



The Award Winning

Malibu Rotary Club Surfwriter

April 8, 2015

Official Newsletter of the Rotary Club of Malibu
Malibu Rotary Club President Margo Neal

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Pictures by Dr. John W. Elman

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Check [Calendar](#) on Malibu Rotary website www.maliburotary.org

- **Rotary International Website: www.Rotary.org**
- **Rotary District 5280 Website: www.rotary5280.org/**

- RI President (2014-2015) Gary CK Huang
- Rotary District 5280 Governor (2014-2015): Elsa Gilham

**“Spare Parts--An Organ Donation Story”
—Why and How Harold Mintz Donated His Left Kidney to
a Stranger**



Harold Mintz, communications director for Shady Acres Entertainment, was the featured speak at the Malibu Rotary Club meeting April 8.

When Harold Mintz, in a humorous manner, describes how he found himself agreeing to voluntarily go into an operating room one day in 2000 at Georgetown University Hospital in Washington DC to have his perfectly good left kidney removed so it could be given to a stranger, a patient whom he never met, who was waiting with another surgical team in the OR of another hospital across the Potomac River, even he has trouble believing he did it—what Rotarians recognize as a lifetime exhibition of “service above self.”

When given all the facts of the situation Harold suggests that what he did was done not because he was crazy, but because he was thinking logically. Encouraging participation of the Malibu Rotary Club audience in his presentation, especially high school guest Amir Mohiuddin, whom Malibu Rotarian Beth had brought this day to the meeting, Harold asks “What is the function of the kidney?” Amir correctly responds that the function of the kidney is to filter the blood.

A functioning kidney is essential for life. Without having a functioning kidney a person needs to either be on dialysis or he or she will die. Usually, each hemodialysis treatment lasts about four hours and is done three times per week for the rest of a person’s life unless they are lucky enough to get a transplant. Most people needing a transplant don’t get one—it’s like winning the lottery.

As Harold looked back on his life there were several pivotal moments that brought him to the moment when he decided to donate his kidney. He remembers that he was impressed by pleas to give blood and donated blood as soon as he was old enough to do so in high school. Also when he was in high school he recalls a day at the dinner table when he was told that his father had spleen cancer. His father died of this disease within 6 weeks.

He is not sure if anything could have saved his father from an early death, but if he could have done something to save his dad he would have done it.

About 79 people receive organ transplants in the United States each day. However, 21 people die each day waiting for transplants that can't take place because of the shortage of donated organs.

Harold asked Amir if he could save his mother’s life by donating his kidney Amir responded affirmatively. The question posed to everyone was what relationship does a person have to be for you to donate a body part to help them survive? Could the relationship be “Just another member of the human race who needs my organ?”

One day in the 1990's Harold viewed a movie on airline flight that featured the story of someone who had gotten an organ transplant. As the credits rolled at the end of the movie there was a telephone number. Harold wrote the number down on a piece of paper and didn't really think about it until sometime later.

One day, cleaning out his wallet, the paper with the organ donation phone number fell out of his wallet and Harold called the number. At that point, it was just to get information.

Harold received a packet in the mail with information about the need for organ donations. The information Harold received was not for living donors, but on the need for prospective donors putting the desire for being an organ donor put on their driver's license and informing their family about donating organs when they die. There was no program for living donors.

In Washington DC, however a new program was being considered—a program for people willing to donate an organ, specifically a kidney, while they are still alive.

Harold thought he would get information about this. He wasn't committed to do it—he just wanted get information. He was invited to ask questions of the doctor that would be performing the surgery. Was it painful? Would it be successful? Would his life be at greater risk, be shortened, subject to hypertension, or in any way be impaired because he has only one kidney instead of two? Will he need to take special medications? Who would get his kidney?

Yes, there would be some pain but it wouldn't be bad. There some risk in any surgery, but kidney transplants are generally very successful. He would not have to take any special medications but the recipient would have to take medications to avoid rejection of the transplanted organ. After his kidney is removed his life should otherwise not be impaired or shortened. When people have kidney disease it affects both kidneys. The only reason someone would have only one bad kidney would be because of a trauma—like an accident that somehow injured the kidney. It is rare that someone would have such an injury. The surgeon didn't know who would get his kidney.

Harold was married and had a child. He hadn't told his family about his inquires about donating a kidney while he was alive. Since he was now truly thinking about actually doing it he now took a deep breath and told his wife.

When Harold told his wife about his idea of donating his spare kidney she initially said absolutely not. He asked her to go with him to talk to the surgeon—he wouldn't do it without her permission—he would give her a 51% vote.

She agreed to talk to the doctor and seeing Harold's desire to do it, agreed to let Harold give his kidney to a needy recipient.

Besides various medical tests that were done on Harold, blood typing, general health exam and so on, Harold was sent to a psychiatrist to be evaluated mentally for choosing to want to donate an organ to a stranger while he is alive.

It is not unusual for a family member to donate an organ to another family member, but for someone to donate an organ to a stranger does not happen too often. Harold passed all physical and mental tests. The coordinated surgeries for donor and recipient were set for a day in the year 2000.

After the surgery was performed Harold did not want to meet the recipient. Why? Because he felt that she might be disappointed. He knew that the area around Washington DC had a large black population—he was worried that the recipient might be disappointed that the donor was white.

The recipient however wanted very much to meet the donor, and 3 months after the surgery, donor and recipient met. Although there were several people in the room where they met Harold knew who she was. Across the room was a small black lady with flowers in her hand. She wanted to meet and thank Harold for changing her life.

She was a wife and mother who had been waiting for a kidney for 20 years. She and her husband had been exiled from Ethiopia where her husband had been imprisoned by the government because of his political views. Yes Harold and the recipient were very different. He was a tall, talkative, Jewish man, who we could see liked to talk to everyone in the room at the Rotary meeting. He described her as a tiny, shy, religious Christian African, who would have probably never talked to Harold were it not for the fact she wanted to thank him for giving her his kidney.

They have remained in contact as they now are celebrating the 15th anniversary of this surgery, and the start of a program of living organ donation.

Harold does not expect most people to do what he did—give up an organ while you are alive. He often speaks at high school about something he believes everyone should do—put on your driver's license that you want to be an organ donor when you die.

April is Organ Donor Month. You can learn more about becoming an organ donor at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services website on the subject: OrganDonor.gov



Harold Mintz at the Malibu Rotary Club meeting April 8 with (L to R) David Zielski, Margo Neal, Dennis Torres, Harold, Tiffany Venable, Fred Cornet, John Elman, Beth Mohiuddin, and Bianca Torrence

Other News and Guests from Last Malibu Rotary Club Meeting

There were multiple guests at the last Malibu Rotary Club meeting. Three of the guests were sons of members on spring breaks from school. New member Tiffany Venable brought her two sons **Brandon** and **Cameron**. Beth Mohiuddin brought her son **Amir** who successfully answered a barrage of hypothetical questions by speaker **Harold Mintz**. Other visitors were former Malibu Rotarians and past Presidents **Rex Levi** and **Dennis Torres**. Also in attendance was **Chris Bashaw** from the *Malibu Surfside News*.

Bill Wishard, Rotary District Special Olympics Chair

Bill Wishard is coordinating Rotary District efforts for the Special Olympics games being staged in Los Angeles July 25 - August 2, 2015. People in Los Angeles, and especially Rotarians, can get involved. Bill spoke about this at the Rotary District Breakfast March 31. The Special Olympics will have 7,000 athletes from 177 countries.

Rotarians to participate as volunteers “Fans in the Stands,” or by sponsoring an athlete. It free to go to the games, and individual Rotary Clubs should each of a captain to have club members go to the sporting events together for a fun group experience. Sponsoring an athlete financially costs \$2500. Some large clubs in District 5280, LA 5 and Wilshire Rotary Clubs have done this. For smaller clubs, like the Malibu Rotary Club, they can join with other clubs to raise the \$2500. The Malibu Rotary Club is contributing \$500, and will join with another club to support an athlete.

Malibu Rotary Club Supports RainCatcher

Clean drinking water is a problem affecting millions of people around the world. A Malibu company, RainCatcher, is trying to solve the problem in an efficient manner. Much of their work has been in Africa. The Malibu Rotary Club along with the Rotary Clubs of Beverly Hills, CA USA and the Rotary Club of Entebbe, Uganda has applied for a Rotary Foundation Grant to assist Raincatcher. There are several videos available on You Tube that show the amazing things Raincatcher is doing bringing clean drinking water to places in Uganda and Kenya where there was previously no clean drinking water.

David Zielski, Executive Director of Raincatcher, makes regular trips to Uganda and Kenya to do Raincatcher installations and maintenance. In February The latest video showing what David and the Raincatcher people are doing in Africa was shown at the Malibu Rotary Club meeting on August 20. A link to the video is now on the MalibuRotary.org website. The direct link to the video is at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=59rzOcM-RL0&list=UUFetq8NgjhXhtkVf0idcQUg>

Calendar (for details on these programs see maliburotary.org)

April 15, 2015

Malibu Rotary Club Assembly

Margo Neal and Bob Syvertsen

The April 15, 2015 meeting of the Malibu Rotary Club, tax day, will be a Malibu Rotary Club Assembly where the club budget for the last quarter of the Rotary year will be discussed.

May 6, 2015

Mati Waiya, Chumash Ceremonial Elder

Wishtoyo Foundation--Preserving Chumash Culture in Malibu

"Wishtoyo was founded in 1997 by Chumash ceremonial elder, Mati Waiya and our mission is to address modern day environmental issues by preserving and utilizing the ancient wisdom of Chumash culture and inspiring the public and its youth to have environmental awareness and responsibility for sustaining the health of our land, air, and water. At the heart of our programming is the Chumash Discovery Village, an authentic recreation of a working Native American village next to Nicholas Canyon Beach in Malibu. We provide education programming to over 3,000 school children per year and we open our doors to the general public one Sunday per month. Our board members include: Beau Bridges (actor), Terry Tamminen (Schwarzenegger administration), Carole Goldberg (Vice Chancellor UCLA), Debora Sanchez (Supreme Court Judge) and David Kaplan (Surfdog Records). For more information about us, you can visit our website at www.wishtoyo.org or see us in the Malibu