

THE VALE NEWS

Dec. 22, 2010

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Community Service - a time to promote the importance of Rotary information to club members and awareness of Rotary on the community.

Club Calendar & Speaker Assignments

2011

Jan.	5	Joe Goldstein - Ky Koitzsch - McCullough Barn restoration
	12	Leon Bruno - Program for Autistic Kids
	19	Joe Klimek - Dr. Deborah Richto
	26	Judy Reed
Feb.	2	open
	9	Joe Goldstein - Aaron Locker and Suzanne Slomin

Editor's Note: Please inform Wini (496-6710) of the name of your speaker at least 2 weeks in advance. If you can't get a speaker for that date, please try to trade with another person on the list.

Birthdays: none

Anniversaries:	Jim & Carol Groom	12/24
	Joe & Jean Koch	12/16
	Jack & Barbara Mansfield	12/31
	Jack & Doreen Simko	12/28
	Ralph & Sissy Walker	12/29

It appears that the week between Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve is a popular time to marry for Rotarians. Congratulations to you all!

Our meetings return to the Sugarbush Inn on Jan. 5, 2011.

THERE WILL BE NO MEETING ON DEC. 29TH.

Our meeting today took place at the Lareau Country Inn. It was a very noisy crowd. There were 5 tables with 8 settings each and they were filled. Trish came in late and was standing in the dining room holding a plate of food looking around for a place to sit and Doug got up and gave her his seat as he was finished eating. There was only one guest - David Babic, the new financial advisor at Edward Jones office in Waitsfield.

Meeting News

Audrey thanked Al Barillaro for arranging our Christmas Party. Everything went smoothly and it appeared that all had a good time. After dinner Doug led the group in singing holiday songs, ending with a robust rendition of the 12 days of Christmas.

Audrey thanked Dinsmore for setting up our breakfast meeting with such short notice at the Lareau Country Inn. The space was tight, but they prepared a tasty breakfast and there was no shortage of food.

There is not much Rotary business at this time of year as we are between projects. The Restaurant Raffle is finished and the YBYI project will start next year.

Announcements

Jack Mansfield told us about the Christmas Concert coming up at Harwood Union H.S. on Thursday, Dec. 23rd at 7 P.M. 150 singers will be featured from the Mad River Chorale, The Young Singers Chorus of Vermont and the South Burlington Community Chorus, with Piero & Andrea Bonamico conducting.

Adults \$15, children under 12 are free- tickets at the door.

Ralph reported that the Restaurant Raffle grossed over \$6,000 and netted over \$5,000. All the money has been collected. Ralph and Sissy did a very efficient job.

Mega Bucks - \$302 to the winner. After some confusion over the winning number, it was decided that David Babic held the winning ticket. He drew the 10 of spades and collected \$5.

Happy Bucks

Betty - Thanked Dinsmore for breakfast arrangements, said it reminded her of having breakfast at Grandmas.

Jack Mansfield - family here this week end and next.

Sissy - going to visit family

Ralph - happy skiing here

Stan- celebrating holiday here

Tom Byrne - got a part in Valley Player's next production

Monk - Mad River opening Fri. - Bring rock skis.

Ron Geren - son got into college of choice

Bob Holden -Eli back for Christmas

Jim Leyton- Jackie cooking for big Christmas Dinner

Leon Bruno - spending Jan - April in Hawaii and Japan

Audrey - son-in-law achilles repaired and family coming

Jack Miner - son coming from Pittsburgh, PA

Simko - family coming

Ken Amann - New puppy - looks like a keeper

John Hale - Kids and grandkids coming for Christmas - full house

Dave Ellison - in-laws coming

Dave Koepele - first full day of winter

David Babic - won \$5

PROGRAM

Audrey presented our newest member, Nicholas Laskovski with his badge. His father, Peter Laskowski, said he was in at the beginning of Nick's life and that they lived in Vienna.

At this point Nicholas took over.

My name is Nicholas Peter Laskovski. I was born on February 8th, 1985 in the city of Vienna, Austria. I was born to Peter Laskowski, current resident of Waitsfield, VT and Patricia Drumm Grady of Cooperstown, NY. Both of my biological parents have remarried and I have been fortunate in my life to now have the continued support of four loving parents; Peter, Pati, stepfather Kevin, and stepmother Blaine. I also consider past host parents from an exchange year in Germany to have much parental influence and by that, I now consider myself to have 5 sets of parents. There's nothing like having a great support squad to back you up.

I started school in Vienna and became bilingual by the age of 2. When I was five, my Mom and Dad and older brother Alex, and older sister Kristina packed up and headed for Brussels, Belgium. I started Kindergarten and remained in school in Brussels until the end of first grade. I became fluent in French and became the house translator on family outings. I remember life being full of travel with frequent trips around Europe, including Greece, Switzerland, the Austrian Alps (where I learned to ski), France, and Scotland, among others. My veins have been bred to be on the move, to soak in culture, and to have a keen awareness for my surroundings.

At seven years old my parents divorced and through custody I ended up living with my mother and moving across the pond to Chatham, NY where we owned property. My father had moved to Washington, DC. After just a few months, my mother, brother, sister and I moved permanently to Cooperstown, NY.

It was in Cooperstown that I spent most of my childhood and for the most part I consider it home. Having been in so many different places, enrolling in different schools, with influence from many teachers, in multiple languages, it made no difference that I ended up in a small Upstate NY town. I could be anywhere and happy. Both my parents remarried when I was fairly young and it wasn't long before the family started to grow. With just a couple ceremonies and signatures, I acquired two older stepbrothers, a stepmother, and half-sister by the time I was 10. Life was as typical as it gets. I ran around as a young boy being enthralled with GI Joes, Legos, Supersoakers, baseball cards, all with the European touch of loving breakfast eggs, meat plates, brotchen, and Nutella. At a very young age, I fell in love with sports. I started skiing, playing soccer, basketball, and tennis and becoming captain of each team by high school. I also became interested in music, with percussion and piano being my instruments of choice. Some of my most memorable high school moments were winning section championships in soccer and reaching the state finals in both Tennis and Basketball. As a sophomore, I spent one month with Outward Bound in Maine, canoeing, camping, and hiking for three weeks. This solidified my love for being in the outdoors for extended periods of time.

While I was living most of my life in Cooperstown, my father and stepmother moved to Mexico City. This made things a little more interesting. During my summers between the ages of 12 and 16, I would spend a couple months at a time in Mexico. We traveled around the country frequently and it was at this point that I started picking up Spanish as a fourth language. I remember climbing Mexican ruins, visiting the city of Oaxaca and eating mole covered grasshoppers, and my Dad letting me drive at the age of 14 over one of the highest passes in the country. It included the 2nd and 3rd tallest peaks in Mexico, one being an active Volcano.

I began working at my stepfathers' restaurant at the age of 14. I spent a year washing dishes before becoming a prep cook, line cook, bus boy, waiter, and chef. Needless to say, the restaurant has played a big role in my life and to this very day I still have keen admiration for food, particularly really, really good food. I began volunteering at the Farmer's Museum in Cooperstown, NY at 15 and acted as a young interpreter. I ran a station at the museum and became a master whisk broom maker, supplying the country store with hand-made brooms. At 16, I received my open water certification and entered into early retirement as a lifeguard on Lake Otsego in Cooperstown for the next three years.

After graduating high school, I was accepted into the Rotary International Exchange Program. In 2003, I packed a year's worth of belongings into a bag and headed to Germany. I hadn't spoken German in nearly 15 years so I wasn't quite able to speak when I landed, but it didn't take me more than a couple months to become proficient. This was one of the best years of my life. I immediately joined a semi-pro basketball team and played in basketball tournaments around the country. I made friends like it was job #1. I lived with three different host families throughout the year, each with a different set of kids and house rules. And each with great big hearts who welcomed me and taught me lessons in life when I was really ready to learn them. About once a month, I would meet with other exchange students in the region and we would gather for weekend long conventions to speak on customs, languages, differences, similarities. These moments were extremely special. At the beginning, you can imagine that 100 kids in a room, for the most part all speaking different languages, might pose some communication challenges. By the end, we could communicate in a common language, express ourselves with personal views and soak in the views of others. We broke down barriers together and ultimately created a network of friends which extends to almost every continent in the world.

It was the gap year in Germany which gave me time to really consider what I wanted to study in College. In 2004, I enrolled in the Rubenstein School of Natural Resources at the University of Vermont. Environmental issues and renewable energy became my passion. My year included a renewable energy workshop on the island of Dominica learning and teaching about solar energy, wind energy, biofuels, and other ways to help the island reduce their dependency on import fuels. In 2005, I transferred to Cornell University to pursue those efforts even further. It was in my sophomore year that I also became re-enthralled with the natural world of fungi and it wasn't long before one of my best friends and I founded the student

group called the Cornell Mushroom Cultivators, Collectors, and Connoisseurs. At this point I joined a three-year research experiment which was dedicated to helping Northeast forest owners devise methods for diversifying income from their forest lands. With an emphasis on mushroom cultivation, we also trained landowners on forest farming techniques that included ginseng cultivation, goldenseal, other forest medicinals, annuals, berries, etc. I became a lead intern and project manager of Cornell's MacDaniel's Nut Grove and Cornell's 4,000 acre Arnot Teaching and Research Forest.

In my final semester of college, I shipped off to Singapore to study at the National University of Singapore, primarily focusing on Tropical Ecology and Geographic Information Systems, otherwise known as GIS. Simply, GIS is used to manage environmental databases and are used in land conservation, sustainable development, hydrology, water systems, population dynamics, or basically anything that can be mapped. Think Google Earth, which in itself is a great GIS database. Singapore was my gateway to experiencing the East. I was fortunate to connect with people who brought me to their homes in Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Thailand. They are now some of my best friends. After the semester, on my way home I spent 2.5 weeks traveling by train through India, stopping over in Bahrain with a quick week in Istanbul before returning back to my host family in Germany. It had been 4 years since I had seen them last and my room was still set-up. After 5 days with them, I flew to NY and the next day I attended graduation. About a week later I left for Hawaii and was just a half ocean away from completing an around the world trip. I plan to finish that section soon.

As most post graduates do, I moved back home. In my case however, I moved to a different home, this one here in Vermont. From a living standpoint, my father and I had not been together since I was about 8. I asked him and without a blink he said OK, but one thing still had yet to be done. I brought my things up to the house on Dana Hill, put the big stuff away, grabbed the essentials and we loaded up motorcycles for an epic, one month motorcycle journey to the Northwest and back. We camped the whole way, never once saw rain, and experienced each other as adults for an extended period of time, for the first time.

I began working as a Wilderness Therapist at True North which is conveniently located just 1.5 miles continuing up Dana Hill. My time was spent teaching survival skills to youth at risk, while also helping them to deal with peer and family situations. In my experience, there is no better classroom than nature, where every distraction is a learning tool.

Less than six months later, in January of 2009, I was hired by Alteris Renewables and continue to be employed by them today. We are working throughout New England to help customers install wind and solar energy to offset the rising cost of electricity while promoting alternative energy sources. It is a dream job come true, partly because it is in a beautiful place, and also because I actually get to use what I learned in school, while still learning as I go.

Because I didn't want to stop growing mushrooms, I have founded Dana Forest Farm on our family property and have been hosting cultivation workshops since the spring of 2009. I am still connected with my advisor from Cornell and in 2009 we co-authored a USDA SARE grant in conjunction with UVM in which we were granted \$120,000 over three years to continue our efforts with diversifying farms in the Northeast. I am a current manager for the project. I have also recently applied for another grant that will hopefully allow me to provide Northeast shiitake mushroom growers with specified techniques on cultivation in northern climates. Ultimately, if you start seeing more mushrooms popping up at farmer's markets, grocery stores, or on your hamburgers, you'll have a talking point as to why this is happening now.

I want to be a Rotary member because I love this community. I want to give back to Rotary for everything that they've done for me. I want to connect with more people than just those I see at work or in the daily grind. I want to add to this group and I want to help people in need. This is one of the best organizations on earth and I feel proud to be a part of it.

For everything that has happened in my life, I want to thank my family, my friends, and those who have taken the essential risks for all of us to be where we are now.

After the meeting, Wini & Bette took the Christmas Card money and went shopping for the ingredients of 2 Christmas dinners and other basic foods for two needy families in Warren. Each box of food included an envelope with \$24 and a card signed "from the members of the Mad River Rotary Club". The food was delivered to the Warren Elementary School.

The Vale News

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