



## BILL ROSENDAHL PUBLIC SERVICE AWARD

for Contributions to the Public Good

# THE VOICE OF A *Generation*

CALLING 58 YEARS OF DODGERS' GAMES IS JUST THE START OF WHAT HAS EARNED JAIME JARRÍN THE L.A. PRESS CLUB'S PUBLIC SERVICE AWARD

BY SAUL GONZALEZ



Vin Scully was an early mentor in Jarrín's broadcast career.

**T**o a large number of Dodger fans, a familiar and beloved phrase is, “¡Se va, se va, se va, y despídala con un beso!”

For non-Spanish speakers, it means, “It’s going, going, going, kiss it goodbye!” It’s what Los Angeles sportscaster Jaime Jarrín says to his listeners when a player hits a home run.

Since 1959, the dapper and dignified Jarrín has been the (make that “the”) Spanish-language voice of the Dodgers, covering the team’s victories and losses through thousands of games at Dodger Stadium and Major League ballparks across the country. He’s as synonymous with life in L.A. as the beaches, palm trees and freeways.

His 58 years covering the team have earned Jarrín honors at tonight’s 59th annual Southern California Journalism Awards. He is receiving the Bill Rosendahl Public Service Award for Contributions to Civic Life, named for the late journalist, public access TV host and city councilman.

Jarrín has been a conduit for generations of listeners. He has seen players’ lives play out before his eyes, detailing their arc from rookies whose names few people knew to gray-haired elder statesmen of the game.

Jarrín is far more than an expert

announcer. His sharp eye and eloquence make his radio audience feel like they’re in the stadium with him watching a game on a cool spring evening or warm summer day.

In this metropolis of immigrants, Jarrín’s broadcast presence has become a kind of cultural touchstone. His voice reassures Spanish-speaking newcomers that they’re welcome in L.A. and that becoming a fan of the Dodgers is one way to connect to this sprawling and confusing city.

Jarrín knows firsthand about the bravery of immigrants, and the sacrifices they make to leave everything they know behind and start a fresh life in a new country.

Born in Ecuador, where he studied literature and journalism, a 20-year-old Jarrín came to the United States in 1955, booking passage on a banana boat. After the vessel docked in Florida, he decided to make his way west, all the way to Los Angeles.

His first job in L.A. had nothing to do with broadcasting or baseball. Jarrín worked at a factory in East Los Angeles making metal fences. He spent the rest of his time brushing up on his English and trying to convince the bosses at KWKW, one of the first Spanish-language stations in the country, to hire



him. Eventually the bosses gave in.

In 1958, the Dodgers moved to L.A. from Brooklyn. The team approached KWKW with a proposal to broadcast games in Spanish. Team owner Walter O’Malley understood the potential of cultivating Southern California’s Latinos as Dodgers fans.

Jarrín was offered a job as an announcer and given a year to learn the fundamentals of baseball, a game he knew little about.



Above: Jarrín received the Golden Mike Lifetime Achievement Award for 2007. He was the first Latino American to win a Golden Mike in 1970 and repeated in 1971.

From left: Jarrín started announcing for the Dodgers on radio station KWKW in 1958.

Early Dodger games were broadcast from the Los Angeles Coliseum.

Below: Frank Sinatra visits the clubhouse before the 1974 World Series game against the Oakland A’s.





**PUBLIC SERVICE AWARD JAIME JARRÍN**



Top, from left: former Dodger pitcher Fernando Valenzuela, Jarrín and Pepe Yñiguez announce games for the Dodgers' Spanish language broadcasts.

Son, Jorge, started calling Dodger games with his father in 2015.

Above: Jarrín with his wife, Blanca, and their pet dog in 1974.

Jarrín was inducted into the Cooperstown, NY Baseball Hall of Fame in 1998 as the recipient of the Ford C. Frick award.

The other legendary Dodgers announcer, Vin Scully, was one of Jarrín's first broadcast mentors, and later a friend. Jarrín says he has always followed some of the early professional advice Scully gave him: Prepare for every game as if it's your first, and never get too close to the players.

Scully also became a broadcast lifeline for Jarrín. During the early days of his career, the Dodgers didn't have a budget for Jarrín to travel with the team on the road. Jarrín improvised by listening to Scully's broadcasts and quickly translating Scully's play-by-play coverage into Spanish. Scully would also include details about the weather and crowds that Jarrín could use to help set the scene.

There's another reason fans are so familiar with Jarrín's voice—he doesn't believe in sick days. From 1962 to 1984, he never missed a game, calling close to 4,000 games over 22 seasons.

There have also been fortuitous turns. In 1979 the Dodgers signed a 19-year-old, left-handed pitching phenomenon from rural Mexico named Fernando Valenzuela. The young player's talent sparked "Fernandomania," especially among Southern California's growing Latino population. Thousands of them tuned into Jarrín's broadcasts to follow Valenzuela's accomplishments on the field.

"It was like a dream," Jarrín told *The Guardian* about that era. "What Fernando did for baseball is amazing. I think he is one single player who created more baseball fans than any other player."

Jarrín's work extends far beyond the ballpark. He has covered events including the funeral of President John F. Kennedy, the Chicano civil rights marches of the 1970s, and Pope John Paul II's visit to America. He also coordinated Spanish-language coverage of the 1984 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles.

Jarrín has received numerous awards and honors. That includes his 1998 induction into the Baseball Hall of Fame. His native Ecuador has awarded Jarrín the country's most prestigious medal of service given to civilians.

As his professional life has flourished, so too has Jarrín's personal life. He and his wife Blanca have two sons, Jorge and Mauricio. Jorge followed his dad into broadcasting and now calls Dodger games with the elder Jarrín. A grandson, Stefan, is a baseball scout.

At a time when many in this country are engaged in a bitter debate over immigration, Jarrín's life is a testament to the contributions immigrants have made to journalism and to that most American of sports, baseball.

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