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Remembering Roger Ebert

Adam Leipzig · Thursday, April 11th, 2013

The last time Roger Ebert and I talked, which as at Sundance, we didn't talk about movies… and of course we didn't talk.

Since cancer took the lower part of his jaw, Roger couldn't talk, but he wrote incessantly. Our "talk" was done by emails and tweets, and Roger's written voice was so much a part of him it was just like we were talking.

I'd met Roger at Sundance ten years earlier, in a press screening, tiny flashlight in his hand, as he scribbled away at his notepad. No one wrote more joyously about movies, or understood film in greater depth. Roger's great gift was to bring a film geek's passion to the populist audience.

Despite his illness, Roger was endlessly upbeat, and he never stopped going to the movies. Up until last year he was a regular fixture at film festivals, accompanied by his wife Chaz, flashing enthusiastic thumbs up or scribbling notes to share his thoughts.

What did we talk about the last time? Books. My book had just been published, and Dolly's Bookstore, the independent bookseller on Park City's Main St., had placed it on the movie table, right next to *Roger Ebert's Movie Yearbook 2013*. I told Roger I was honored to have our books side-by-side.

"Dolly's Bookstore," said Roger. "The Penguin paperback of P. G. Wodehouse's three *Blandings Castle* novels that I bought there changed my life. I had to tear myself away from my room to see movies."

Which he did, and we're all the richer for it.

In 2011 Roger gave a TED Talk about remaking his voice. It captures his triumphant spirit, and is a great way to remember him.

Top image: Roger Ebert in screening room for photo shoot for People Weekly, June 13, 1984; Chicago. Courtesy Sundance Institute.

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