshall College of Law and was a member of the New York and District of Columbia bars.

Russert started his TV work after a career in government. He was special counsel to New York senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan from 1977 to 1982 and worked for New York governor Mario Cuomo in Albany from 1983-84.

He moved to NBC in 1985 and soon was supervising live *Today Show* coverage from Rome — including negotiating Pope John Paul II's first appearance on American TV. Twenty years later he received an Emmy for coverage of Ronald Reagan's funeral.

Washingtonian magazine called Russert the "best and most influential journalist" in the capital. NBC News now faces a gaping hole in its political coverage. It's unclear yet how the network will replace him going forward.

Meet the Press premiered in 1947 and is TV's longest-running program. It is the top-rated Sunday talk show, dominating *This Week* and *Face the Nation*.

Beyond his Sunday show, Russert was the face of politics across the network and its cable affiliates. He analyzed and adjudicated this year's heated primaries on *Meet the Press*, *Today*, a CNBC interview show and, week after week, at MSNBC — the self-described "place for politics" through this long campaign season.

Meet the Press premiered in 1947 and is TV's longest-running program. It is the top-rated Sunday talk show, dominating *This Week* and *Face the Nation*. Russert's impact spread beyond the show as MSNBC named itself "the place for politics" and went

nearly wall-to-wall with primary season coverage.

When Russert spoke, people listened, as when he delivered a verdict May 6 on the Democratic nomination race. Barack Obama won big that night North Carolina and stayed within 2 percentage points of Hillary Rodham Clinton in Indiana. "We now know who the Democratic nominee will be," Russert said around midnight, provoking headlines across the Internet — "Russert says it's over" — and a YouTube video called "Tim Russert tells Clintons it is over."

NBC anchor Brian Williams, who worked with Russert on debates and other political coverage, said from an airstrip in Afghanistan today that his colleague's death was "an unfathomable loss." He said he admired Russert's "lawyerly approach" to NBC's political coverage, including the recent round of debates among Democratic presidential candidates: "He was always about fairness."

Another colleague, Andrea Mitchell, called Russert "the historian of all things political here." She said Russert learned from his Jesuit education how to ask the right questions. "He would always ask what people wanted to know" from their political leaders, she said, and "had a huge impact on political campaigns," including Hillary Clinton's election as New York senator (he'd moderated a key debate from Buffalo, his hometown). "He taught all of us how to be journalists and better journalists."

Tributes to Russert poured in from a wide swath of political figures: Republicans and Democrats, senators and House members, California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, his wife Maria Shriver, Al Gore, former president Bill Clinton and Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, President Bush and the two men who want to succeed him.

Presumptive Republican nominee John McCain said he was "very saddened" by what he called a "shocking loss." He said he and his wife Cindy "extend our thoughts and prayers to the Russert family." McCain called Russert "the pre-eminent political journalist of his generation" and "just a terrific guy."

Obama, the presumptive Democratic nominee, said he was grief-stricken. "There wasn't a better interviewer in television, not a more thoughtful analyst of our politics, and he was also one of the finest men I knew — somebody who cared about America, cared about the issues, cared about family," he said.

The news raced quickly to Paris, where President Bush and first lady Laura Bush were at a dinner at the Elysee Palace hosted by President Sarkozy. White House spokeswoman Dana Perino said the president reacted with "deep sadness and shock." She said the couple wanted to express their "strong sympathies for Tim's family, his friends, and of course the whole NBC family."

RELATED: [Bush remembers Russert fondly](#)

The day's tragedy began at 1:40 p.m. when emergency crews received a call from NBC. A unit was dispatched at 1:41 and arrived three minutes later, according to Carrie Brooks of Washington Mayor Adrian Fenty's office. She said Russert was unresponsive at the scene and taken to Sibley Hospital a few miles away.

Alan Etter of D.C. Fire and Rescue said Russert was found in a small office, so small he almost spilled out of the room. A person with him was trying to breathe for him, using a rescue breathing mask, but wasn't doing chest compressions which are now known to be vital for saving lives.

The paramedics on the scene shocked Russert's heart three times to try to restart it, but he did not respond. They left for Sibley Hospital at 2:07, arriving at 2:23 p.m. He was pronounced dead at the hospital.

Michael Newman, Russert's doctor, told MSNBC that Russert had asymptomatic coronary artery disease that was controlled with medication and exercise. He said Russert performed well on a stress test in late April. He died, Newman said, when cholesterol plaque ruptured in an artery, causing sudden coronary thrombosis. Newman said an autopsy showed he also had an enlarged heart.

"Our profession has lost a stellar journalist," said Sylvia Smith, president of the National Press Club.

James Campbell, chairman of the political science department at the State University of New York at Buffalo, said Russert "was perhaps the most highly regarded interviewer in the national media. He did his homework and stuck to the facts." Not only that, says Campbell, he kept the spotlight on his hometown of Buffalo "in a very positive way" and helped its image.

Russert's two best-selling books included a 2004 book about his father, a career sanitation worker and newspaper truck driver, called "Big Russ & Me, Father and Son: Lessons from Life," and a 2006 follow-up based on responses to that book, "Wisdom of Our Fathers: Lessons and Letters from Daughters and Sons."

Russert's resume included more than 40 honorary degrees, several awards for being an exemplary father and membership in the Broadcasting & Cable Hall of Fame. Hub Brown, chairman of the communications department at Syracuse University's S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications, said another sign of Russert's stature was a skit poking fun of him on NBC's Saturday Night Live. "The parody is a huge compliment," Brown said.

Thomas Patterson, a professor of government and the press at Harvard's Kennedy School, said Russert pioneered the path, since taken by others, of moving from government to journalism. "He exuded politics," Patterson said. "He was a giant in the business."

Contributing: Steve Sternberg, Andrea Stone, David Jackson, Gary Levin

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cicelysdad wrote: 12h 41m ago

In this age of "infotainment", people have forgotten what real journalism is. Tim Russert was a true journalist. Unlike most others these days, his only agenda was finding the story and then telling it as it is, not how he thinks it should be, but simply the truth, an increasingly rare commodity. I don't trust

anything I see on television any longer. "Fair and unbiased" is no longer a value of the news media. I did trust Tim Russert though. To me, he was a rock star. He could be appropriately serious and yet he also had a great sense of humor that he also expressed appropriately. He was a true professional with more integrity than all of our government combined. I will miss him. My sympathy and best wishes to his family and friends. I am truly sorry for your loss. He was a great man. That is an increasingly rare thing these days.

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57girl wrote: 21h 26m ago

After thinking about Tim Russert's death for a day or two, I have to wonder if he had some damning evidence against one of the big wigs maybe we've been led by so many lies through Government corruption that I have an over active imagination. But given Tim Russert was a pretty powerful man in a pretty powerful position, I have to wonder what he was working on when he died and what the subject matter of his next commentary was supposed to have been about does anybody know who his next interview was scheduled with? I am just curious. Heart attacks are just so convenient ... look at Ken Lay and there are those of us that still question whether he really died or not. See, if the Government were the guys in white hats, they'd have us all believe them to be, some of us wouldn't have such a distrustful attitude about what goes on behind the scenes Yep! Bushes fault again! LOL

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CoalTownPa wrote: 1d 1h ago

My understanding is that NBC will attempt to blame Bush, Chaney, and the Iraq War for the death of Russert.

Heck, the liberals blame everything on Bush and Chaney, this does not surprise me.

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King Broder wrote: 1d 2h ago

Tim Russert was a good guy who always got to the truth which is why I can see why some people didn't like him. If you are the type who supports those with something to hide, you wouldn't have like Russert at all.

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greybeard vet wrote: 1d 3h ago

Most biased? Come out of the little cellar hole. Every politician from every party, every left and right wing commentator all say the same thing. He was the most knowledgeable and fair person who actually knew what he was talking about they all knew. Geez. some people just get a rise out of others' misfortunes. One of the highest praises he got was from Sean Hannity, the FOX ultra conservative. Biased? Look in a mirror.

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democracy1776 wrote: 1d 4h ago

Tim Russert was the most biased newsman on TV.

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ChiefE9 wrote: 1d 8h ago

The good die young while those old and hateful LMSM journalists live forever. You know who they are.

Russert was fair and balanced and asked the tough questions.

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Al Tostig wrote: 1d 16h ago

Tim Russert was about as biased as a news journalist could be!

That is, of course, only true when limited to those times he spoke about his beloved Buffalo and family. He was in my opinion a most excellent journalist, fair and balanced in the TRUE sense of those terms, and with a unique twist - he allowed his audience a generous glimpse into his personal life. And what a fine vision that was. His story of starting from growing up in a family of modest means and making it big through hard work and stick-to-itiveness is the pure essence of the American Dream, and I am sure it has been and will continue to be an inspiration to many.

God bless and godspeed, Tim, with heartfelt thanks from the fathers and sons that you've brought together through your life of joyous and wonderful example. My condolences to Tim's family in this difficult time.

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Fenwick wrote: 1d 17h ago

petlover100 wrote: 2h 18m ago

To the media (and especially MSNBC): "Sometimes less is more."

~~~~~  
Perhaps that is there way to handle grief - mucjh like you can change the channel and watch HBO to take your mind off the subject.  
~~~~~

As for Jennings and Bradley - they sure did dedicate a great deal of time remembering an old friend. Seeing how ABC does not have a cable version of their news made and editorialized by the Disney folks, the tribute was limited to ABC network, affilaites could air the tributes or not.

Bradley was with CBS - again no "sister" in the 24-hour news channel group - just the network TV.

Seeing how NBC is owned by GE which owns CNN, CNBC and MSNBC as well as NBC - they would pay appropriate tribute to a man worthy of such an honor.

But don't worry - next weekend people will have forgottern whom Russert was, and we move on - closer to invading Iran, Rove facing a Congressional Committee, Bush claiming Europe supports him when they do not, Rice lying about the same, Gas reaching \$5 at the pump. Food costs rising another mortgage scandel, McClellen facing Congress under oath revealing the truth about the Bush administration, blah blah blah...

Life goes on for the living, but it is the living that should remember the great men among us, past present and perhaps into the future?.

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marieTX wrote: 1d 19h ago

petlover100 wrote: 49m ago

To the media (and especially MSNBC): "Sometimes less is more."

Thank you!

He was a wonderful person and very accomplished, but I, too, think the media has overdone the continuous tributes a bit (NBC, PBS, CNN, MSN, Fox, even C-Span). This kind of coverage is usually reserved for deceased presidents, heads of state, or the pope.

When Peter Jennings and Ed Bradley passed, the networks did not air endless tributes over and over again. He was host of a Sunday political chat show, not a network giant, like Walter Cronkite or Edward R. Murrow. Maybe it's a slow news cycle this weekend and the networks have to scramble to fill up the 24/7 air time slots, but if I hear another word about Big Russ, the hero garbage man, I think I will scream!!

If the networks want to be productive, they would air specials on heart disease prevention. Now that would be a fitting tribute to Tim.

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