As we enjoy this 41st Annual Sponsorship of the Concord Band’s Spring Concert, Concord Rotarians are realizing that they have been on a high speed train since our 1931 charter. In recent years the Rotary train has made more and more stops in an unending desire to demonstrate “Service Above Self” in projects and events, locally and globally.

This Rotary Year, President Sharon Spaulding has taken her cue from Past Presidents in raising our Club to new levels of accomplishment with a dynamic passion to serve and succeed.

Internationally, her train has made stops in Kenya, Haiti, Ivory Coast, and Cambodia, to mention a few of the destinations. Rotary District and International matching grants have multiplied local donations to make a serious impact in implementing these important initiatives. “Every Year Every Rotarian” is an annual campaign that requires an average donation of about $125 per member to qualify Rotary Clubs to benefit from matching grants.

And now our Club can announce a dramatic approval in recent weeks. After dozens of meetings with various Town boards and commissions, a “Certificate of Appropriateness” has been issued by the Historic District Commission to proceed with our five year campaign known as “U.S.S. Concord Bell”. Renamed as “U.S.S. Concord Bell 2016”, we will expand and rejuvenate the Veterans Memorial by displaying the Bell of the 1923 Light Cruiser U.S.S. Concord, a ship which fired the last salvo of World War II and was awarded one battle star. We will be upgrading the entire area, highlighted by new plantings, a drinking fountain, and new flags, in addition to the display of the Bell.

We’re grateful to the Concord Preservation Committee for approving a substantial grant to fund 50% of the cost of the project. Final approval will occur at this year’s Town meeting. This will be at least our tenth major community service undertaking by our Club since 1981, with a value of at least $1 million in 2016 dollars.

We’re also forever appreciative and thankful for the many volunteer hours invested by Past President and Director, Atty. Henry Dane. He also made a similar effort on behalf of “Helipad 91” at Emerson Hospital and “War Memorial ‘98”.

As was the case in the “War Memorial ‘98”, to expand and rejuvenate the then 1952 World War II memorial, we will once again encourage individuals and organizations in the community and beyond to participate in the necessary financial support and the actual construction. We will especially welcome the involvement of Concord’s many veterans from all of our military services.

But the high speed train continues on its mission. The Thomas R. Huckins Memorial Golf Tournament, originating in 1988, funded a major portion of the Club’s initial contribution to Polio Plus. This Rotary International effort to permanently eradicate Polio and five other vaccine preventable diseases, has inoculated millions of children in a nearly 30 year campaign that started in the Philippines.

We are extremely close to success, as Pakistan and Afghanistan are the only two countries with active cases of Polio in the world! The Gates Foundation has poured millions of dollars into this international undertaking, which also involves the World Health Organization and many

governments. In recent years the focus of The Huckins Tournament has evolved into supporting scholarships for Concord and Carlisle students, in addition to funding part of our Club’s annual programs. For a number of years the Rotary Club of Concord has continued to be the largest contributor to these vital scholarships.

We’re all hanging on for dear life to the Spaulding Express, never shocked at yet another new event being added to an already super active year. One of our most meaningful events this year was last fall’s inaugural ceremony at the Trinitarian Congregational Church to honor the fine service of the Concord Fire and Police Departments. On March 8th the more than 10 year,   
bi-monthly Bristol Lodge meal was produced by Chr. John Dow’s committee, using 60 pounds of corned beef! Squeezed in on March 6th was a skating social, attended by District Governor Jim Fusco. Not so many days before that during perhaps only cold, snowy stretch of the winter, the first Skiathon race was held at the Great Brook State Park cross country facility in Carlisle for the benefit of the Ivory Coast project.

On March 19th we held the Annual Minute Man Arc carnival at their facility in Concord. Last fall, with support from neighboring Clubs and a District grant, we constructed a golf green for the enjoyment of the participants at the facility. We also have held bowling and golf outings for this Concord based human services organization.

Joint meetings and projects with the Bedford, Lexington, and Nashoba Valley Clubs, and Concord’s Lions Club have been a regular feature of this year’s busy schedule.

In October, we held our first Club program in the magnificent auditorium of the brand new Concord Carlisle High School. A dynamic, inspirational and motivational program was given by an internationally known celebrity speaker. It is hoped that this type of program can be considered in the future.

The Memorial Day Ice Cream Spectacular was organized at the Bedford VA Hospital in addition to Pres. Elect Steve Kirk’s charter fishing day for veterans. Steve also conducted fly tying instruction in past years at the VA. In November, we organized a buffet brunch for some of those same Veterans.

Last fall we joined with Lexington in packaging nearly 10,000 meals for “Stop Hunger Now”. “Cradles to Crayons” and Concord’s OpenTable continue to be regular beneficiaries of our Club’s annual programs.

On April 11th the annual Joint Meeting with the Lexington Club will be held in Lexington, just a few days prior to the celebration of Patriots Day in both towns. Concord Rotarians will once again march in the Concord Parade, an over ten year tradition in our organization.

On April 16th we will participate in this year’s Concord town wide cleanup, an over 20 year Club operation to pick up road trash and debris on Cambridge Turnpike.

Upcoming in May is the Annual Class Act, an event at CCHS to recognize the unsung and somewhat unheralded seniors in the many activities and clubs at the high school.

Additional emphasis on young people is evidenced by our outstanding Interact Club, a Rotary sponsored service organization for students at CCHS. The members have their own meetings and projects, sometimes joining with our Club at scheduled events. Also in the works is an effort to organize a similar club at the Carlisle Middle School.

And yet to come this year is the Rotary Youth Leadership Award (RYLA) program for high school sophomores. We will be sending twelve students to this highly praised annual District 7910 event.

Space doesn’t allow covering a number of this year’s project and events. We’re thankful to our leadership and Board of Directors for being “hands on” at every turn. And now we’re concentrating on building the Club membership to the long range goal of 100 by having an average of one new member inducted every week from March 1st to June 30th.

Tonight we’re most appreciative of the talented musicians in the Concord Band, led by Director James O’Dell; and the outstanding performance by Vocal Soloist, Amanda Carr.

On June 23rd, Steve Kirk will be installed as the 85th President of the Rotary Club of Concord. We’re assured of continued success with his steady hand ready to take control of the speeding train, as it continues making important stops along the route of Rotary’s annual programs. Come join us for the trip!

Special thanks to the many individuals and organizations that have supported us over the years. We trust you approve of the ways we invest your backing.

Dick Hale,

President 1978 - 1979