

## No Tears and No Joy

Written by {ga=riverburns}

Thursday, September 06 2012 5:41 AM - Last Updated Thursday, September 06 2012 1:43 PM

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By the time you read this, he may have already passed on. For some of you, it will be a joyous occasion, but for others, it will be a time to reflect on the great memories. However, for many of us, it will not be a reminder of love for our Browns or hate for the man who took them away, but the polar opposite of both emotions, complete and utter apathy. At what could be the hour of his death, the thought of Art Modell means nothing to me. Pizza, toilet brushes, and pocket lint have more meaning to me at this point in time.

Is it cruel to say that I don't care about the man, whether he lives or dies? Honestly, it really is, and I know that if you take the name "Art Modell" of the story and leave out the part about owning NFL teams, I would sympathize with this "John Doe". Then, there's the "ten hospitalizations, two heart attacks, a stroke, internal bleeding. And every one of those illnesses, she was at my side", and that's when this man is better off being anonymous for the sake of that black, faintly beating organ in my chest that some refer to as a heart. "She" was Pat Breslin, the soap opera star he married in 1969, and stayed married to until she was taken by pancreatitis last October. He's suddenly a widower that's ready to re-unite with his bride of 52 years as her children, who he adopted, sit by his side, waiting for the inevitable.



Their names are John and David Modell, and I can't imagine their pain, but it's their surname that reminds me of the fellow laying in that hospital bed, and the small role he played in adolescent, football loving, tv watching life so many years ago. I have an empty feeling about the life that's about to end, as I see the internet weigh in with unsolicited opinions in the late hours of Wednesday evening. Yet, if I can forget the name on that wrist-band, and the story behind his relevance in my life, I'm sympathetic towards a man that lost what (I'm assuming) was most important to him for over half a century. Even when I remember that he is indeed Arthur B. Modell, I can't be mean-spirited about the boys losing a father, and their six offspring

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losing a grandfather. To them, this is all happening right now.

On the other hand, I insist that seventeen years ago, without suffering and without mourning, the man was dead to me. Some of us were still children and others not so young, but we were all left to suffer just the same without that football team that we loved to watch play on Sunday. That couldn't be replaced with a team owned by Alfred Lerner, even just a short three years later. How replaceable were Browns fans for Art Modell, though? Football hungry Baltimore fans were ready and willing to replace all of us in Modell's heart and in his wallet. I can recall my anger, my grief, and my plan for how I'd handle a face-to-face encounter with the man who stole my Sundays, but that's all in the past.

My first thought now is about how he cannot take that Super Bowl ring with him, but what does that even mean? Why should I care? The simple answer is that I shouldn't, and I don't. Maybe, I've sometimes wondered, I should forgive him, and per my friends that will never comprehend the situation, justify the business sense of uprooting the Browns. But, I know Modell doesn't seek our forgiveness, that he always understood the vitriol toward him, and he always acted in the interest of #1. Whatever was in the best interest of Art Modell, that was the priority. We don't have to like it, or even accept it. The most difficult thing to accept was that our anger, permanently forcing him out of Northeast Ohio, never bothered him.

He tells [USA Today's Gary Mihoces in 2003](#) , when asked about Browns fans:

"I love them dearly. ... I will not say the same about the politicians and some members of the business community."

That quote ran in a story before Modell's last regular season game as a majority NFL owner, as the owner of the Baltimore Ravens. After one last victory over the Steelers, and a quick playoff exit, Steve Bisciotti was the new head honcho, and Modell would soon be forgotten. It's the same when that football team, now just a faded shadow of what used to be Cleveland's team, takes the field in their purple or black uniforms. They're not our rivals any more than Modell is our enemy. Neither are worth our time to hate, or to even give the satisfaction of our attention.

