

## **Pittsburgh – Rated #1 Most Livable City - Again**

by  
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When I got out of school in the '80s, I took a job that sent me to live in many cities across the US. As many others who graduated in those days quickly discovered, they had no choice but to go elsewhere to find work as good paying jobs were tough to find in the Pittsburgh market.

As I went from city to city, I have to admit the climate was almost always better than Pittsburgh. And there was often better scenery that would sometimes take your breath away. I also remember taking some good-natured ribbing about being from these parts as most people had dirty, smokestack images locked in their minds. But I can still recall that day in 1985 when I was sitting in a big city office area when someone showed me a USAToday newspaper story that rated Pittsburgh the most livable city in the US.

The good-natured ribbing turned into some bawdy laughter from a few at work who were incredulous that Pittsburgh could be good for anything. But this time, I wasn't smiling. This time I uncharacteristically rose up from my cubicle and blurted out "you people have no idea. The best people in the world live in Pittsburgh."

When I got home that night, I took a good long look at myself. That article really tipped the scale for me. Yeah, I was a little tired of being a no-name in a big city. But the truth is I missed having roots. I missed my family. I missed Pittsburgh people who I thought were the most genuine in the world.

And so I did the one thing I learned you should never do. I moved back to Pittsburgh without a job. I remember saddling myself with a sense of shame that I had somehow failed, that I would never become all that I had set out to become. How wrong I was.

Eventually I was fortunate to land a nifty job in the town of Apollo. The Kiski Valley where I relocated wasn't quite the North Side where I had originally been raised but it was close enough. I was back where people worked hard and had tremendous pride in their community. Most importantly, I was back where people knew my name.

I quickly grew to love the Kiski Valley towns. The people were warm and genuine. They were the kind of people that would come to mind when you heard the expression about taking the shirt right off your back to help someone out. They also held a deep loyalty to their communities despite some really difficult economic times.

While there were always interesting characters in these towns, Character with a capital C is what always hit home with me. I knew many struggled to make ends meet but because of their faith and family, they were some of the richest people I've ever known.

And Character wasn't just the composition of the residents of the area. It was also the makeup of the business people of the area. The Strongland Chamber of Commerce was and is a phenomenal example to me. I have never been around so many business people dedicated to making a difference in their communities.

So now that I live on the other end of the Valley News readership audience, are things any different? Well I was out toiling with my rototiller last weekend trying to carve out a good plot for all these vegetables I have visions of growing when a Jefferson Township neighbor I hadn't yet met came over to introduce himself. "Hey I'm not trying to tell you what to do but I have a tractor that can get this done a whole lot quicker and will get down deeper than what you're doing," he said. "Wow, can I pay you for that," I asked. "Don't be ridiculous, I'm your neighbor," he replied back. That's Pittsburgh.

While the area gets high marks in many measurable categories. The intangible that can never be measured that takes the Pittsburgh area way over the top is the Character of its people. So for a brief moment we can all share a sense of pride that Pittsburgh is rated #1 once again. But only a brief moment... For as Pittsburgh area people do, we go back to work hard, get to church and love our families.



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