

FROM RUSSIA WITH...? WHAT DOES PUTIN REALLY WANT?

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By Mike Colbrese

President Mark Wright opened the meeting by ringing the bell and introducing **Roberta Nestaas** for the Inspiration of the Day. Roberta asked the members to reflect on their reasons for becoming Rotarians—to serve a higher cause than ourselves together.

Howard Crabtree, accompanied by **Freeman Fong**, led the gathering in “America the Beautiful.” The attendees remained standing while former club president **Nancy Osborne** gave a memorial to recently passed member George Reynolds.

President Mark introduced all visiting Rotarians and guests and then he welcomed **Kim Moore** who introduced prospective members. Mark then invited **Daryl Campbell** to the podium to introduce the club’s newest member, **Harry Short**. Harry, who is now retired from manufacturing, is originally from Peoria, Il. He is a Paul Harris Fellow and he and his wife devote time to Habitat for Humanity and the Boys Scouts of America.

After recognizing the club’s 40 membership anniversaries, Mark brought long time member, **Don Kraft**, to the stage. Don in his usually crafty style, presented “#4 Bits,” a new, weekly feature which will highlight a part of Rotary history. Don provided the backstory for the Rotary Four-Way Test, which was developed by one time Rotary International President Herb Taylor. Herb, who decided to rescue a nearly bankrupt Club Aluminum Company, developed the test to guide the company to rise above the many other similar companies that sold houseware products door to door at that time. The Four-Way Test, which guides Rotarians to this today, lead that company 85 years ago to financial success.

The attendees provided a warm round of appreciation and President Mark introduced long-time Seattle Radio personality, Dave Ross, and Seattle #4 member, **Jill Dougherty**.

Jill is currently a Distinguished Visiting Practitioner at the University of Washington’s Evans School of Public Policy and Governance, a Global Fellow at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, D.C., and a CNN Contributor who provides expert commentary on Russia. She served as a CNN correspondent for three decades, reporting from more than 50 countries. She was CNN’s Moscow Bureau Chief, covering many significant news events in Russia and the former Soviet Union, including

the presidencies of Boris Yeltsin and Vladimir Putin, Russia's post-Soviet economic transition, terrorist attacks, the conflict in Chechnya, and the reported hacking of the 2016 U.S. election. Jill continues to report for CNN as a contributor from Seattle and Moscow regarding current events in Russia.

Through a series of questions, Mr. Ross guided Ms. Dougherty to reveal slowly and thoroughly the Vladimir Putin and Russia under his rule that we have all become more increasingly curious about. She explained that she and Putin had actually been students together in 1971 at Leningrad State University—she as an exchange student and he as a student in preparation for entry in to the KGB. She began covering him as a journalist in 1999. “To understand Putin,” she said, “you must know that his father was seriously wounded fighting the Nazis, that his brother died and his mother almost starved to death during the blockade.” Putin vowed that such conditions would never happen again; therefore, at age 16 he went to KGB Headquarters to join but was told he must first go to law school, which he did.

Ms. Dougherty laid more of Putin’s foundation by stating that he was extremely unhappy with the breakup of the USSR and still considers this a tragedy because Russia’s influence, its power, was over. Therefore, he has been on a mission to restore that power and influence. He not only wants Russia “back at the table,” he wants them leading the discussions. Part of Putin’s strategy to renew Russia’s power is to undermine the United States by focusing on any strife in this country such as racial unrest and high crime rates. Within that strategy is the exportation and exploitation of corruption. Another significant part of that strategy is to support every country’s sovereignty openly stating that each country must respect the other’s independence. He opposes international organizations dominated by the United States, but supports the United Nations where Russia has veto power.

Jill reported that polls in Russia show that Putin is trusted by the Russian people. While we hear stories of wide spread corruption in Russia, Putin’s political machine attempts to down play that by pointing out the corruption in America. She called this “whataboutism.” She kept returning to the theme that any time Putin can, he will attempt to make Russia look stronger by pointing out the US’s failings.

When Mr. Ross asked about the stories regarding Russian’s impact on the recent US election, Ms. Dougherty was very careful to point out that nothing is known for sure at this time. She explained that when the propaganda is reviewed, at a time when Russia seemed concerned that Hillary Clinton was going to win the election, they painted her as a sometimes-crazy sick person. When they thought that Donald Trump might win, other propaganda was used.

She also explained that this is not the first time that claims have been made that elections have been influenced; however, it's the first time that digital tools were used. She also admitted that the US has been accused of influencing elections in other countries.

She was very clear in pointing out that Russia has no idea about how to solve the world's problems.

Following a round of applause from the club, President Mark invited club member Tom Jaffa to the podium who invited everyone to next week's meeting at Bell Harbor to welcome the fleet.

President Wright thanked the meeting participants and wished everyone a great week.