



ROTARY SPOKES

Rotary Club of Ventura

Est. May 1, 1919

“The Friendliest Club in Rotary”

September 14, 2023

J. RYAN STRADAL



Bestselling author J. Ryan Stradal gave a presentation at our meeting September 13, 2023. He was introduced by Madhu Bajaj, who met him at an American Association of University Women’s annual Authors’ Day event (which she highly recommends).

Ryan grew up in Minnesota, and all his books are set there. When his father was transferred to Japan, his mother went with him. Ryan was born when they returned to the U.S. His mother enrolled in college when Ryan was little, and to make the most efficient use of her time, she read him her college reading assignments as bedtime stories, even though he was too little to understand them yet. She loved reading and wanted to write a novel, a goal she never accomplished.

Ryan earned a college degree in radio, television, and film. He then moved to Los Angeles and worked in television at VH1 and MTV News. He learned to edit, shoot, and handle rights and clearances and standards and practices. He wrote “unscripted” TV like *The Bachelorette*, and loved his time in the Canadian Arctic working on *Ice Road Truckers*.

His mother’s death inspired him to write his first novel, *Kitchens of the Great Midwest*. He asked himself what she would have written if she had lived. He described the book as “a recipe for a human being.”

His second novel, *The Lager Queen of Minnesota* is a tribute to women involved in the brewing industry, even though one of them hates beer.

His latest novel, *Saturday Night at the Lakeside Supper Club*, was released April 2023 and became a national bestseller the first week. He told us about the special status of supper clubs in the Midwest, and read some passages from the book describing them.

Ryan commented that when you write a novel, you are making up a world. He creates a world he would like to live in.

MEETING SEPTEMBER 13, 2023

Attendance: 39.

Lunch: We enjoyed a Mexican lunch of chicken enchiladas, refried beans, rice, green salad, fruit, and carrot cake for dessert.

Club member and city councilmember **Doug Halter** gave the first of his monthly updates about the city. He addressed two issues: the general plan and affordable housing. The general plan includes issues like where transportation, parks, housing, etc., will be, the size of buildings, what type of businesses we want, etc. Affordable housing remains a challenge. City residents go off to college but are unable to return due to housing costs. The state dictates aspects of housing policy, like requiring accessory dwelling units, and density bonuses that allow construction of bigger, taller buildings that include affordable housing. Any building with six or more units must include 15 percent affordable housing.



But due to building costs and current building code requirements, affordable housing remains difficult. Doug had more to share but was out of time, with Neal giving increasingly frantic gestures to finish up.

Introductions/Flag salute/Inspirational message: Sandy Lassila. She shared a Chinese proverb: “If you want happiness for an hour — take a nap.
If you want happiness for a day — go fishing.
If you want happiness for a year — inherit a fortune.
If you want happiness for a lifetime — help someone else.”

Song: Jessica, Bev and Sandy led singing of “America the Beautiful.”

Announcements:

President Neal Lassila: Beachside Bash: You can sign up to help judge the Steak Cookoff (judging class the Friday evening before). You can also compete in the cookoff. Contact Neal if interested. We have received some great cash and in-kind donations for the event, including some top-notch tequila that we will monetize somehow and use to buy bargain bin tequila for margaritas. **See our full page ad in this and next week’s *Ventura County Reporter!***

Kristin Taylor: (1) The Salvation Army food distribution is every Saturday. You can help pack the food Friday at 10 a.m. at 650 S. Petit Ave., Ventura.

(2) Coats for Kids will begin committee meetings on Sept. 27 at 11:30, Poinsettia Pavilion. We already have four \$250 sponsors to cover expenses: the Milais family, Doug Halter and Randy Encinas, Kellye Patterson and Ellyn Dembowski (Team Dembowski), and the family of Larry Dawes. Volunteers include Saurabh Bajaj (Fast Signs), Sally Crain, Hilford Moving and Storage, and Danny Quintana.

Saurabh Bajaj: Comedy Hour at our next luncheon meeting (Sept. 20). Send him an email if you want to participate in the competition. Jokes should be rated PG or PG-13 and maximum one minute.

Madhu Bajaj: (1) Sign up to attend the evening event for Steve Bennett and/or the reception for District Governor Marta Golding Brown. See details in Upcoming Events, below.

(2) Holiday Party for members and their families will be December 1. Location and other details to be announced.

(3) Max the Virtual (and physical) Idea Box is lonely! Your suggestions are welcome!

Bev Ward auctioned off spots to do **Fining** at future meetings.

Hutch Hutchinson presented a **Paul Harris Plus 2 pin** to **Margi Wray**. Although she has been a member for less than four years, she has already served as our Club President! Paul Harris awards recognize contributions to the Rotary Foundation. An example of the Foundation's work is the Kangaroo Mother Care project funded by a Rotary Foundation global grant to the Rotary Clubs of Mbarara, Uganda, and Calgary at Stampede Park, Alberta. The project helps prevent leading causes of death in premature babies: hypothermia, malnutrition, and infection. The grant funds cloth wraps to maintain body temperature through skin-to-skin contact between babies and their mothers or other family members, training for health professionals and families, improved nutrition, equipment, and bed space. Just one way your Rotary Foundation contributions improve our world.



Happy Dollars. Ken Leandro questioned a bill he received from the city for law enforcement at the Fireworks event. Not only did he confirm it had already been paid, but the city discovered and refunded a \$1,200 overpayment!

Fining: Dan Holmes soaked members by asking impossible questions about California Rivers. (They were only impossible if, like me, you don't know anything about rivers.)

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!	
Sandy Lassila September 11	Mike Anderson September 13
Steve Dato September 13	John McConica September 17
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CELEBRATING CLUB ANNIVERSARY	
Aaron Campbell September 15 2 years	

UPCOMING EVENTS

(For more complete and up-to-date information, check the ClubRunner app on your phone, or our website)



Sept. 20 lunch meeting: Comedy Hour. Member joke contest hosted by Saurabh Bajaj. Email Saurabh to sign up.

Sept. 23: End of Summer Beachside Bash, national ribeye steak cookoff, live bands, brew fest, car show, food trucks, grilling demonstrations, and more. San Buenaventura State Beach, 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. More information at venturabeachsidebash.com.

Sept. 27 Coats for Kids committee, 11:30 a.m., Poinsettia Pavilion.

Sept. 27 lunch meeting: Dr. Sevet Johnson, CEO of the County of Ventura.

Sept. 28: Board Meeting, Crowne Plaza Hotel, 12:00 – 1:30 p.m.

Sept. 28: Meet Assemblymember Steve Bennett, 5:30 – 6:30 p.m., in the Crista McAuliffe Room, Ventura Unified School District Office, 225 W. Stanley Ave., Ventura. Short program at 6:00 followed by question-answer period. Refreshments served. RSVP to Madhu.

Oct. 3: Reception for District Governor Marta Golding Brown, Portside Clubhouse, 1196 Portside, Ventura, 5:30 – 7:00 p.m. RSVP to Madhu.

Oct. 4: Board members meet with District Governor, 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m., Cañada Larga Room, Poinsettia Pavilion.

Oct. 4 lunch meeting: District Governor Marta Golding Brown.

Oct. 11 lunch meeting: Justin Grooms: Diversity Equity, and Inclusion.