



Meetings: Tuesday 12 Noon

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## NOVEMBER IS ROTARY FOUNDATION MONTH

### Happy Birthday

### Happy Anniversary

Nov 26: Matt & Lynda DeBruyn

### Upcoming Speakers:

Nov 26: Shea Henry, ED Maple Ridge Museum  
History of Maple Ridge

Dec 03: AGM – Meadow Ridge Rotary  
and Christmas Present Exchange

Dec 10: Susan Pynn  
African Safari

### LAST WEEK'S MEETING

President **Laurie Anderson** presided.

**Adrienne** advised that the following persons have accepted the following nominations for the Executive and Board of our club during the 2025-2026 Rotary Year:

President: **Alex Pope**  
President Elect: **Eric Mollema**  
Past President: **Laurie Anderson**  
Secretary: **Debbie MacRae**  
Treasurer: **Walter Volpatti**  
International Chair: **Ineke Boekhorst**  
New Generations Chair: **Sharon Kyle**  
Club Services: **Adrienne Dale**  
Community Services: **Mike Davies**  
Vocational Chair: *(to be determined)*

### Letter from the Rotary Foundation regarding Misrepresentation of Rotary in Media Coverage

President Laurie brought to the Club's attention recent false headlines and news coverage pertaining to the estate of Rotarian Steve McEachern of Alberta that unfairly and improperly put Rotary in a bad light. By way of background, Steve McEachern died leaving a bequest in his Will of \$45,000,000 to the Rotary Foundation. His wife (who is currently 101 years old) survived him. They had no children, grandchildren or other descendants. An action was started in her name to claim a greater share of his estate. There is no suggestion that his surviving widow was not properly provided for in the Will, or that the Will was invalidly made, or that his widow was not fully aware of the bequest to the Rotary Foundation when the Will was made.

The widow is quoted in the news reports and online as saying that her husband told her that he wanted to change his Will to spread the bequest among other charities and not just to the Rotary Foundation. Laurie noted that under Provincial laws in Canada, only a spouse (and children, of which they had none) can contest a validly drawn Will. Therefore, in this case he thinks the surviving widow must be claiming a larger part of the estate, with the purported/alleged intention of then remaking her own Will to give what she may receive in her court action to other beneficiaries, and that there are 'behind the scenes' persons influencing the 101-year-old widow.

Laurie read to the Club the following a letter (from Jennifer Jones, Trustee of The Rotary Foundation, and Chris Etienne, Director of Rotary International) that was sent to all Club Presidents in Canada for the purpose of setting the record straight on this legal matter, and to share with members of their clubs:

*Dear Club Presidents,*

*We are writing to address recent media coverage that has misrepresented an unfortunate legal matter. We encourage you to discuss the following information with members of your club who may have questions or concerns. At the same time, we are actively engaging with Canadian media to clarify these misunderstandings. If a member of the media contacts you regarding this matter, please refer them to Rotary International's Media Relations Lead Michael VanDam at [Michael.VanDam@rotary.org](mailto:Michael.VanDam@rotary.org), so we can ensure clear and consistent communication.*

*First and foremost, let us offer some key facts to clarify some misleading headlines. This is a family dispute over a will that involves Mary McEachern, the widow of Steve McEachern, long time Rotary member in Edmonton, Alberta. Ms. McEachern's legal team initiated legal proceedings against her husband's estate, which happened to include gifts to The Rotary Foundation Canada. Steve served Rotary faithfully for 45 years. A lifelong supporter of The Rotary Foundation and member of the Arch Klumph Society, he was passionate about Rotary's mission and proud of its strong financial stewardship. In his will, he generously designated a portion of his estate to The Rotary Foundation Canada to fund humanitarian efforts. However, Rotary was not informed of Steve's planned gift until 2022, 18 months after his passing.*

*At no point did Rotary instigate legal proceedings against Ms. McEachern. Mary is part of our Rotary family. Since first being made aware of this situation we have worked actively to seek a solution that honors Steve's original intent. The false portrayal of this matter, the result of a media campaign orchestrated by the Adams Agency, a public relations firm, seeks to manipulate public perception and sway the outcome of this case.*

*Rotary has made repeated efforts to collaborate with Ms. McEachern's legal teams to gain basic information about the estate. The process has been complicated by multiple changes in her legal team and despite our repeated outreach, we still don't have the necessary information regarding the estate's complicated assets, size, or its financial implications. The Rotary Foundation Canada remains committed to respecting Steve's memory and his final estate plans. We share Ms. McEachern's wish to see this matter resolved fairly and swiftly and are working closely with her legal representatives to that end. Additionally, we are collaborating with Canadian Rotary members to counter misinformation that has been shared in the media, so the public is better informed of Rotary's actions. Rotary is a family, and Steve's fellow Rotarians loved and respected him deeply. The Rotary Foundation sent condolences to his family before we were aware of his planned gift. This situation is unfortunate because it overshadows Steve's extraordinary generosity and the legacy he intended to leave with Rotary.*

*As you know, the Rotary Foundation Canada, as an associate foundation of The Rotary Foundation, plays a vital role in supporting community projects led by Canadian Rotary clubs. Contributions support a range of humanitarian needs, from disease prevention to environmental initiatives. Projects such as Rotary Employment Partnership, a collaboration among Rotary, Inclusion Alberta, and Alberta Human Services, have been improving the lives of Canadians for decades. The project connects individuals with developmental disabilities with meaningful work, and it has created more than 850 jobs since it began over 20 years ago, with about 600 of those employees still working today. Thanks in no small part to the unwavering support of Canadian Rotarians, The Rotary Foundation and its associate foundations have been recognized as one of the best managed global charitable organizations, with 16 consecutive four-star ratings from the US-based Charity Navigator. Thank you for your commitment to Rotary and to our shared mission of service, integrity, and the advancement of global understanding and peace.*

*Sincerely, Jennifer Jones and Chris Etienne*

#### Program: A brief history of women in Rotary – Laurie Anderson

Laurie, stating that it is hard to imagine not having women in our Rotary Club, asked our members to think about what our club would be like without Ineke, Adrienne, Brenda, Sharon, Lynda, Debbie, Libby and our newest member Susan, who make up only 27% of our registered members (but who do 50% + of the work in keeping our club functioning and fun). The Rotary club in Summerland, BC, has over 50% of its members who are women. So we need to catch up. Rotary was formed almost 120 years ago but women have been included in Rotary only since a couple of years before our own club was formed in 1989. He gave a brief history of women in Rotary.

[Note: This information is taken from an article found online, produced by the Newton, New Jersey, Rotary Club, entitled "A History of Women in Rotary" - 4/24/20 revised - By Bob Shankman.]

There were several early attempts to include women within the Rotary organization. The 1st official attempt was at the Rotary International Convention in 1910. Some delegates introduced the topic, but it was overwhelmingly rejected. The LOS ANGELES HERALD, August 18, 1910, had this to say about the decision: "Because the average man cannot manage the average woman, the members of the Rotary Clubs of America barred women from their organization."

It's interesting to note, however, that the first constitution for Club #1 (the Chicago club), adopted in January 1906, makes no mention of gender. It refers only to "persons". But apparently, it was implied to mean "men". Efforts to join internationally also began early. In 1912 a club in Belfast, Ireland discussed the advisability of women joining and/or attending weekly luncheons. However, it was rejected.

The 1921 International Convention, in Scotland, produced the Standard Club Constitution. In it the terminology was changed to state: "A Rotary club shall be comprised of men." But it also permitted, at that time, the formation of a separate "Ladies Auxiliary". It appears they were using their own version of "separate, but equal". Several subsequent international conventions, specifically in 1950 (India) and 1964 (Sri Lanka) considered deleting the word "male" from the Constitution. But again, they were withdrawn or defeated.

There were other movements, over the years, but they never gained any momentum. The Upper Manhattan Club in 1972, for example, proposed to admit women but it was rejected with "laughter". Several other efforts were made during the late 60's and early 70's. This was coincidental with the rise of the women's movement and the fact that women were reaching higher levels, in their professions.

[Laurie noted that when he graduated from law school in 1968, there were only two women in the graduating class out of 101 students, but now women often outnumber men in law school.]

In 1976, the town of Duarte, California, had a very small Rotary Club. Duarte is located about 12 miles east of Pasadena on Route 66, and currently has about 21,000 residents. Since the Club had only eight members in 1976, they voted to invite three women into the club. Two of them, both school principals, joined immediately. The third joined a few months later. They wanted to grow the club and this move dramatically grew it.

Initially, the new members were listed using only their first initials. However, a few months later, in celebration of the Club's 25th anniversary, they were re-introduced using their full complete names. As you might expect, word spread about them having female members, and a few months later (Feb. 1978) their charter was revoked by Rotary International. After refusing to remove the members, this club changed their name to the "EX-Rotary Club of Duarte" – and existed without a charter. A series of legal actions then began. The club initially filed suit protesting the revocation of the charter. In 1983 the California Superior Court ruled in favor of R.I. and upheld gender-based discrimination. But the California Court of Appeal later reversed the decision, that same year. The Court ruled that the Duarte Rotary Club was, in fact, a business establishment and that it came under the auspices of the Unruh Civil Rights Act which outlawed business discrimination, in California. R.I. appealed this decision to the California Supreme Court. The Court, however, refused to hear the case. It was then appealed to the US Supreme Court. It seems R.I. was very intent on keeping women out. The US Supreme Court made their decision on May 4, 1987. It ruled that Rotary clubs may not exclude women from membership on the basis of their gender. It basically upheld the decision of the California Court of Appeal.

This was a 7-0 decision. Two judges recused themselves. Justice Harry Blackmun was an Honorary Rotarian and Sandra Day O'Connor's spouse was a Rotarian. [Laurie noted how much the Supreme Court of the USA has changed - with the recent refusal of Clarence Thomas and Samuel Alito to recuse themselves in the face of much more serious and obvious conflicts of interest.]

The NY Times stated on 5/5/87: "The Court rejected Rotary's argument that it has a constitutional right to bar the admission of women because of its selective membership policy, public service activities and other attributes." Rotary (US) reacted fast and accepted the decision. A policy statement was issued stating that any US club could now admit qualified women as members. The Duarte California Club was then reinstated, and initiated its first women in early June 1987. Sylvia Whitlock, one of the early members, became the 1st women Rotary club president after the court ruling. She went on to become Governor of District #5300 (California & Nevada) on July 1, 2012. Recently, in a speech before a California Rotary Club, she noted that the first two Duarte women received little initial resistance from the club, itself. The only resistance they had within the town came from other women. They objected because the club then met in the evening, with many married men in attendance.

Prior to this change, although not allowed as members, women, especially wives, were enthusiastically welcome at meetings. In fact, they were known as "Rotary Anns". This tradition began in 1914. The national convention was being held in Houston and several members rode on a train that started in San Francisco. Two women, named Ann, were traveling with their husbands and affectionately became known as "Rotary Ann". The name stuck and soon applied to women who attended the meetings or functions.

The decision opened the doors to women, not only in Rotary, but other "male only" clubs such as Kiwanis and Lions. Kiwanis changed their constitution in 1988, as well. Women currently make up 26% of their membership.

The Court decision was an important Civil Rights decision. But there is always room for improvement. While there are, now, about 200,000 women members, this is only 18 % of the approximately 1.2 million total members. Specifically, it is 15% Internationally and 22% in the US. There is still much resistance in many Asian districts. Japan, for example has only 4% women members.

[Adrienne observed that not many years ago she was refused entrance to a Rotary club in Germany that had a "male only" policy.]

#### Club Announcements:

Tuesday, December 3, 2024 - Club AGM and Christmas Present exchange (limit \$20).

Friday, December 6, 2024 - Christmas party social at Clint and Cheryl's home.

Tuesday, December 17, 2024 - Zoom inter club meeting with Italian Rotary Club.

December 24 and December 31, 2024 - No Meetings

#### Quote for the Day:

Whether it's  
the best of  
times or the  
worst of times,  
it's the only  
time we've got.

- Art Buchwald

**Submitted by Laurie Anderson**