



## Rotary Opens Opportunities

1944-1945 Bob M Garrett  
2012-2013  
1992-1993 John  
1962-1963 Holly  
1951-1952 George Schaefferman  
1979-1980 Alan Ater  
1980-1983 Russell Miller  
1938-1939 TH Black

**Blackwelder**  
1976-1977 Tom Strunk  
1966-1967  
1955-1956  
1980-1981 Phil Blackburn  
1955-1966 Dale Leipper  
1972-2008 Ron Hammond  
Steve Bledsoe  
1976-1977 Dr. EP Humbert

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1924-1925 DL Wilson  
1926-1927 GH Buchanan  
1928-1929 CC Doak  
1930-1931 Phil  
and

1974-1975  
1961-1962  
1937-1938  
1996-1997 Robert Walker  
1964-1965 Wesley Summers

1927-1928 Oak McKenzie

1971-1972 Oak McKenzie  
1996-1997 Robert Walker  
1984-1985 Wesley Summers

Chuck Herman 1974-1975  
 Mary Kaye Moore 1991-1992  
 Paul Van Riper 1991-1992  
 Dr. Tom King 1991-1992  
 Gene Supphen 1991-1992  
 Bob Holmes 1978-1979  
 Dave Johnson 2001-2002  
 Elton Abbott 2001-2002  
 Hugh Walker 2001-2002  
 Joaquin Meiller 2001-2002  
 Charles Gilliland 1978-1979

1951-1952 Vincent Johnson  
1947-1948 Joe Woolket  
1995-1996 Jerry Shook  
2003-2004 Mike Jones  
1922-1923 Art King  
1992-1993 MC Nolace  
1934-1935 Bunny Williams  
1937-1976 Charles Pratt  
1978-1979 Gilliland  
1997-1998 Johnson  
2001-2002 Elton Abbott  
1999-2000 Dave Walker  
2002-2003 Meriller

1935-1938 Re LA Wilson 1945-1948  
1938-1939 Ross M Shawwood  
1939-1942 AM Waldrup  
1942-1943 HW Ritchey  
1943-1944 Re House  
1944-1945 Joe Vin  
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1948-1949 Tom Dyal  
 1946-1947 Mc Atkins  
 1998-1999 Mike Southernland  
 1972-1973  
 1970-1971 Mike McSavich  
 1923-1926 Dr Jon W Black  
 1943-1944 Dr De P Trotter  
 1923-1930 HH Williams  
 1988-1989  
 1943-1944 John S  
 1914-1915 Walter Hinkle  
 1984-1985 John Rogers  
 1967-1968 A Cecil Wamble  
 1934-1935 Alister Waldron  
 1926-1928 Chas F

Joseph Hill  
1920 Loan  
1940-1941 WR

2016-2017 Joseph Hill  
 2019-2020 Joan O  
 1940-1941 WR McCullough  
 Justin Kerley  
 Lawrence  
 Casey  
 1980-1981 M  
 2020  
 1989-1990 Ed Wagner  
 1986-1987 MO Lawrence  
 1983-1984 Curtis Lard  
 1981-1982 James Stracener  
 1957-1958 Bud Barlow  
 1941-1942 Dr F

1973-1974 Austin Kerley  
1942-1943 Dr WL Lawrence  
1932-1933 JF Casey



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Bryan  
**Rotary**  
Club



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## THE ROTARY CLUB OF BRYAN, TEXAS CENTENNIAL | 1921-2021

# A President's Perspective

BY JOE CERAMI

2020-2021 President, Bryan Rotary Club

**WHAT IS ROTARY?** A Dynamic Rotary Club in a Dynamic Community

The Rotary Club of Bryan, Texas was formally admitted to Rotary International in May of 1921, with 25 members. At that time Rotary International had been in existence since 1905, when Rotary was founded by a Chicago lawyer, Paul Harris, and three friends.

Paul Harris's biographer points out that Harris and his friends were concerned about the changes that were occurring in their city as people began moving from rural to urban areas. The founding Rotarians wanted to provide an opportunity for newcomers to find a club that provided a "small town" sense of community.

From those humble beginnings, Rotary has grown into an organization whose purpose is to provide humanitarian service and to advance goodwill and peace around the world. Today there are over 35,000 member clubs worldwide, in more than 200 countries, with a membership of 1.2 million Rotarians. Rotary remains a non-political and non-religious organization

open to all.

### ROTARY'S CORE VALUES

At its core, Rotarians express a commitment to the Four Way Test. The test was developed by a business leader in the 1930's who wanted an ethical yardstick as a guide to right conduct for his employees. The businessman became a Rotary International Director and the test was adopted by Rotary in the 1940s. At every weekly meeting, our Rotarians recite The Four-Way Test of the things that we think, say or do:

1. *Is it the truth?*
2. *Is it fair to all concerned?*
3. *Will it build goodwill and better friendships?*
4. *Will it be beneficial to all concerned?*

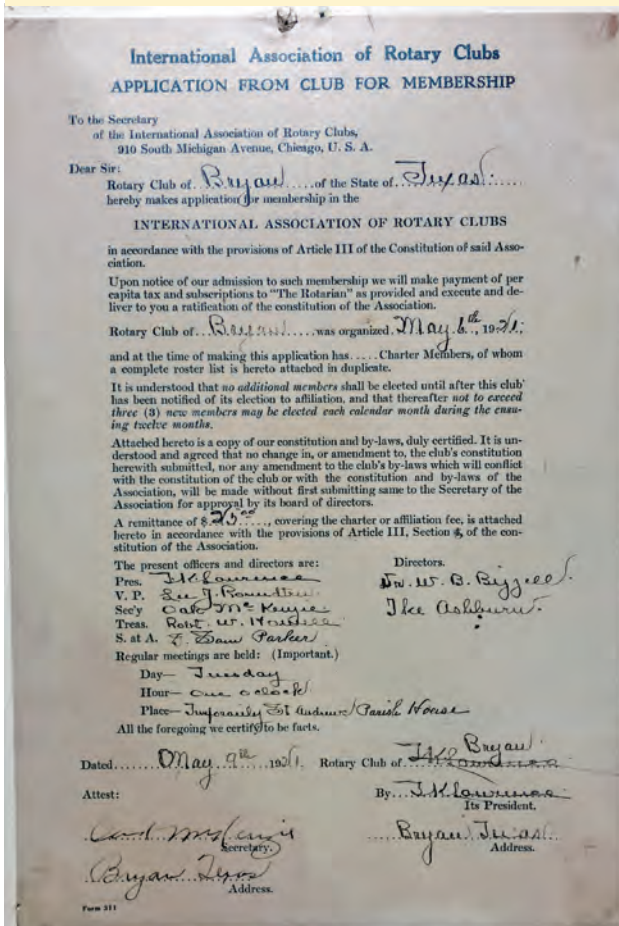
The core values of Rotary are what helps bind its members - in the spirit of goodwill and friendship - to serve our community.

### WHAT DO ROTARIANS DO?

The two, longstanding mottos of Rotary are "Service Above Self" and "One Profits Most Who Serves Best." Rotary International stresses seven areas of focus for the many



Joe Cerami, new Rotarian, landscaping our joint splash pad project with the Aggeland and College Station Rotary Clubs at Kingdom Ranch in Snook in 2011.



The original charter of the Bryan Rotary Club dated May 9, 1921, and signed by the 1st Club President, T.K. Lawrence, housed at the Carnegie Library archives.

projects that Rotary sponsors worldwide. Most long-standing and generous has been the Rotary "Polio Plus" campaign that has helped to eliminate Polio in all but two countries.

Throughout its one-

hundred year history, Bryan Rotary and its Rotarian volunteers have committed time and resources, locally and internationally, in each of seven areas of focus. Recent examples are:

1. *Promoting peace*



President Joe posing with Rotarian friends celebrating the 1st of 100 trees planted in recognition of a century of service by Bryan Rotary Club from 1921-2021.



President-Elect Joe, with Past-President Bunny Pratt, volunteering to replace dangerous cooking stoves in an impoverished Guatemalan compound near Antigua in January 2020.

- *Flags Across Bryan; Field of Valor 1,000 Flags Salute to Service in Veterans Park and Brazos Valley Veterans Memorial*

2. *Fighting disease - Brazos County Community COVID-19 Vaccination Hub*
3. *Clean water, sanitation, and hygiene - Healthy Homes Guatemala with Habitat for Humanity*
4. *Saving mothers and children - Community Grants*
5. *Supporting education - Scholarships and Teacher Grants*
6. *Growing local economies - Annual Rotary 10 Business Performance Awards*

7. *Protecting the environment - 100 Trees in Bryan Park (Under Review)*

### THE NEXT 100 YEARS

Just as in 1921, it's difficult to predict what the future will bring. Given Rotary International's history, vision, values, and purpose, we can expect that three commitments will continue: (1) A commitment to serve our community; (2) A commitment to our Four-Way Test; and (3) A commitment to fun and fellowship. The people, projects and programs will evolve over the next century as we will continue to be a dynamic Rotary Club in the dynamic community that is Bryan-College Station and Rotarians will continue to be people of action.



# Merrill Green, Rotarian

BY ROBERT CESSNA

Current Rotary President Joe Cerami, Coach Merrill Green and Coach Gary Blair.



## Who invited you to join Rotary in 1974?

Dr. Wesley Summers, our superintendent of schools in Bryan at the time. It certainly was a good thing for me. It was good PR for the school district and I ended up enjoying every bit of it.

## You were elected President of Bryan Rotary Club in 1980. What's your most memorable moment of your Presidency?

I remember we had such great members in the club at that time. And for that matter, we still do as far as I'm concerned. I remember when my name was mentioned to be brought up as possible president, I went to one of those great members - John Hill - and I said John, you're going to have to help me to be president, because right now, I'm coaching football, I'm athletic director and with all the other things going on, I just don't think I can do the right thing for the club if I don't have some help. So it worked our real well with their help.

## You had the privilege of serving as a Rotary District Governor. Share your experiences of traveling to other clubs to learn about their projects.

Well, it was quite an experience. Right about that time, our house burnt down. Your support group is always a very integral part of your district governorship. And there's not a human being in the world who was better at that than [my wife] Bonnie.

Now, she did as good a job as she could, but she had to spend time on helping us get our house back in shape so we could get moved back into it. So, that was one part of it. I certainly developed a love for Southeast Texas during that time. I met men and women of all ages and persuasions that were part of the Rotary Club who were very, very meaningful to it. It was a very good experience for me to be able to feel like I was part of a great organization such as Rotary and I had a great deal of help. I traveled quite a bit, which was surprising. I don't know how many miles a week I traveled. I would always meet with all 41 clubs. I had to go to all their functions. I was a very integral part of the district at that time.

## Did you ever have the chance to travel abroad because of Rotary?

That was a big plus. I've told people I've traveled, especially around the Europe area and every nickel of it was on Rotary. Bonnie and I went to the international convention which was in east France. I also went to a club in Scotland that we were affiliated with, kind of a brother club. The guy who was the district governor there, he actually was the head of the whole police force in Scotland. So when we went there, we got a lot of travel, seeing a lot of things. Those are places I couldn't have gone had it not been for Rotary.

## Polio eradication has been Rotary International's keystone effort since 1983. Why is that





Merrill Green and Michelle Wagner - Yeatts

### import to you?

We have been known for that, even getting Bill Gates involved and others. It has been our main thrust for all those years. And about the time we thought we got it done, there would be a country like Pakistan that would pop up with a Polio victim. And then we'd say, no we haven't done it yet. And I don't think we still can say that we've eradicated it totally. That's always a major part of a district governor's [duty], raising funds. A lot of young people today don't know a lot about Polio, but it was every bit like the pandemic today. They didn't know what to do with it and what to do about it. Then, Jonas Salk invented the Polio vaccine [in 1953] and it wasn't long after that the Rotary, our Rotary International got involved with the United Nations. All of those institutions were involved, but we took it on as our major project for many years. You could donate to fighting Polio and the Rotary would match your grant.

### What guiding Rotary principle do you think still

### matters as much today as when you joined?

What has always mattered to me is that I don't have the ability to make major influences on things in the world, but when you join an organization like Rotary, it gives you that opportunity to help affect major issues in the world. It's a world-wide institution more than anything else. When I joined, my father had been a member in Chickasha, Oklahoma. That's what got me thinking about it. I've got to brag a little bit, that out in the garage on the wall I have a Chickasha Rotary Boy of the Year award. Now, doesn't that impress you? But looking back, starting with that, I became to realize more and more what an affect we had on the world. And I thought many, many times, if they could use the same approach to getting peace in the world, as the Rotary does ... for instance, practically every community has a Rotary Club. In the past, they said they were always looking for the leaders in the community. In fact, they used to have it

where you could have only one member of one profession in your club. If I was a doctor of optometry there could not be another doctor of optometry in our club. It gave such a great broad approach. I said if every community felt about the world the way Rotary does, [things would be better]. Otherwise, there's [often] so much politics involved.

### Why should people today want to join the Rotary Club of Bryan?

I'm glad you asked. As I said before, if you want to affect the world there's no better way to do it than to join an organization where that's their goal. I do feel like I've been effective. I'm not as involved as I used to be, but I still go to meetings. And by paying my dues, I'm affecting things that are going on all over the world. I can't think of anything better than that, except your church. It's been that way to me and it has really broadened my whole outlook on the world.

# Congratulations

## Bryan Rotary Club



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THE ROTARY CLUB OF BRYAN, TEXAS

# Teacher Mini Grants

BY CRYSTAL DUPRE



Bryan Rotary distributed \$10,000 to Teacher mini-grant awardees to enrich learning opportunities for elementary students for 2020-2021.



Community education grant presentation to the Boys & Girls Clubs of the Brazos Valley for computer lab equipment.

The Bryan Rotary Club has a long standing tradition of giving back and supporting many wonderful endeavors. One of such cases is the teacher mini grant program.

Each year in September we begin reaching out to principals of all Bryan schools, both private and public, to announce that it is once again time to submit grants. The principals disperse the information and encourage their teachers in grades Pre K-5th to participate in the program by submitting a grant request up to \$1,000. Teachers then identify an area of opportunity and begin working on their grant application.

The grant process includes identifying the project and gathering the appropriate information so that the grant committee can rank submitted grants. The grants are submitted with information on goals/objectives; project description/activities; originality/creativity; ability to evaluate the success of the project and the proposed budget. Consideration is also given to the number of students the grant will serve and if it is a one-time use or has yearly shelf-life.

Not long ago I was doing some research

in The Bryan-College Station Eagle on Rotary and found an article listing the current year winners of the Bryan Rotary Teacher Mini Grant program. The year was 2000 and the club had awarded 10 teachers with grants of \$200 each. Twenty one years later and we have grown the total award amount from \$2,000 per year to over \$10,000 in grants each year. Depending on our fundraising efforts, we have awarded up to \$15,000 per year in grants.

After grants are awarded, materials ordered and plans implemented we invite the recipients to our Wednesday luncheon to share a little bit about their grant and how they have used it in the classroom. Some of the grants funded this year were:

"iRead! You Read! We All Read for Success!"

"Science Looks Like Magic, but What is Really Happening?"

"SOAR & Accelerate: Stop, Open and Read"

These are only a small sample of the many ways teachers are innovating to serve and reach their students with creative strategies. The Bryan Rotary is proud to be part of these exciting adventures.



## BRYAN ROTARY



**GROWING THE  
COMMUNITY  
THROUGH GIVING**  
**\$244,850 GRANTED  
FROM 2011 - 2020**



**Teacher Mini-Grants**  
**\$87,550**



**Community Grants**  
**\$84,800**



**Student Scholarships**  
**\$72,500**

**Rotary**   **Rotary Opens  
Opportunities**



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# Bryan Rotary 10

## Business Performance Awards



**Keystone Millwork, Inc. has been a Rotary 10 awardee in multiple decades of this 27 year old program.**

The economy and energy in the Bryan/College Station area is fueled largely by small businesses, and the Bryan Rotary Club Board wanted to recognize and honor these successful

businesses. The Board of Directors also felt this program reflected the respect of Rotarians for all useful occupations and for the value of productive work.

Introduced in June



**Reba Ragsdale and Rusleen Maurice, worked for decades championing the Rotary Business Awards program now known as the Bryan Rotary 10.**

1994, the Bryan Rotary 10 Small Business Performance Awards Program recognizes, from among those nominated, the top ten fastest-growing small businesses in the community. These businesses must have their headquarters in Brazos County; franchises and satellite businesses are disallowed.

1994 Bryan Rotary President Reba Ragsdale and Vocational Chair Rusleen Maurice, who suggested the program, worked with the Board to establish relationships with the Bryan/College Station Chamber of Commerce and the Mays Business School at Texas A&M University. Newman

Printing Company was the financial sponsor for the first 21 years. In 2015, Tom Light Chevrolet was the underwriter and the program name was changed to the Bryan Rotary 10 Small Business Performance Awards Program. Since 2016, Anco Insurance has been the program underwriter.

Through the years, other awards have been incorporated into the program. The Bryan Rotary/Anco Insurance Award for Lifetime Business Achievement was introduced in 1998. This award is given to an established Brazos County business, recognizing them for longevity, customer service, community involvement and financial growth. Nominations for this award are limited to members of the Bryan, College Station and Aggieland Rotary Clubs.

The Bryan Rotary Club/Brazos Valley Launch Award was introduced in 2018 and underwritten by the Brazos Valley Economic Development Corporation. This award recognizes a new business that is less than six years old and is contributing to the economic growth of the Brazos Valley.

These prestigious



**Rotarians Cameron Comire, Elena Scoggins, & Deborah Cowman volunteer at the annual Rotary 10 Awards Luncheon.**



**Hilda Cuthbertson and Hayden Riley congratulate Eric Wylie and his company, Element Retirement & Investment Consultants, on being named to the Rotary 10 in 2018 and 2019.**



**Charley Gilliland speaks with Rusleen Maurice at the 2016 award ceremony.**

awards represent the hard work and success of these local businesses, as well as their impact on the local economy and are presented at an annual luncheon. Each winner receives an award while

one award lists all of the winners for that year, and is displayed year-round at the Bryan/College Station Chamber of Commerce. Visit [Bryan-Rotary.org](http://Bryan-Rotary.org) to see portfolios of past winners.



# Flags Across Bryan - Community & Patriotic Pride



BY WALTER HINKLE, Past President 2014-2015

One of my favorite Rotary activities has always been our Flags Across Bryan initiative.

We deliver flags on

it requires a lot of organization and volunteers. This ends up being a lot of fun and fellowship for the Rotarians and friends of Rotarians

flag count balance as well as replacing worn flags.

As a flag day event approaches, we have a lot of



Once upon a time, Jere Blackwelder, Dave Johnson, Pawan Mahimtura, Janie Williams, Hilda Cuthbertson, Bunny Pratt, Reba Ragsdale, Holly Rees, & Dub Pearson raised a flag in Downtown Bryan outside the Carnegie Library as part of the Flags Across Bryan delivery program.



Rotarians gather at the Conlee-Garrett warehouse in Downtown Bryan every flag holiday to load up (Presidents Day, Memorial Day, Flag Day, Independence Day, & Patriot's Day).



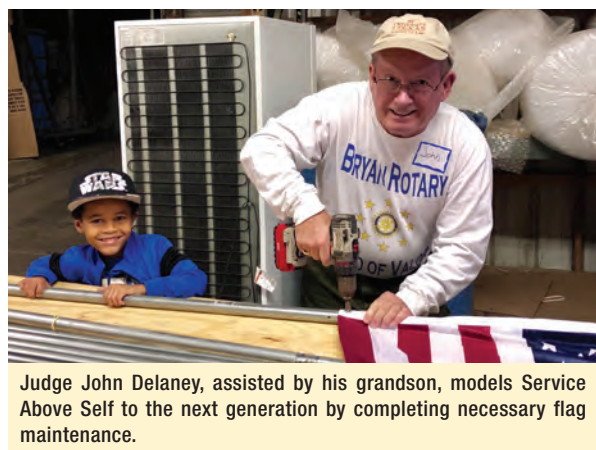
For Flag delivery days volunteer teams show up to haul and post flags at homes and businesses in Bryan for a patriotic boost around town!



Flag delivery is a fun way to get to know your fellow Rotarians!

five national holidays each year (Presidents Day, Memorial Day, Flag Day, Independence Day, and Patriots Day) plus our subscribers have a flag placed at Veterans Park for the entire week of Veterans Week in November. Our subscribers can use this flag as an opportunity to honor someone of their choice with a marker that remains on the flag for the entire week. We offer this subscription for only \$50!

In order to make these deliveries,



Judge John Delaney, assisted by his grandson, models Service Above Self to the next generation by completing necessary flag maintenance.

who volunteer to help make flag deliveries happen.

We have Rotarians who help keep up with all of our subscriber information, including billing and collections, route planning and

moving parts to manage. We ask for volunteers to hand out flags that are stored at the Conlee-Garrett warehouse, volunteers to drive their personal pick-up trucks and helpers to set the flags. There is a lot to do but it



is truly a labor of love. It is a chance to connect and work with fellow Rotarians that you may not know very well and form new friendships.

There are few things in life more

beautiful than seeing our flags lining the neighborhoods and businesses that make up our subscribers. After each flag day, we return the flags and look forward to our next time to set

them out again!

For more information on our Flags Across Bryan project, visit [www.bryan-rotary.org](http://www.bryan-rotary.org)

Service Above Self for 100 years!





Bryan Rotarians with the help of many others log 285 volunteer hours on average to prepare, post, tag, and take down of the annual Bryan Rotary Field of Valor display at Veterans Park each November.

Rotarians are People of Action and together we serve, connect, and inspire. The Bryan Rotary Field of Valor exemplifies this spirit. In 2010, at the Rotary International Convention in Montreal Canada, Bruce Norton met a Rotarian from California who told him about their unique

flag project. Upon his return, Bruce was energized and championed the idea of an expansive field of American flags as an anticipated signature event for Bryan Rotary. The Bryan Rotary Club Field of Valor – 1000 Flag Salute to Service emerged from this original

vision. We posted our first flag display in November 2011. The aim of this annual patriotic showcase is to serve the community through funds raised, to honor veterans and first responders whose vocations often put them at risk in service to others, and to educate students

through scholarships and teacher mini-grants. November 2021 will mark the 10th anniversary of the Field of Valor display, and through the generosity of our sponsors and flag subscribers, Bryan Rotary Club has been able to grant \$244,850 to local teachers, students, and non-

profits. The Field of Valor is evocative. The volunteers experience the camaraderie of setting up the display of 1000 flags at Veterans Park in celebration of Veterans Day. Visitors to the park get an inspiring surprise when driving in to see the flags waving,

which they may not have expected on their way to the sport fields. The FOV also helps draw attention to the Veterans side of the Park and the historical walkway highlighting major wars fought by our nation.

Field of Valor Event Chair, Bunny Pratt, said “it’s the stories we



The nephew of Rotarian Liz Dickey enjoys a run through the FOV Display. The 1000+ flag display is setup in an 8'x8' grid pattern and features 3'x5' flags on 10' flag poles sunk into pvc pipe buried in the ground.



For multiple years, retired nurse and Bryan Rotarian Heidi Boas has tagged 10 flags in the FOV to honor various local Veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces.



Long time Rotarians Bob Kraus and Bruce Norton enjoy a short break at the Salvation Army canteen truck.



Jay Muthusami, John Delaney, Matt Prochaska, and Walter Hinkle can always be counted on to volunteer for the holiday flag delivery program and FOV Display.





Each November, Bryan Rotary recognizes our own Veterans and invites other Veterans and First Responders of the community to join us for a special lunch program during Veterans Week.

learn from our flag tag sponsors that keep us motivated to plan and prepare for this project every year. It's for the young wife whose husband was deployed, while she was pregnant with their first child, and the picture she sent to him overseas of her standing in the flag field with his tag to let him know

she was proud of his commitment. It's for the dad who chooses to honor one son for his active duty in the Army while tagging another flag in memory of his other son, who was once a doctor treating soldiers in the burn unit. And, it's for the Marine who lost his buddy to an IUD and wanted to tag a

flag in his memory to help bring closure since he was still on active duty when it happened and unable to attend the funeral of his friend. Such sacrifices of time, of family, and especially of lives deserve our recognition.”  
Take a moment to walk through Veterans Park and the Field of

Valor each November 11th in recognition of Veterans Day and reflect. Ponder the years of war and peace and the people who have served throughout our nation's history so that we may live in a country where we have the right to choose life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.



Holly Rees, a WWII Veteran and Purple Heart recipient, was a Rotarian for 67 years. He was a Past Club President and Multiple Paul Harris Fellow.

Rotary



Club of Bryan

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CONGRATULATIONS ON 100 YEARS

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A group of Bryan Rotarians hold red balloons for World Polio day symbolizing our efforts to stomp out Polio.

# Raised by a Polio Survivor

BY STEPHANIE (GEORGE) SIMPSON

My dad, Sam George, was born in Dallas, Texas in 1934. In 1942, when he was 8 ½ years old, he contracted Polio. He was admitted to the Texas Scottish Rites Hospital in Dallas. It would be his home for nearly a year.

By the time the virus had run its course, he was left paralyzed from the neck down. Like many others, he was put into an iron lung, also called a tank ventilator. He was placed in the children's ward with

several other kids, also in iron lungs. He said they could talk but they couldn't see each other. There were days one of the "friends" wouldn't be talking and they would ask about them. The nurses always told them they had gone home. Even at a young age, he knew the truth.

Dad suffered through many surgeries around the knees and carried the scars his entire life. He was eventually released from the hospital.

During his stay, he had slowly regained the use of most of his muscles, except for his legs. He could move his toes on his right leg, but nothing on his left leg. Up until the time he married in 1955, he mostly walked with the aid of braces and crutches on both legs. After getting married, he settled into his life in a wheelchair.

My parents purchased their home in 1958. The house had one bathroom and the door



was too narrow for him to get through in his wheelchair. So, until they added on a den and a second bathroom with a wide door in 1974, my dad had to get out of his wheelchair and scoot across the bathroom floor then pull himself up on the toilet. He did that for 16 years.

My dad was a remarkable polio survivor. The only thing he acknowledged



Stephanie George Simpson donated many hours volunteering in 2021 at the Brazos Valley COVID-19 Vaccination Hub.

was the fact that he couldn't walk. He graduated from SMU in three years, earning an undergraduate degree and later received his Master's degree in Educational Psychology

from Texas A&M at the age of 44. He could drive any car, including those with standard transmissions. Yes, he could operate a clutch with that dead left leg! With the





In 2019, Stephanie George Simpson (far right) pictured here with Kat Brewer, Bunny Pratt, and Janie Williams at the annual District conference, was named to the Rotary 5910 District Roll of Fame.

assistance of some engineering students, he built his first racing wheelchair and started participating in 10k "runs" in his early 40's. He eventually purchased a true racing wheelchair so he could take up marathon and half marathon races. He raced in Dallas, Austin, San Antonio, and several other cities in Texas and medaled in more than 20 races.

He even rode escalators! We would go shopping and he would roll right up to the moving stairs, reach for the rail and away he'd go. He would descend backwards. This was when his family would be behind him. In case he slipped, we would be the first ones to be taken out!

He worked, first as a disc jockey and then as a vocational counselor. He commuted to Houston for nearly 10 years. He always had a job and worked up to the day before he died. When he couldn't drive, he had the wheelchair transit bus pick him up at the house so he could go to work.

My dad was the epitome of "Your only limit is you." He always tried, he may not have been able to do something, but he always tried.

My dad was a member of the Bryan Rotary Club for over 20 years. Rotary International's initiative to eradicate polio was only a few years old at the time. He was in awe of the fact that an

organization he was a member of had started a worldwide effort to bring an end to the very disease that had had the most profound effect on his life.

I joined Bryan Rotary in 2001 and was told we were the first father and daughter members at the same time. It only lasted two years, as my dad passed away in 2003 but it was important to our family to designate monetary donations be made in his memory to the Bryan Rotary Club for Polio Plus. Since I have been in Rotary, I have any foundation donations dedicated to Polio Plus in memory of my dad.

**SWAN STONARTS**

# Congratulations & Best Wishes to the Bryan Rotary Club on **100 Years**

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# Rotary Youth Exchange Family Ties

BY ANDREW & SHELLEY NELSON

Andrew and I agreed to host a Belgian exchange student in 2011. Also hosting were John & Ann Anderson, a Rotary couple we knew and liked. Little did we know at the time how this petite young lady would change all of our lives and bring us all closer together.

Mathilde had already

graduated from high school when she came to us, but, per the rules of our district Rotary Exchange, she still attended high school. Her English was excellent; due to the American TV shows she watched growing up, she was enamored with American football, and the events of an American high schooler,

like Homecoming and Prom. But she also spent time educating us on her culture and her family life in Belgium.

At first Mathilde was a bit homesick, but our family dog was a blessing as Grace gave her someone to snuggle with and love on. But it feels like it took no time for here to get comfortable laughing and joking like a member of the family. Mathilde got to know our extended family at Thanksgiving and she brought a new tradition to our family with the purchase of an online Advent calendar from the UK that we all followed each evening during Advent after dinner.

When it was time for her to move in with the Anderson family in early January, Mathilde had become quite attached to us and was depressed and tearful at “leaving her family again”. We gave them some space to get to know each other, and before we knew it, Mathilde grew deeply connected with Ann and John as well. Before the end of the exchange year, we nicknamed John and Ann our “exchange in-laws”. Through Mathilde, we grew closer and treat each other like family.

When the exchange year ended in 2012, we had an opportunity to travel to Belgium through my job. My



Andrew & Shelley Nelson with their children Rachel & Matthew and their dog, Grace, at Christmas in 2011 with their Rotary Youth Exchange “daughter” Mathilde from Belgium.



Welcome to America signs greet Lucie Froch, from Dortmund Germany, who lived in Bryan/College Station with three Rotary Youth Exchange host families during the 2018-2019 academic year.



customer was only about 15 minutes from Mathilde’s home. Our whole family decided to make the 2-week trip. We got to know Mathilde’s parents, sisters, and nieces and nephew. In 2013, Andrew & I traveled a few hours from her parents’ home for work and made the drive to their home to have dinner with them. In 2014, we visited Bastogne, Belgium for the 70th Anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge, and Mathilde joined us in the festivities. Again, we visited her parents and had a great lunch with her whole family. In 2015, for Mathilde’s Christmas present we got her a flight back to Texas to visit all of us again during Aggie football season

so she could get her football fix. In 2019, Mathilde traveled back to Texas to introduce her American parents to her boyfriend to make sure she had our approval. During that trip, her sister, who works for the Governor of the Luxembourg region of Belgium, and the governor traveled with her and we got to spend time with Mathilde, her sister, and the governor.

A couple months later, we again went to Bastogne for the 75th Anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge. This time we were unable to see Mathilde due to her school schedule, but her sister met us in Bastogne and played host at a luncheon with the governor. Mathilde

intended to travel her again in 2020 for a friend’s wedding, but unfortunately COVID canceled that trip. We keep in touch via Facebook Messenger and every Christmas since 2011, our extended family has a Skype call with her extended family, so we are all able to keep in touch. For every birthday, Mother’s and Father’s Day, we get a Message or call from Mathilde, who calls me “Mummy” and Andrew “Daddy”. We fully anticipate we’ll be traveling to Belgium in the next year or so to attend her wedding.

We are forever grateful to Bryan Rotary club for our Belgian daughter.





## Disease Prevention in the Goakhpur District of India

Between 2014-2016, the Bryan Rotary Club was able to provide relief to a region in North East India that was severely impacted by a disease called Japanese Encephalitis (JE). JE is a viral infection, spread by mosquitoes, that affects parts of the central nervous system, including the brain and spinal cord. People who live in rural areas

are most at risk due to their proximity to rice fields, poor sanitation and other open pools of water. Rotarian Dr. Jay Muthusami helped garner Rotary grant funding and partnered with six Rotary clubs in the Gorakhpur District of India to provide relief. Jay led much of the effort in acquiring mosquito nets, identifying villages most impacted by the

disease, and visiting these villages. Through these efforts over 3000 mosquito nets were delivered to needy families with children under the age of 15. Six Rotary Clubs with the participation of more than 50 volunteers were able to deliver these mosquito nets door-to-door and help educate families on preventive measures they can adopt to avoid JE.



## Children of the Dump in Nicaragua

Bryan Rotary Club, in Partnership with other US Rotary Clubs and the Hope & Relief International Foundation, provided aid for multiple years for projects in

Chinadega, Nicaragua, focusing on providing basic education and skills training for children living in extreme poverty as well as maternal & child health. In December

2008, Bryan Rotarians Jere Blackwelder and Bruce Norton visited Nicaragua to see the project sites and help deliver Christmas care packages to the children.

## Healthy Homes Guatemala

In January 2020, seventeen B/CS Locals, including 4 Bryan Rotarians, traveled from Texas to Guatemala to volunteer with the Habitat Global Village Healthy homes initiative. Families in extreme poverty, defined there as ~\$85 month, can apply for the program, pay a small fee, and work alongside volunteers to receive a smokeless stove, latrine, and water purification system. Volunteers completed 14 smokeless stoves during the trip and engaged

with many hardworking and gracious people. Think about the heat and smoke and smell of an outdoor campfire on a windy day. Now visualize that in a small tin shed with no ventilation and you can imagine what these families face everyday to provide basic meals for their family without running water or electricity. With the help of our Habitat Guatemala Project Leader and Translator, Celia Enriquez, we heard what a new

stove means to Maria Garcia and her family. "She is really thankful to all of you because she is explaining that never before have they received help from people from other countries so it's a blessing for them to receive you in their community and especially her house. May God bless you and may God bless this project that you've done that's helping them. She's very happy and thank you very much. May God bless you all."



Typical metal shed where the cooking is done with firewood. Notice the black soot. The more efficient mud brick stove with a chimney uses less firewood to save the family money, is enclosed to help prevent burns, and redirects the acrid smoke outside to improve eye and lung health.



Four Bryan Rotarians (J. Paul Teel, Bunny Pratt, Maria Small, and Joe Cerami) find a building with a Rotary marker on it in Antigua which is common when travelling to other countries where Rotary has a strong presence.



