

Oct 19th, 2015

Jim Mackey (25 year Rotarian)

President John, Thanks for inviting me to say a few words about my experience in Rotary over the past 25 years.

My earliest recollections of Rotary are from the mid 50's when the Rotary Pool was situated in the park at the north end of the present track and sports field at the Lindsay Collegiate and Vocational Institute. Like every pool, it required annual maintenance which was performed by Rotarians. Since we lived close by, my father and I walked over to join the volunteer Rotarian cleaning crew. I think it gave me bragging rights at school to have stood at the bottom of the deep end.

I remember conversations at home about 'crippled children' and the Easter Seals campaign as well as the poster child 'Timmie' visiting. I remember too, my parents' concern about Polio. I could tell then, that they were genuinely fearful of the disease and what it could do to our family. There were pictures of Iron Lungs used for treatment of severe cases and children with cumbersome metal leg braces they needed to make walking possible, and there were victims of the disease here in Lindsay. My experiences then had impact, I am happy 50 odd years later, to be able to support Rotary's Polio Plus campaign. As the advertisements say, "We are this close," to the successful eradication of the disease and Rotarians have been involved since the get go.

My further connection with Rotary did not occur until I came back to Lindsay. I had been working for a civil engineering consulting firm in London, Ontario for a number of years when the opportunity to join the family firm resulted in becoming a candidate for membership. In joining the Lindsay Rotary Club, I joined the few who are third generation members. My grandfather James Mackey, was a charter member of the club and my dad Gord joined in the early 50's. Rotary meetings 25 years ago were held at the Gold Course on Angeline St. S. on Mondays at 12:15. Back then funerals were generally not held on Saturdays or Sundays, so Mondays were often our busiest days for many years. That sometimes made it difficult to keep our attendance at acceptable levels.

In 1992 I helped with the draw at Rotanza. It was an unwieldy and cumbersome elimination draw that had to be managed without error. There were 500 tickets sold and each buyer's name was hand printed on a numbered card and hung on a board that was displayed at the event. Prior to the draw, each sold ticket stub was recorded, folded and rolled to fit into a prescription vial which was then loaded into a drum on the night of the draw. As the draw progressed the vials were drawn from the drum, the ticket unfolded and recorded and the corresponding card was taken down from the board. Obviously this was a labour intensive activity. Every year my mother-in-law, and my kids were conscripted as well as ten to twelve volunteer needed at the event to make sure the draw was completed before the end of the evening. Tracking sold tickets, loading them into vials and making sure that none were lost because increasingly time consuming as the draw grew from 500 to 600 and eventually to 700 tickers. We had several sell out events and each year, for several weeks prior to the event, our dining room table became ticket stub central with boxes of prescription vials ready to be filled. One year, I was not available for the event so Bob and Lenore

Puffer volunteered to take over. I was dismayed to hear that they spent the 36 hours before the draw loading, unloading and reloading the vials until they found ticket stubs that had become stuck together and put in the same vial.

Part of my effort each year was to look for ways to streamline things. The volunteer base was dwindling as our club membership waned so we needed the operation to become less labour intensive while remaining risk adverse. After a couple of attempts to computerize the draw, we were blessed with a volunteer named Pat Presley who worked tirelessly every year, using a computer application that resulted in a comprehensive database of all things draw related. The elimination draw lived on successfully without issue for a few more years.

Having had a short hiatus, the new and improved Rotanza promises to continue to be a successful fund raiser for the club.

I have enjoyed membership on several committees over the years. Several years ago when our meetings were held at the curling club on Peel street, President John and I met with a couple of Rotarians from Barrie who told us of an opportunity to join with several other clubs in a fundraiser selling Cash Calendars. We took the idea to the club and for several years sold calendars. We didn't have to develop the product or do any of the administrative work, but we did get a cheque each year to present to the beneficiaries. Eventually, the project was brought home to Lindsay and provided funds for the auxiliary at the hospital.

For several years the club participated in the Rotary student exchange program. My family hosted a young lady named Berit Peipgras. We called her 'B'. 'B's' stay with us was rewarding on several levels although it was not without some challenge as Bernie will attest. 'B' is now an architect and mother, married to a commercial photographer and they make their home in The Hague where they own a design studio.

Our weekly bulletin was mailed to us when I joined. Meeting notes were transcribed and hand delivered to the Chamber of Commerce for publication and mailing. Peter Milner was the bulletin editor for many years and he always took his meeting notes in shorthand. Peter's command over the written word always made for good reading. For several years, I have enjoyed working as bulletin editor which consists mainly of sending the bulletin out to those on the email subscription list. The job is made easy by several volunteer 'scribes' who take excellent notes every week and provide them to me for publication through our clubrunner webpage.

They say time flies when you are having fun. It certainly does not seem to have been so long a time since my father asked me if I was interested in joining Rotary, but I can say with conviction that I have certainly enjoyed it.