

President, Bill Davidson's year end speech

June 30, 2020

In November of 2018, when John Bathurst called me and asked if I would like to relinquish my role as Chair of the Speaker Committee after the previous 7 or so years, I was a bit suspicious. John said, "I have a great opportunity for you, and I know that you have a lot of time on your hands." I acknowledged that becoming President of the RCoV was not only a great opportunity, but was also a great honour, although I did not know where he got his assumption that I had "a lot of time on my hands". I had stated previously that I would accept the nomination as President of the RCoV if I ever retired, but John suspected that my retirement may never happen. So, having no further argument I eagerly accepted that nomination.

In hindsight, the role of President was much easier to deal with while having a job with my office located downtown. I am very busy at work, but have flexibility and I have access to much better technology in my office than I would have had at home... all of these factors allowed me to deal with Rotary matters on a timely basis. There were other advantages to having my office downtown – I was a 5 minute walk from the Terminal City Club, and I was also able to host some Club and District meetings in our boardroom which was very convenient for myself as well as for other Rotarians.

The journey to Club President commences about the time one is nominated at the Club AGM, which is more than 6 months before the actual start of the Rotary year. Past President Phil Webber was very quick to offer instructions on how to access various sections of the Rotary International website, including Rotary Club Central and MyRotary, as I needed to start thinking club goals etc. for my year as Club President. John Bathurst emphasized to our club repeatedly during the year that the RI website contains valuable information about Rotary and John is right. I learned more about Rotary from going through the website than in all my years as a Rotarian.

The first official duty as incoming Club President is to attend the President Elect Training (PETS), which is held every February at a hotel conference center near the Sea-Tac airport, just south of Seattle. I had heard from previous Presidents that PETS was a very organized and informative event. I was not disappointed as all the presentations and breakout sessions were of very high quality and even included presentations from RI Director Jeffrey Cadorette as well as incoming RI President Mark Maloney. In addition, I met and interacted with fellow Rotarians from District 5040, including Bill Bennett who was former Minister of Mines in the Gordon Campbell government, who was his Rotary Club's incoming President. I have attended numerous professional training conferences over the years and PETS was amongst the best.

The next big step on the journey to July 1, 2019 was to attend the District 5040 conference in Sun Peaks. I never attended a District conference in the past as they tended to occur in the last day of our "busy season" at work. However, the 2019 District Conference started in the evening of May 2nd, which was quite convenient for me. Also, Sun Peaks held a lot of appeal to me as we used to own a condo there when our kids were young, so I was quite eager to see the place again. The District Conference was also well organized with quality speakers and programs and provided further knowledge and resources for my upcoming year as Club President. There were also a number of members from our Rotary club in attendance so was nice to meet up in the hotel bar at the end of the day and get a chance to know everyone a little better.

The last major step before July 1 was to attend the RI Convention which for 2019 was held in Hamburg, Germany. However, my anticipation for Hamburg was severely dampened with the sudden passing of Don Evans on May 20, 2019. Don will go down as one of the great contributors to our Club, to our District and to Rotary in general. I will never forget the shock when Phil Webber walked into our Membership Committee meeting and told us this terrible news.

From the moment we stepped off the train from Berlin to Hamburg to the moment we walked out of the final assembly, the organization of the RI Convention was tremendous. There were more than 26,000 attendees and everything seem to run without a hiccup. Once again, great speakers and presentations. All Rotarians should try and attend one of these conventions during their Rotary life, as it would be beneficial to hear first hand about the global reach of Rotary; to hear some very inspirational speakers talk about how Rotary affected their life; as well as to meet people from all over the world. An added bonus was that there were a number of Rotarians and spouses from our club, from our district and from our neighbouring district 5050. Our club members had two dinners away from the conference site, which were a lot of fun.

The next major part of planning for 2019-2020 came in June 2019, with the membership survey, followed by the Strategic Planning Session.

As I mentioned in my address to the club early in my year, I was disappointed by the number of responses we received for the survey, but was encouraged by the well thought-out concerns and perspectives raised by members. I also mentioned that there was a lot of negativity in the survey results, which created a lot of frustration for me before my year as President even started. But, I remember Brian Street saying to me, “there is no point flying off the handle”, just as I was about to. Instead, I thought it best to spend my time getting down to the root cause of member dissatisfaction and work on engaging club members. Rotarians should believe that what we are doing in the RCoV is relevant and connected to our individual values, as well as to Rotary values. I hope that I was able to do this for some members. I took a few newer members out for lunch, as I suspected they were dissatisfied. One of the members ended up leaving the club as the member wanted a seismic change to the way we operate and that wasn’t possible. This member participated in just about everything in his short time with our club, so I give this member an “A” for effort and the member departed on good terms.

Our Strategic Planning Session was quite different than past sessions. The late Don Evans facilitated our Strategic Planning sessions for as long as I remember and had his own distinct style. Our former member, Mark Busse, facilitated the 2019 Strategic Planning Session. I know that some attendees of the Strategic Planning Session did not appreciate Mark’s approach, but I found the results valuable especially when combined with the results of the member survey.

Don Evan’s death in May of 2019 and the negativity surrounding the membership survey gave me an uneasy feeling before my year even started. But, I used this negativity to put together my address to the club which I used as my guide for the balance of the year. Once I put the negativity behind me, I found the next seven months to be fulfilling and I thought to myself... “this job isn’t so bad after all.”

Then mid-March hit with the full shut down of life due to the COVID-19 virus. No more physical Tuesday meetings at the Terminal City Club, no more committee meeting. “What are we going to do?” was coming at me from many sides. The COVID-19 period could have been a destructive time for our club –

we have older members, who are at high risk due to the virus; we stopped all volunteer efforts; our fundraising efforts such as the bike-a-thon were cancelled; our committees stopped physically meeting; and the club as a whole stopped physical luncheon meetings. And then, the spirit of Rotary started to come through. Certain club members (whom I will name later) rose to the challenge and organized our virtual club and committee meetings on the ZOOM platform. Some of you might think “how hard can that be?”, but these members reached out to the entire membership to ensure that all members who wanted to participate in the virtual meetings were able to, so not that easy.

Once we were comfortable with the ZOOM platform we have continued with all of our regular Tuesday club meetings, as well as Board and committee meetings. Although I prefer face-to-face meetings, the ZOOM meetings are very well attended. Moreover, our Tuesday club meetings are attracting former members of our club, some current members that we have not seen for many years, as well as members from other Rotary clubs. In addition, we have continued to attract high quality speakers to our weekly ZOOM meetings.

CHALLENGES FOR INCOMING PRESIDENT GERRY GLAZIER AND THE INCOMING BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Ensure mentorship of new members continues and gets better.
- Maintain transparency of club operations to members. It was a bit frustrating to hear that although most information is readily available, there was a constant comment that, “I do not know what our club does.”
- Regularly revisit the Strategic Plan and measure our efforts against the plan.
- COVID-19 is not going away, and our club will be impacted all next year. So, continue all efforts to keep the membership engaged and informed, especially until the time comes that we can all get together again to meet and to provide our volunteer efforts on the community.
- What happens if the Terminal City Club (TCC) cannot serve our needs once the COVID restrictions are further reduced? This is also going to be a long-term challenge, especially as the TCC becomes more expensive.
- We are a volunteer organization so we need to remember that things don’t always run smoothly and volunteers do not always come through as they said they would, so stay calm.
- Do not be afraid to challenge the status quo. I don’t think we ever voted down a motion at a Board meeting, but numerous times we engaged in healthy debate and referred issues back to committees for further clarification or information before subsequent approval.

REGRETS

- Lost my cool a couple of times.
- Intended on more interaction/participation with other Rotary clubs, which did not happen and then COVID-19 limited any other chances we had.
- Missed the 2019 bike-a-thon as we were at a wedding in Kelowna that weekend.
- Felt bad for all the hard work Rotarians, including a number from our club, put into the organization of the 2020 District Conference which was cancelled.
- Having three Board members resign from the Board; two because they moved away from the lower mainland and one due to serious health issues.
- Disappointed by the general lack of interest towards a signature fundraising event to fund our Youth committee obligations.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Growth in the number of younger members.
- The good times and comradery with Rotarians from our club and others at the RI conference in Hamburg and the District conference in Sun Peaks.
- Interaction within our District with club Presidents, President Elects, Rotaractors, and representatives of the District at regular meetings organized by John Bathurst in his role as Assistant District Governor.
- Attending an event in August with RI President Mark Maloney, where President Maloney also inducted new Rotarians, including Sarah & Thomas Reppchen, and Saarika Varma of our club.
- Jack Zaleski, Gerry Glazier, and Franz Gehriger being recognized by District 5040 with major awards.
- Joan Posivy being recognized with a Rotaractor for Life Award.

THANK YOU

- **Parisa Adrangi**
For accepting the role as club secretary even though she was still quite new to the club and hardly knew me. Parisa was also nominated by the Board to continue on the Board to fill a one-year vacancy due to a Board member resignation.
- **Stu Bird**
For accepting a 1½ year role on the Board to fill a vacancy due to Board member resignation.
- **Wayne Fraser**
For accepting a ½ year role on the Board to fill a vacancy due to Board member resignation. Wayne will remain on the Board as President Elect.
- **Jack Zaleski**
For his experience, insight and sense of club traditions which made his role on the Board extremely valuable. For a successful 2019 bike-a-thon.
- **John Bathurst, Phil Webber, and Brian Street**
For their constant guidance and wisdom as recent past presidents of our Rotary Club.
- **John Bathurst**
For his role as ADG, where he did a great job connecting all the Rotary clubs in the District and holding us all accountable. And he get to do that again for another year.
- **Kaz Kadono**
For always having his “treasurer” hat on and for all the time he puts in this role, which few people realize.
- **Peter Clarke**
For his role as Sergeant at Arms, which unfortunately ended prematurely due to all the COVID impact. Peter will deny this, of course, but he brings a lot of insight and passion to our club and has the personality that makes it easy for members to turn to when they have concerns about our club.
- **Speaker Committee**
Chaired by Fred West and has continued our traditions of quality and engaging speakers even during our virtual era.

- **Thomas & Sarah Reppchen**

For jumping right in with both feet, as new members, by not only attending many committee meetings as well as participating in events and projects, but also putting the club on the ZOOM platform and helping our members sign on to ZOOM so that we could continue with our regular club meetings and committee meetings.
- **Saarika Varma**

For bringing together the Strategic Plan document and continuing to follow through on the development of the Strategic Plan with Gerry Glazier and the incoming Board. Also, along with her partner Brian Gusko, has taken the lead on our Public Image Committee working with a number of members including Jack, Phil, Gerry, and others. Saarika and Brian were responsible for the Vancouver Sun article that referred to our club's donations to the Adopt-a-School program for COVID-19 relief. This includes Technology as a sub-committee working with Alvin, Jack, Juno & Brian S. who are all working to improve our use of technology as well as build our social media presence.
- **Carolyn Treger, our Club Administrator**

For all her support provided to Parisa, Gerry, and myself, specifically to make our roles function but also to the service she provides the club as a whole. Carolyn took the initiative to develop a Board Operating Manual, something that hasn't been used in our club for a long time, that will be given out to all incoming Board members. This Operating Manual covers almost all aspects of club operations and is very informative.
- **Ian Storrs, Verona Edelstein, Michael Woolnough, Anne Lippert, and the ISC**

For continuing to lead our ISC. The knowledge, experience and diligence of the ISC had to make some hard decisions this year to defer funding on various international projects due to issues in the receiving jurisdiction.
- **Gerry Glazier and Rene Abi-Rached**

For continuing to lead our Community Service Committee, who along with our Youth Committee took the initiative to help local families in need during the COVID-19 crisis. After many years as co-chairs, Gerry and Rene are stepping down, with Brian Street and Thomas Reppchen taking the reins.
- **Kendall Jessiman, John Bathurst, Joan Posivy, and Adriana Zylmans**

For continuing to lead our Youth Committee and working with our Rotaractors and Interactors.
- **Justin Emilio, Navid Morawej, and Franco Gallo**

For keeping our Networking presentations going and interesting.
- **Franz Gehriger and Jason Boudreau**

For continuing to introduce potential members to our club. This committee has improved the process to move candidates from potential to new and even during this COVID time has continued to bring in potential members.