

Address to the Rotary Club of Windsor (1918)
By Past President Lex McCrindle on Past President's Day
January 29, 2018

President Colleen, Past Presidents, Fellow Rotarians and Guests

My family's first encounter with Windsor Rotary was not with me but was a telephone call. "Hello Mrs. McCrindle, this is Gordon Preston, Chief of Police, and I would like to ask you a few questions about your husband!" I think Ann's heart was in her mouth with that introduction but he went on to say that he chaired the membership committee of the Rotary Club of Windsor and he wanted to get some information about me and blah blah blah all because I was being proposed as a new member. He ended the call by asking her not to tell me about it in case I was not accepted. About 4 months later, in June 1969, Alex Stuart introduced me to the Club with Roy Lancaster, president.

Service of varying types has always been the hallmark of this Club. I joined an Easter Seal Club whose main interest was helping Crippled Children. Over the years, that name changed to Children's Assistance. The Easter Seal campaign to finance the work with the children was our only real money maker and spender. The year I chaired the Easter Seal campaign, we had to stuff about 20,000 envelopes with a flyer, return envelope and a set of Easter Seals. Members took materials home to hold stuffing parties. We went to seniors' residences, the jail, church groups, and schools to get more of the stuffing done. Then the envelopes had to be counted into bundles in quantities designated by the postmaster for each postal carrier's walk. Then, we waited patiently for envelopes to be returned. There was always a poster child – boy Timmy one year, girl Tammy next year - that helped make the publicity required. Also, there were walkathons – either starting or ending at Bill Howitt's garage across the street.

How many of you remember Ralph Backman? He was a wiry guy who didn't weigh 150 pounds. The year Ralph was President, the Easter Seal ambassador was Whipper Billy Watson, a 350 lb minimum professional wrestler. He came to an Easter Seals Kickoff meeting at the Holiday Inn. A ring was set up. Ralph disappeared from the President's table and came back in T-shirt, shorts and running shoes ready to go into battle. Whipper Billy and Ralph "duked it out" to the delight of us all. Ralph was tossed around but fought back all to come to a draw – all in favour of Easter Seals. Incredible what you have to do to support those marvellous kids! The media support from that sort of stunt and many others throughout the years was invaluable to the financial success of our campaigns.

The Easter Seal campaign expanded to incredible heights when the telethons became a main part of the fundraiser. One of the other real benefits of being an Easter Seal Club was the legacies left to this Club over the following years. But all good things come to an end and Easter Seals - not the kids – and us parted.

We needed another fund raising activity and Art in the Park was a project that we got involved with after a woman's group of the Art Gallery found they could no longer handle it. For the first few years, a marketing company headed by former CKWW manager George MacDonald gave us help and then we continued on our own. This was an interesting financial adventure since we received a flat fee for putting it on and then any funds raised beyond that were split half and half between us and maintenance of the historic Willistead Manor. In Shari Cunningham's Presidential Year 2008, she also chaired this fund raiser – an incredible load in a busy year. AIP was rebranded and is now rated highly in community events occurring in this province and is our main fundraising project.

Speaking of fund raising, don't forget about Walter Willm's claim that Bingo is our 2nd biggest fund raiser – and it is. But maybe it isn't. I am constantly looking at funds given by you the members for all sorts of work we are doing. Last week you received your income tax receipts. I made them up and the last page of that report gives me a total on those receipts. Last year's total \$48,023. That's an average of \$345.00 per member. That's some pretty heart-warming money given exclusively by you the members to help kids and adults here and throughout the world.

In my initial years as a Rotarian, the support of Rotary International was the payment of our dues to the district and to Rotary International. There were no Paul Harris Fellows when I joined and the first is recorded in 1976. Today, $\frac{3}{4}$ of our members are Paul Harris Fellows thanks to an initiative by Norm Wheeler. About 30 years ago, he found that previous donations given to Rotary International gave us points which when coupled with money became easier to acquire Paul Harris Fellowships. Many of our present and previous members took this opportunity to donate to Rotary's worldwide projects to the tune of nearly 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ million US\$.

World Community Service first came to my attention in around 1980. Bill Fraser the architect was commissioned by the Canadian Government to handle the design of refrigeration plants in Benin City in Nigeria. He was back and forth to that country over several years. As a very Rotary-wise past president of this Club, he encouraged a group of men there to form a Rotary Club. They tried to meet some needs in their community. Bill came back to our Club to see if we could help. In days when most money sent internationally usually ended up in pockets other than where it was intended to go, this was a different way of helping others that we really liked. Bill got the money, watched it being spent and watched a Rotary Club overseas grow.

That was a start to an aspect of this Club's world service that we embrace today. It is great when our members personally champion a project and go overseas to help and see that the money sent is being put to the use intended.

A few moments ago, I alluded to points received from Rotary International for donations given. Those donations came from our support of Rotary's Polio Project. Let me tell how we got involved. At the 1982 district conference in Niagara Falls, one luncheon speaker,

Wilf Wilkinson (who in later years became President of Rotary International), presented a marvellous and spell binding report on Rotary's newest venture – to rid the world of Polio.

As was the custom of District Conferences in those days, the afternoon was a free time for all with usually golf and shopping being the main attractions. Marty Goldberg was our President then. As we were leaving the luncheon, he urged me and a couple of others who had not scheduled any other activities to join him in his room for a discussion about what we had just heard. Ken Hawkeswood, Ken Wiley and I took him up on his offer. We spent a good 2 hours wrestling with the question – “how could we support this new Rotary effort?” We knew there was \$100,000 available in our Club's funds. We persuaded all involved to send this money to RI and to support Polio in the future. It was Rotary's first significant Club donation to Polio. Over the years, we have donated over \$US300,000 as a result of one motivating speech at a district conference.

I have been talking to you about the making and spending of money as Rotarians do their service. That work does not happen in a vacuum but rather with an organized group of committees giving and receiving directions as they live their Rotary life. Today in our singsong, you heard something to effect that this Club is so well organized that no president, no matter how badly he screwed up things up in his year, could cause this Club to fail. That was something uttered by John McGivney many years ago and became known to all of us at the front here as the McGivney principle.

In my early years, committees met generally at lunch or in the evening, seldom in the late afternoon and never in the morning. Evening meetings were lots of fun because at the conclusion of business, there was social time that followed. One of the interesting locations for luncheon meetings was at Crescent Lanes. Harry Slobasky and his wife Evelyn, the owners of the bowling alley, had a room there adjacent to a kitchen. There was lovely sandwich menu and there was never a bill. However, there was always a pot passed among the attendees who did what was fair. Life was a lot simpler in those days.

In recent years, quite a bit has been made about the women in Rotary. But let me tell you that there has always been women in Rotary. The spouses of Rotarians were always called “Rotary Anns”. My wife, Ann, thought that she was special when she got a first letter from them when I became a member but no - that's what all spouses were called. Yes they were a social group but from time to time, we (male Rotarians) looked to them particularly to support the work we were doing. With mixed emotions, those days came to end when in May 1989, we took in our first female member, Evelyn Slobasky. She had been a widow for several years but she was still a part of our activities and social life and of course we got to see her every time we had a meeting at her bowling alley. She was joined shortly thereafter by other very valuable new members who took enthusiastic roles in our Club's life giving us lots of new firsts – first female committee chair, first female president – Connie Martin and first pregnant member – Shari Cunningham.

We created a bit of excitement about this news by organizing a contest as to who could name the time of day of the birth – not the date. All entered paid \$10.00 and the baby – Edward Langstone received a Paul Harris Fellowship on the day he was born and so did the correct guesser – Bill Wilkinson Sr. Always lots of fun at the Rotary Club.

At our first meeting this year, we saw a wonderful presentation of things we have done over the 100 years of this Club's life. We can boast about the McGivney Centre, Maryvale, pools, Safety Village, Grace Hospital and the whole area of work that the public sees here and abroad – but there is one real glue that keeps this Club going. It's the weekly fellowship in attending meaningful meetings of the members of this Club. I figure that I have attended at least 2000 Rotary meetings in my life and although there are some I might like to forget about, there are many more that I recall fondly.

We start our meetings with singing and we take time to sing something else after lunch is served. There are lots of people in this world that think this a bit "hokey" in today's society. But few know why we sing. As Tevia in "Fiddler on the Roof" sings "It's Tradition". The original Rotarians rotated their weekly meetings in each other's offices. Try holding a grudge against somebody in your circle of friends while you sing. You can't – and that's why they sang and why we sing. "Smile and the World Smiles with You" is the one song we have sung most often just as did earlier today.

Here are some interesting happenings I have observed at Rotary meetings over the years.

At the Seaway Inn, our meeting room was in the basement with a carpeted floor. John McGivney was the speaker presenting a team from Toronto that was reporting on whether or not the facilities at the Red Cross building on Ouellette Avenue were still suitable for the work of helping our Crippled Children. About 10:30 that Monday morning, a water main in the hotel broke and flooded the basement. By the time we arrived for the noon meeting, most of the water had been removed, the room was clean but the carpet was soaking wet. There was no time to make arrangements to go elsewhere. So there we sat in humid and smelling circumstances and listened to a report concluding that it was time to get a new location for our kids. A few years later, work began on the first building on Matchette Road with funding we presented.

Years later, Diane Moore had challenged the tool and die mold makers in our area to build an apparatus called a "Hart Walker" – a British designed appliance to help children with mobility issues to get around. They accepted the challenge and came to a meeting one Monday where the model was first shown and explained. Then a young boy came in his wheelchair, and over by the piano, was fitted into the walker. Then, he walked straight out of this room and I can tell you, there wasn't a dry eye on any mold maker or Rotarian. What a day!

The Christmas meeting of the Rotary Club has always been a cheerful day. For many years, the President gave everyone an empty glass with a gold labelled message and signature to take home and fill with lots of cheer. The Salvation Army band would play

some Christmas carols and Santa had lots of goofy and appropriate gifts. Usually, there was time for a bit of serious considerations as well. One year 3 members were asked to give us a reflection on how they handled Christmas – first a Christian, then a Jew and then the only member of the Club who was neither a Christian nor a Jew - Anil Chitte. His talk gave me and others a new perspective on this yearly holiday that I will never forget and, Anil, you did it without telling a joke first!

In the 1900's, the Windsor Star printed a late morning paper called the Ontario edition. For many years, Jack Pitt, the Public Relations Manager of the Unemployment Insurance Commission picked up the Ontario edition on his way to Rotary and about 5 minutes after we sat to eat, he would come forward and read the news. The headline and its story were generally read verbatim and from there, he got into the rest of the paper. He would come out with the wittiest and comical versions of what was in print. We heard lots of fake news long before Trump and it set the Club on a very jovial path for the rest of the meeting.

Past President Claire MacLeod and previous Director of Education for the City of Windsor addressed the Club once a year for many years on whatever he thought was appropriate for the date. Those were spell binding addresses and many significant enough to publish.

Then there was one meeting a year which a number of us Past Presidents were anxious about - a party night to celebrate our year end.

Most of us on this side of President Colleen never knew how we would be treated that night especially at the hand of 2 of our members – Alan Buchannan and Fred Sorrell. Alan would compose some sort of song that you never knew if it was complimentary or not but it was all in good fun.

Then Fred had his turn. He was the guy whose antics would bring the audience to roaring laughter since he was the media specialist who made up slides of some of the year's events at the expense of the president being skewered. Fred got his come-up-ins in 1987 at Ken Hawkeswood's party. We were in the Ambassador auditorium at the University of Windsor. The first slide was shown and then the projector's bulb burned out. For the next 20 minutes or so, search parties went all around the building to find a spare bulb or another projector. Nothing found and so the night was over and Ken breathed a sigh of relief. I happen to know that there is a spare bulb in the brief case of our projector today. We learned!

Presidential parties have taken other tactics in years following. At Romeo Girardi's night, we were treated to a new performance of Romeo and Juliet with Juliet being played by an actress but rather a high pitched squealy voice of our present district governor Rick. In last year's play, the president and his wife were actually actors – and not bystanders – in the performance. Maybe Presidential goodbyes are not so dangerous anymore!

I have been dealing with the Club's past until now – but let's have a look at the future. Right now, all the past presidents of this club that you are looking at have had their day to shine in the life of this Club. It's to you that we have passed the torch. We may be out to pasture – but that does not mean that we can't help or we won't help. Every year, the leadership of this Club changes and we past presidents sincerely wish those who accept new leadership roles and responsibilities all the best to keep this club growing in its service here and abroad. We past presidents are the nominating committee for the various board positions every year. We watch your performance and you can only perform if you take your service seriously. I urge you to have a look at the committees available in this Club. Try more than one. When we look to the leaders who will become President, they have to have been good directors and to be a worthy of being a director, you have to have been involved as a member who has made a difference in your committee work. Don't forget about attendance at meetings. Make ups are great – but being together as a meeting group is the glue I pointed to earlier. You, the ones we Past Presidents look at today are the future of this club. Rotary is fun and it can be a life changing experience. May you enjoy your future service in helping this be a better world locally and internationally as we head into our second century! Here's to Rotary!