

Lifetimes ~ Of a Man, a Newspaper and a Town

The Day I Almost Destroyed the Boston Symphony and Other Stories

By John Sant'Ambrogio
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John Sant'Ambrogio fell in love with music during his first summer at the music camp his mother owned in the Berkshire Mountains of Massachusetts.

It was there that he grasped what playing music would give him: "a chance for freedom, the fragrance of pine trees, new friendships and who knew what else." From that beginning sprang the vision that supported his career, first with the Boston Symphony and then, for 37 years, as principal cellist with the St. Louis Symphony. In the summer of 1987 another music camp became part of his life, this time in the Colorado Rockies, where he founded Strings in the Mountains. In 2005, when John retired from the St. Louis Symphony, he

became a full-time resident of Steamboat Springs, where he now performs with the Steamboat Springs String Quartet and the Steamboat Symphony Orchestra. Judging from the memoir he has so ably written, his new home reaffirms the joy he continues to experience through "expressing this beautiful music and sharing it with others."

John's smile reflects that joy of knowing the sound "that touches your soul." In his stories, the

reader travels with him from the early days of his life, when he felt like an outsider in everything he did, to the happiness he felt in 1956 touring with the Seventh Army Symphony in Germany, where he could practice his precious cello to his heart's content.

The cellist's further adventures in the musical world engage readers whether or not they're knowledgeable of Tchaikovsky, downbeats or bowings. One vignette leads invitingly into another, connected like the players in a symphony orchestra and resembling the orchestra itself, which John likens to a metaphor for life.

