

# President Mark Celebrates His Last Meeting with *Your Rotary Story*

Totem Report June 27, 2018

By Dann Mead Smith

**President Mark** opened his final meeting as president to a round of applause celebrating a great Rotary year! **Carolyn Hojaboom** reflected on the “Five Timeless Truths” from the Serenity Prayer and Mark introduced “his favorite trumpeter,” **Arnie Ness**, who led us in *Zip-a-dee-doo-dah*. We had visiting Rotarians from the Charleston and High Desert clubs.

President Mark then introduced **Don Kraft** for his #4Bits

finale by saying, “I have learned so much from this guy, I am honored to know him.” Don started with, “Today’s #4Bits is my final offering of bits of history and trivia about Seattle 4 Rotary. President Mark wanted you to know more about your heritage, so we scattered eight editions throughout the year and called it #4Bits – bits of Seattle 4 History.” Don thanked everyone involved in putting #4Bits together this year: Miriam Lisco, Mariah Kimpton, Kevin Crane and his wife, Midge.

Today’s #4Bits was a “final exam” to check how much we had learned about our club’s history. Don asked questions on an uncomplimentary cartoon the Seattle PI ran in 1909; photos of Mistery Pinkham and Skeel and also Herb Taylor, who developed the Four-Way Test; Supreme Court Justice Charles Z. Smith and Luther Carr; the first woman member of our club, Mickey Lahiff; and many others.

He ended with us all standing and cheering President Mark, “two bits, four bits, six bits, a dollar, all for Mark Wright, stand up and holler!”

President Mark then thanked his leadership team this year. He asked all the Rotary board members to stand, and thanked the committee chairs, Kathy Williams and Roberta Greer for leading the Rotary foundations, Don Kraft for keeping the history of our club “vital and alive,” and Tim Bendokas for organizing the Rotary anniversary recognitions, saying, “thanks for making them special.”

Mark mentioned how he first became involved with Rotary in Spokane in the early 90’s thanks to Dean Merritt who introduced him to a Spokane Rotary club. He said that “he immediately fell in love with that group and fell in love with Rotary.” He challenged us to think about people in our life who



we would want “to connect to our amazing group.”

He then introduced a panel of four of our members to reflect on their Rotary story, **Navi Bains, Faouzi Sefrioui, Nancy Osborne, and Ben Linford.**

President Mark asked each of them how they ended up in Seattle and how they were introduced to Rotary.

**Navi** was born in the US but moved to India at an early age and learned about Rotary in high school back in the US when she joined Interact and was “amazed by their work on polio and inspired by their work in India.” She led the UW Rotaract club and realized that the Rotary network was huge and “if there is something you want to do, you can do it at Rotary.” She was Rotarian of the Year for District 5030 three years ago. She also mentioned the challenges of recruiting younger members due to the time and financial commitments involved and that our local clubs are working on that.

**Faouzi** was born in Morocco and moved to Casablanca where he grew up. He then moved to France and fell in love with Seattle after visiting it forty years ago. He was introduced to our club by Mike Verchot nine years ago. He is an active member of the International, Peacebuilder, and Mentoring Committees. He told the story of how he learned about philanthropy and service from his father who helped him with providing basic services to his school friends. He took this philosophy with him when he moved here and started a program that sent computers to Africa which has now grown to sending 5,000 computers to schools there.

**Nancy** moved here from San Francisco for a job opportunity. She was club president during our centennial year and has represented Rotary at the Gates Foundation and Rotary International events. She was first introduced to Rotary after speaking to the Shoreline Club which she was then asked to join. She mentioned that the Centennial was a great time to reflect on the power and influence of Rotary and to look at the next project after polio. She shared her conversation with Bill Gates Sr. at the time who said that we needed to now focus on eradicating malaria. She was recently in London for a high-level meeting with Commonwealth leaders discussing malaria eradication. She mentioned that Rotary is providing the “soldiers on the ground for this effort.”



**Ben** joined Rotary out of college after his boss introduced him to our club, but he was familiar with Rotary via his grandmother who was the second woman to join the Anchorage club. He talked about the experience of going to India and providing polio vaccines on National Immunization Day and how Rotarians were the center of the parade in the village. He also talked about his passion for education and service with the *Rotary Winners for Life* program.







President Mark then called the past club presidents (there were 14 present) to the front of the room for **the “pass the gavel” ceremony.**

The gavel was handed to **Cindy Runger** who said she “got chills as the gavel was passed down the line” and how honored she was to serve as



president in the coming year. She just returned late last night from the Rotary International conference in Toronto which was a “celebration of service.” She invited us to her first meeting on July 11<sup>th</sup> and thanked Mark for “a wonderful year that raised our profile in the community and let us tell our stories. You are a class act and will be a tough act to follow.”

We then viewed a video from past president **Cathy Gibson** who was unable to be at today’s meeting since she was in Toronto for the Rotary International Conference. [Click here to see her message.](#)



Past President **Sue Nixon** then presented Mark with his past president badge, pin, and a special plaque.

**President Mark** closed the meeting with, “I wish I had a teleprompter... This year went faster than I thought it would... We started the year with Howard Behar telling us to know who you are and then you will do the right thing because you know who you are.”



Mark said he has “learned and grown as a leader and learned about all of us.” He said he will “cherish this as a highlight of his life.” He is glad that we are a “more open and diverse and inclusive club. Newer members, this is your club too; take action to bring about change. Stay checked in. Service will never go out of style. Thank you for supporting me and choosing to make a difference. Serving says volumes about who you are. Thank you for allowing me to serve as your president.”