

“What are Old People For?”

Totem Report April 12, 2017

By Bret Anderson

President Cathy opened the meeting precisely at 12:25 and brought us all to our feet to hear **Sten Crissey** read a poem and invited us to slow down, adapt to the pace of an elder, look into their eyes, wrinkles on the face are earned through experience while hate can wrinkle the soul.

Linda Rough and **Marli Iverson** led us in the inspirational song created by youngsters in a peace camp: “Let There be Peace on Earth.” Our voices mingled in the key of C for this one.

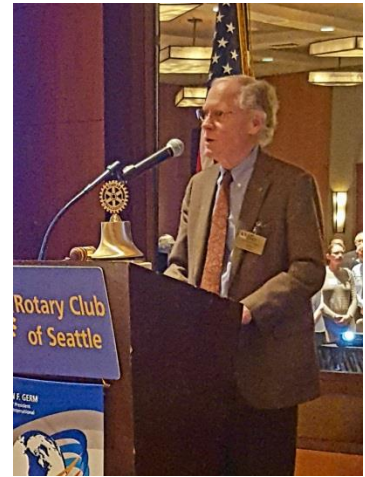
There were great new member presentations by **Rob LoBosco** and **John Steckler** (Is Ballard the new Bellevue?). New member **Patrick Evans** from Ohio likes his new sport of snow-shoeing. Our other ‘new’ member, **Robert Stadler**, has been participating as a corporate member for several months. We are glad to have both of these fine people on board.

We were brought up-to-date on the SRSF fund by **Jim Moore**. The other **Jim, (Duncan)** made a campaign announcement for the TRF.

Lisa Mayfield recognized a group of health care professionals for aging. She also introduced Steve Lee, Senior Policy Advisor for the City of Seattle.

Steve presented us with some interesting facts. Every day, 60,000 baby boomers turn 65. Cities do not ‘grow up’ and can be hostile to people who are older. Lacking a social connection is the equivalent of smoking 15 cigarettes a day in terms of impact on a person’s life time. On the other hand, joining a group (like Rotary) can reduce the odds of dying by as much as one half. City of Seattle Mayor Murray has a new initiative to have the Emerald City more senior friendly. The latest survey is about how to make the sidewalks more elderly friendly. They will look at the infra structure and services from a senior citizen prospective. Currently, Puyallup has been designated as the first age-friendly city. Seattle wants to follow in its footsteps and makes these commitments:

- To engage as many Senior Citizens in the process and to listen to the seniors
- To work with AARP
- To establish Equity Forums





-To set up work groups to help various departments to get started on initiatives that will help make Seattle more age-friendly

The sidewalk survey is to get senior input concerning safety and ease to create an age friendlier environment. Please take the time to give your input.

Dr. Bill Thomas identifies himself as one of the few geriatricians still practicing in America. Like a pediatrician but for older people, he is specially trained to meet the unique healthcare needs of older adults. The Wall Street Journal reports that Dr. Bill is changing the way that the U.S. looks at aging.

Bill started out his presentation explaining how happy is being in a room full of aging people. He calls our meeting a Rotary house call.

“What are old people for?” There sure seem to be a lot of them. Humans are uniquely different from other mammals on this planet because much of their life comes after the age of reproduction. It seems that humans have discovered the value of aging. We have invented grandparents! Can you think of any other animal that has grandparents?

In our culture, we are born cute and told that we can do anything. But, then you turn 28 and it is all downhill, physically. Research says that humans grow and adapt their entire lives and this process really begins at the age of 28. This is when we get the time to find our true selves.

The common idea is that we age just like an old car but this is not particularly accurate. After age 28 we experience a symphony of aging with all organs proceeding at the same rate of decline at about 1% a year. In other words, you have been born to grow old. We can't extend our life span but we can maximize it by eating right and exercising. We should re-connect with other generations to reactivate the ancient engine of intergenerational cooperation and reciprocity.



Aging is a thing of beauty. We are able to move past the frenzy of adult life. It gives us the opportunity to spread wings and become closer to what we are meant to be. Aging is a blessing.

Dr. Bill advises us to go look at our face in the mirror tomorrow morning. It is thought, incorrectly, that aging creates a broken down version of our former selves. Remember that it takes time to have a face with the kind of character your face has.

There is reason to be optimistic. We are growing up in the largest, best educated and healthiest group of elders that has ever been. In many ways, this is a miracle because this is a very important group. Soon, 1 in 5 people will have more than 65 years of living experience.

So, what to do about aging? Relax and enjoy it. Research shows that the 70's are happier than the 60's.



Human beings come of age twice. The first time is adolescence and the second is when we leave adulthood and retire as seniors. This calls for a new style of living that accepts what we are as elders.

