Rotary Club of Meadow Ridge

The Four Way Flasher

ROTARY CLUB MEADOW-RIDGE BRITISH COLUMBIA CANADA

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Website: MeadowRidgeRotary.ca

Meetings: Tuesday 12 Noon

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CREATE LASTING IMPACT

NOVEMBER IS ROTARY FOUNDATION MONTH

Happy Birthday				Happy Anniversary
Nov 10	Brenda Jenkin	Nov 17	Wendy Whitter	

Upcoming Speakers:

Nov 10 Veteran - Matt Williams **Veterans Meeting at the Legion**	Nov 17 Michelle Taschereau Atlas Brain Health	Nov 24 Monica Watson Leadership, Teamwork and Communications

LAST WEEK'S MEETING

President **Eric Mollema** presided.

Invocation

Mark Forster delivered the invocation:

"As we come together today, let us be mindful of how fortunate we are to enjoy good company, meaningful friendships, and the ability to contribute to something larger than ourselves.
May our time together inspire new ideas, strengthen our commitment to service, and remind us that even small acts can make a lasting difference.
Let us enjoy the fellowship, the meal, and the opportunity to serve our community and the world

Guests

Ana Castillo - Our Club's Rotary exchange student in 2006.

Nicole Mirea, a guest and employee of Clint, is meeting with us again for the third time.

Cheque Presentation



Andrea Nicholson, a representative of **Christmas Haven**, attending to receive a club donation in the amount of **$1,000**.

Andrea thanked the club for its continued generosity and support. She has been involved with Christmas Haven for approximately four years and has witnessed steady growth in the number of people attending its annual Christmas celebration. Christmas Haven provides a welcoming place for individuals and families to spend Christmas, particularly those who might otherwise have nowhere to celebrate or experience companionship during the holiday season. Andrea emphasized that donations from organizations such as Rotary are essential to maintaining and expanding the event.

Guest Speaker — Gordy's Life and Adventures, Part Two

This program, presented by **Gordon Robson** (with assistance from Mary on the photographs) was the continuation of Gordy's "Who's Who" started on August 25, 2026 (as reported in our September 5th newsletter), illustrating Gordy's personal, professional, political and community experiences spanning more than six decades.

Early Career and Return to Maple Ridge

Gordy briefly reviewed his earlier experiences in the carnival and concessions industry, including work throughout the United States, participation in two World's Fairs and involvement with the Teamsters. Returning to Maple Ridge in the 1970s, he began acquiring and restructuring troubled businesses. His first local venture was a financially struggling taxi company. After taking over the business and expanding operations, he eventually became head of the Taxi Owners Association of British Columbia.

He also recounted an amusing experience teaching in School District 42, despite having left school after Grade 10. One of his former teachers was surprised to discover him teaching mathematics (a subject Gordy admitted he had never formally completed at that level) and quickly put an end to that. His business interests subsequently expanded into real estate, hotels, financial restructuring and community development.

Maple Ridge Planning and Community Development

Gordy became involved in local planning at a time when Maple Ridge lacked a comprehensive community plan. He was appointed chair of the local planning commission and participated in developing a plan that would influence the community for decades. He also discussed his involvement in the redevelopment of 224th Street, recalling photographs of the project and individuals who helped shape the downtown area. His growing interest in local government and public policy eventually led him into provincial politics and political consulting.

Hotel Operations and Major Business Ventures

Among Gordy's many ventures was the acquisition of Glacier Park Lodge in 1975, which his family operated for approximately 30 years. He also described owning and operating a 200-room Vancouver hotel and undertaking numerous hotel and property restructuring projects throughout British Columbia. His approach frequently involved purchasing financially distressed businesses, negotiating with creditors, reorganizing operations and returning businesses to financial viability. Gordy repeatedly credited his success to assembling capable teams rather than attempting to manage every detail personally. One particularly important colleague was Lynda Lawrence, who has worked with him for approximately 50 years.

Edmonton Oilers and Professional Sports

One of the more surprising stories involved Gordy's participation in the restructuring of the Edmonton Oilers. He recalled being approached about the financially troubled hockey organization, which he described as having approximately $5 million in debt and very limited assets. He became involved in acquiring the organization for a nominal amount, restructuring its financial obligations and positioning it for eventual sale to Peter Pocklington. He also described his involvement with David Braley who purchased and owned the Vancouver 86ers (later known as the Vancouver whitecaps) from 1997 to 2000, helping to keep professional soccer alive in British Columbia. Working with others, including David Braley, Gordy helped arrange a transaction that enabled the 86ers organization to continue operating.

Property Restructuring and the Prince George Animal Story

Gordy described his work on numerous properties associated with Northwest Trust and other business interests. One memorable example involved a troubled apartment complex in Prince George containing approximately 500 units. In addition to its financial and management difficulties, the complex had a large population of unattended cats and dogs. Lynda organized an unconventional animal collection initiative involving local youngsters, which resulted in more than 200 animals being collected over a short period (including the unexpected attention the operation received from the SPCA and the complications involving a valuable missing dog). He credited Lynda with bringing order to a challenging situation.

Political Consulting and International Democracy

Gordy spoke about being recruited by former British Columbia Premier Bill Bennett and becoming involved in political consulting. He subsequently joined professional political consulting associations and participated in election campaigns across Canada, including several assignments in Manitoba. His international political work included participation in conferences and initiatives promoting democratic government.

He recalled attending a conference in Istanbul where former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev was recognized for his contribution to democratic reform. Through subsequent contacts, Gordy became involved in educational and political exchanges in Eastern Europe during the period surrounding the collapse of the Iron Curtain. One of his memorable experiences was teaching about democracy at Karl Marx University in Budapest. He reflected on the extraordinary opportunity to discuss democratic principles in countries undergoing major political transformation.

Additional Business and International Projects

Gordy highlighted several other ventures, including: Involvement with the British Columbia Buildings Corporation and public-sector property projects; Ownership and operation of a chain of five newspapers before its eventual sale; Acquisition and restructuring of a portfolio of approximately 22 hotels across British Columbia; Participation in Expo '92 in Seville, Spain, where the family operated two restaurant concepts; International consulting and speaking engagements focused on corporate restructuring and business recovery; Participation in international exhibition and concession opportunities, including projects involving Shanghai and Hanover.

The Seville, Spain, venture was particularly memorable. Although the restaurants did not generate the hoped-for financial return, Gordy described the experience as an enjoyable family adventure, including opportunities for the children to attend school in Spain. He also recalled several business disputes that ultimately produced unexpected financial outcomes.

Rotary International Projects — Thailand

Gordy discussed a Rotary-sponsored humanitarian project in Thailand involving prosthetic limbs for children who had lost legs to landmines. He and Mary travelled to observe and support the project, which provided practical assistance to children facing life-changing injuries. During the visit, Gordy addressed a local Rotary gathering about business restructuring. His comments attracted the attention of a former Thai political leader, leading to an invitation to speak on national radio. He humorously recalled subsequently receiving a call from the Canadian consulate expressing concern about the attention his remarks had generated (he had apparently insulted the King of Thailand).

Gordy also shared a memorable story about attending a Rotary meeting in Thailand around the time women were being admitted to Rotary membership. Mary was the only woman present at that particular meeting. When they returned several years later, the club had a woman serving as president. He reflected on this as an example of the positive changes taking place within Rotary International.

Maple Ridge Mayoral Service and Homelessness Initiative

Gordy spoke about his time serving as Mayor of Maple Ridge, describing it as rewarding but demanding. He concluded that one term was sufficient. One of the community initiatives of which he was particularly proud was a Rotary-supported effort to assist individuals experiencing homelessness. He explained that the program focused on developing personal relationships with people living on the streets, understanding the barriers they faced and helping them access treatment, housing and support services. The initiative reduced the number of people experiencing homelessness from approximately 350 to 43, with further progress achieved through direct individual assistance.

He emphasized that the project's success came from knowing the people involved, understanding their circumstances and helping them navigate the services they needed. The program subsequently received recognition for its results, but he expressed disappointment that changes in administrative practices and policies eventually brought the initiative to an end (and the homelessness back again on the increase).

Family, Refugees and Personal Reflections

Gordy concluded with a moving account of his family and the importance of giving back. He and Mary raised a family that included foster and adopted children alongside their biological children. Later, after their children had moved away, the couple opened their home to families displaced by international conflicts. They hosted Syrian refugees for approximately two years and subsequently welcomed Ukrainian refugees into their home for another extended period. He described these experiences as both enlightening and rewarding.

Reflecting on his recent 80th birthday celebration, he expressed gratitude for the many friends and colleagues from around the world who had been part of his life. He paid particular tribute to Mary, his partner of approximately 50 years, and to Lynda and the many individuals who had helped make his accomplishments possible. His central message was that his achievements were not the result of working alone, but rather of finding capable people, trusting them and working together.

President Eric thanked Gordy for sharing his fascinating experiences and Mary for the considerable work involved in organizing and presenting the photographs, noting the extraordinary number of experiences he had managed to fit into one lifetime (with suggestions that Lynda should be invited to provide her own version of some of the stories!). Eric observed that Gordy's story was a powerful reminder of how much one individual can accomplish through determination, teamwork and a willingness to become involved.

Membership Badges and Club Attendance

Laurie advised that two Rotary buttons (with their magnetic attachments) bearing this year's Rotary International presidential theme "Create Lasting Impact", have been found, and were available to whomever had lost them; and Eric reminded members that he has double-sided adhesive tape available to help secure the buttons because the magnets fail.

Lynda thanked members for consistently reporting their attendance at Rotary meetings and make-up activities, and noted that these reports were being entered into the attendance system; several recent weeks had achieved approximately 70% attendance after make-ups were included.

Happy and Sad Dollars

Michelle Oleschak reported on a recently organized fundraising gala in support of Community Services. After many years of involvement in hospital fundraising events, she had decided to focus on a new initiative for the Community Services Gala that was an outstanding success, selling out and raising approximately $220,000, reportedly double the original fundraising expectation.

Ineke expressed particular happiness at seeing Ana Castillo at our meeting today. Ana was one of our Club's former Exchange Students, from Mexico. Anna finished her education, but always loved Canada. She came back and did a lot of work to become a Canadian Citizen, which she now proudly is!

Ana is now considering joining our Rotary Club as a future member! True Rotary success story! She spoke about her interest in volunteering and community service, and indicated that she would welcome the opportunity to become involved again. Anna said she has loved Rotary as long as she can remember; both her Mom and Dad are Rotarians.

Sharon is either happy or sad … she's not sure which!!! Her son is turning 60 and retiring..... before Sharon retires herself!

President Eric was sad to say that our Sergeant-at-Arms (who will, of course, remain nameless) failed again to put out the coloured tokens to make sure that our members do not sit with the same people each week. **So here is our President's message:**



At Rotary, friendship's what we do,
So here's a little challenge for you!
Before you sit, pick a token bright,
And let its colour guide you right.

If you do, when you arrive,
You'll find new friendships come alive.
So, choose a token, find a seat,
Meet someone new—it's Rotary's treat!

Don't sit with friends you know so well,
There's someone new with a story to tell.
So mix and mingle, share a smile,
And make new friendships, Rotary-style!

Fines

Matt conducted the fines session, explaining that the club needed to make up for a previous meeting when time constraints had prevented the collection of fines and happy dollars.
He began by testing members' attention during Gordy's presentation, asking questions about the distance to Glacier Park Lodge and the number of times Gordy had travelled to Manitoba for political work.



Matt then turned to the history of the Remembrance Day poppy.

He referred to origins of the poppy as a symbol of remembrance, its connection with the battlefields of Europe and its association with the poem *In Flanders Fields*. Members were questioned about the history of the poppy and the military service of the poem's author, Lieutenant-Colonel John McCrae.

(Members discovered that correct answers did not necessarily protect them from a fine to help replenish the club's fundraising collections. Someone suggested that Matt himself should be fined for delivering such an extensive history lesson).

Club Business and Upcoming Events

November 6 - 5:00 pm at the Legion – fundraiser for International Committee

November 10 - Tuesday's Rotary meeting - to be held at the Legion for Veteran's Day November 20

November 12 - Executive meeting @ 5pm @ Centra Law

November 20 - Wine and Charcuterie ng at Mark Foster's

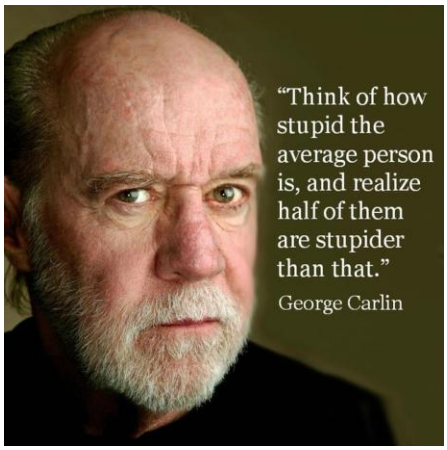
November 25 - Salvation Army Dignity Breakfast - South Bonson Community Centre. Time: 7:30 a.m.

December 9 - Annual General Meeting of our Rotary Club

December 12 - Club's Christmas Party (location TBD)

December 22 - Christmas Gift Exchange - last club regular meeting of the year

President's Closing Quote



Submitted by Laurie Anderson