**That Was the Year That Was (2014-15)**

The online encyclopedia Wikipedia defines the word “engineer” as “a professional practitioner of engineering, concerned with applying scientific knowledge, mathematics and ingenuity to develop solutions for technical, societal and commercial problems.” Strangely, nowhere in this definition does Wikipedia mention the Rotary Club of Arlington, Texas. I find this shocking in view of the facts that Wikipedia is continuously updated and that applying scientific knowledge, mathematics and particularly ingenuity to develop solutions for technical, societal and commercial problems is most of what our Rotary club and its members have done during the last twelve months. Of course, that we did these things is not surprising in view of the fact that Joyce Stanton, an engineer, was, and for just a little while longer remains, our president. But what *is* surprising is that, despite the fact that our president is an engineer, we had a good time doing these things.

 Let me explain. One of Charna’s and my nephews graduated a few years ago from Carnegie Mellon University, a private school in Pittsburgh renown for its College of Engineering. He is shy and somewhat awkward but graduated with a 4.0 GPA and an engineering degree. Of course, Charna and I love our nephew but we have always been aware of his limitations in socializing with others. Yet, we were amazed to learn that at Carnegie Mellon he was considered the life of the party. When I gently inquired of our nephew how this was possible, he indicated that it was a matter of perspective. “How can you distinguish an outgoing engineer from the other engineers,” he asked us. The answer: an outgoing engineer stares at *your* shoes. So, as the Dutch Renaissance humanist Erasmus put it, a one-eyed man is king in the land of the blind. Yet, despite the handicap imposed on her by her engineering degree, Joyce found the courage to look us in the eye and to lead us. And the rest, as they say, is history.

So what kind of year wasthe 2014-2015 year for Rotary Club of Arlington, Texas? I say “Rotary Club of Arlington, Texas” rather than “*The* Rotary Club of Arlington, Texas” because this was the year during which Rotary International announced that, after more than ninety years using this name to describe itself, our club would have to omit the word “the” from its name. It seems that the other Rotary clubs in Arlington—there are now a total of seven—were a little intimidated by our club’s using a name indicating that it is *the* Rotary Club of Arlington, suggesting (correctly) that it is the premier Rotary club in the city. Of course, everyone in this room knows that to be true. However, what I had assured you several years ago would remain our little secret—that the other Rotary clubs in Arlington were made up of members who would rather have gained admission to *this* club – has apparently gotten out.

What’s more, the result of this unfortunate, if obvious, revelation is that our fellow clubs are now suffering from a terrible, if justifiable, inferiority complex. And so, to mollify these clubs and their members, Rotary International has found it necessary to impose this rather striking measure on us. Well, it worked for Facebook, which was originally known as *The* Facebook, so maybe it will only enhance our club’s prestige. But don’t worry. As I hope to demonstrate to you this evening, we remain *the* Rotary club in Arlington, Texas, even if it’s painful for our fellow Rotarians to acknowledge what for them is apparently an awful truth. But as I sometimes find it necessary to tell judges and juries, the fact that the truth is awful doesn’t change the fact that it’s the truth. So let’s not shy away from it. Like Joyce, let’s summon the courage to look it straight in the eye, to assess it, and to decide whether or not the Rotary year just passed was or was not a success. I respectfully suggest that it was. Let me tell you why.

The current Rotary year began in this room almost precisely one year ago when Derrick Kinney, then our outgoing president, formally passed the gavel he had held for twelve eventful and very successful months to Joyce Stanton. And with that gavel, Derrick passed the proverbial baton to Joyce, who gratefully and enthusiastically accepted it and immediately announced her goals for the coming Rotary year. Joyce explained that this year would be the second in a three year strategy during which our club would continue increasing the number of its high quality members, continue to work closely with and deepen our relationships with Arlington’s other six Rotary clubs to provide even more service in the city, and to demonstrate in tangible, easily identifiable ways that we, as Rotarians, place service above self.

Joyce then explained that Rotary International’s theme for the year would be “Light Up Rotary”— yes, she’s an engineer but I don’t think that even Joyce literally meant that we should electrify anything—and noted that we would do everything possible to meet the objectives that our incoming Rotary District Governor, Larry Petrash, had set forth as well as those she, Derrick and others had devised. Those goals, by the way, were both numerous and quite ambitious, even for a group as able as ours and with our record of achievement. They were:

1. To increase our membership – as we did last year – and to attract young and diverse new members to continue the energy in the club.

2. To maintain a 95 percent retention rate.

3. To encourage 100 percent participation in Foundation giving and to meet various fundraising goals.

4. To participate in community projects that allow us to partner with other organizations represented by members of our Rotary club. These include Mission Arlington, the Arlington Life Shelter, the Boys and Girls Club of Arlington, and the Salvation Army.

5. To increase the significant number of scholarships we already provided by creating two additional scholarships. By partnering with two of our newest members from the UTA music department, Joyce announced, we hoped to encourage high quality music students to choose UTA as their place of study.

6. To improve our vocational avenue of service by adding something—we weren’t sure what—that would make a big impact in our local community by generating more jobs; and

7. To continue our role at Webb Elementary School mentoring Webb students and improving the likelihood that as many as possible would graduate from high school.

As you might imagine, that was a pretty tall order. But I’m proud to tell you that we have accomplished virtually every one of those goals and that we have exceeded many of them. We have inducted 24 new members since the Rotary year began, bringing our total club membership to 141 active members and eight honorary members, a new high. And we have retained all but twelve of our members who belonged to the club when the year began.

Sadly, we had to say goodbye to a number of former Rotarians who retired, moved away or passed away. Among them was Theron Brooks, a pediatrician, city councilman and long-time member of this club who was instrumental in creating the Arlington Rotary Foundation and beginning the effort that now allows us to award college scholarships to every Webb Elementary School graduate who completes high school. Theron was laid to rest in Marble Falls, Texas on December 31, 2014. But a more fitting tribute to Theron than the success of the scholarship program he helped found would be hard to imagine.

It is also noteworthy that the Tarrant County Commissioner’s Court recently voted to name the county’s new civil courts building after another beloved former member of our club, the late Tom Vandergriff. Of course, this would be a greater honor if the date upon which the Tom Vandergriff Civil Courts Building was to open had not been postponed three times and its fourth opening date did not remain in serious doubt. But as Tom himself, who served 27 years as Arlington’s mayor and three terms as Tarrant County Judge, would tell you, deadlines in government should be viewed as—well—aspirational.

Yet, while I’m sure we will all miss Theron, Tom and the other former members who have left us, I’m pleased to report that for the first time in many years not a single current member of our club passed away this Rotary year. Moreover, even among those Rotarians who ceased their membership in our club this year, virtually all of them moved a significant distance, changed jobs, or otherwise had a change in circumstances that made it difficult or impossible for them to remain members. In fact one of our members, Chrys Jones, left the club to take a job with a law firm in Abilene, saw the error of her ways, moved back to Arlington, and has rejoined the club. Welcome back, Chrys! And welcome to all our new members who have decided to put service above self and to bring our net increase in club members to 12 for the year. I ask that all our new members present stand so that we might acknowledge you. (Pause for applause.)

And another thing. When I joined Rotary in 1986 there were no woman Rotarians. Yet today I’m proud to report that since Rotary began admitting women in 1987 our club has gone from zero percent female membership to 28 percent of our members being women and that we have increased our club’s membership by eight women this year. Welcome, ladies! Of course, this might have something to do with the fact that our current club president, Joyce Stanton, is a woman and that, although our incoming club president, Clete McAlister, is not, the person chosen to succeed him, Valerie Landry, is also a woman. Joyce and Valerie follow in the footsteps of Mary Jean Moloney, our club’s first female member, and Lisann Peters, who served as our club’s first woman president, both of whom were trailblazers in our club’s long and distinguished history. And so we now have the benefit of what one of my female clients calls estrogen-enhanced thinking to augment what she calls testosterone-impaired thinking influencing our Rotary club’s path. And finally—finally—we’ve stopped using the cornball term “Rotary Ann.” Now if we could only stop singing “In the Good Old Summertime” and the lyric about a woman being someone’s “tootsie-wootsie” we’d have it made.

In fact, some long-time Rotarians’ wives, including Carolyn Mebus, have joined our club, something that would not have been possible under the old rules. And it has worked the other way as well. Tim Moloney, the husband of trailblazer Mary Jean Moloney, has joined us and has proven himself an invaluable asset. Moreover, three of our newest members are minorities. And it would be hard to argue that this increase in membership and the resulting influence of our women and minority Rotarians on our club has been anything less than outstanding. So has the energy and influence of our club’s younger members, who have begun joining in greater numbers since the recession that began in 2008 finally concluded. In fact, three of our new Rotarians who have joined us this year are under 40. Moreover, even many Rotarians’ husbands and wives who have not joined the club have continued appearing at events and projects and assisting the club in its good works. I suggest that we do all we can to help these trends continue, if only to help the women recover from the stigma of being regarded as “Rotary Anns.”

But back to our goals. Not only did we continue our Webb scholarship program, we coordinated with the UTA music department to establish two new music scholarships for talented students who want to study music at UTA. The original plan was for one to be a band music scholarship and the other an orchestra music scholarship. But this year, both scholarships went to jazz musicians, so I guess we’ve made some progress. But I’m afraid that the Johnny High memorial scholarship for students of country music will have to wait.

And another thing: this Rotary year our club contributed $11,484 to Rotary’s Annual Fund, previously known as Rotary’s Every Member Every Year program, representing an average donation of $85.00 per Rotarian. We added to that contributions totaling $2,494 toward Polio Plus, a perennial favorite. Thus, this club has since July 1, 2014 contributed a total of $13,921 to Rotary International’s various endeavors. And it bears noting that we are only a few days away from the entire African continent’s having gone a whole year without a single case of polio being reported, the standard by which polio eradication is officially measured. If our luck holds, that will leave only two countries in the world where polio remains a threat: Afghanistan and Pakistan. Thus, it appears that as the current Rotary year comes to an end we are approaching our goal of eradicating polio worldwide. This, in my estimation, is wonderful, extraordinary, earth-shaking news.

But sadly, I have some bad news as well. Speaking to the Pakistani newspaper *Dawn*, Ehsanullah Ehsan, a Taliban leader, recently said that the polio eradication campaign is part of –and I quote-- a “conspiracy of Jews and Christians to make Muslims impotent and to stunt the growth of Muslims.” Moreover, Newsweek Magazine reported that other radical Pakistani Muslim clerics have begun declaring fatwas, or religious edicts, forbidding observant Muslims where they live to allow themselves or their children to be vaccinated. These statements may help explain the World Health Organization’s published figures indicating that more health care workers and volunteers have died trying to prevent the spread of polio in Pakistan and Afghanistan than the number of people in these countries who have actually died from the disease

Yet, perhaps there is hope. The Taliban leader I mentioned told the same reporter that –and again I quote-- “if they can convince us that these polio drops are Islamic and the spy agencies are not using them to kill our fighters, we would have no objection to any vaccination drive which is in the public interest.” Well I suppose that’s something.

You’ll forgive me if I approach the line beyond which I might be said to have violated Rotary’s “no politics” rule with this observation, but in my culture, we have a word that might not be familiar to many of you. That word is “chutzpah,” meaning audacity or gall. A classic example of chutzpah is said to involve a man who murdered his parents but, when tried for his crimes, threw himself on the mercy of the court because, after all, he was an orphan. I’m all for eradicating polio and I’m in favor of doing it worldwide. But if Muslim clerics forbid their followers to allow themselves and their children to be vaccinated and the Taliban kill those who attempt to administer the vaccine -- then it is chutzpah -- to say nothing more, for these same leaders to complain that Muslims are dying and that the West is doing nothing to help.

But I digress. Perhaps most impressively, we accomplished several key vocational activities this year, the most exciting of which was our first ever Rotary Club of Arlington Job Fair. The Job Fair was for everyone in need of a job but intentionally targeted those who live in the 76010 zip code where our club meets, which has a very high unemployment rate and an even higher youth unemployment rate. So with the help of Arlington’s Sunset Rotary Club, Texas Workforce Solutions, Arlington Answers, The City of Arlington, the Arlington Independent School District, UTA and the First United Methodist Church, we did all we could to attract employers seeking employees between the ages of 16 and 24. And with the ingenuity common among engineers, we scheduled our job fair for the last day of Spring Break. (Pause for laughter.) I’m pleased to report that despite this being our first effort at such an enterprise and our conducting it on a dreary, sometimes rainy day, we literally filled the church’s Great Hall with employers and, more importantly, attracted about 300 mostly young job-seekers. Having personally participated in this program, I can assure you that it was a great success and that it brought together employers and potential employees who would not likely have ever met without the benefit of our club’s extraordinary effort.

While it is impossible to track everything that happened as result of our job fair, Texas Workforce Solutions has reported that 69 job offers were made; that 39 of the 41 employers who attended said they would attend another Rotary job fair if one were held; and that of those employers who responded to a survey regarding the customer service we offered them during the job fair none rated us poor or average, one rated us fair, two rated us good, and thirty rated our customer service as excellent. Not bad for a first effort. Not bad at all.

In addition to our Job Fair, we also sponsored a well-organized Career Day at Webb Elementary School; we recognized two police officers and a teacher for their service to the community; we sponsored an incoming exchange student; and we partnered with the Salvation Army to complete the “Angel Tree” project, a program designed to insure that even the most poverty-stricken children in our community received Christmas gifts. Not only did we contribute money toward this endeavor but we handled the administrative portion of the project. And we did a little Christmas shopping as well. We also sent four promising Arlington High School students to our district’s Rotary Youth Leadership Award program, Camp RYLA. And we conducted our annual Four-Way Speech contest, awarding cash prizes to our first, second and third-place winners and sending the victor on to our district’s competition.

The club began the current Rotary year by purchasing backpacks and school supplies for the children who reside at Safe Haven Arlington, a local women’s shelter. Zack Maxwell, our youngest Rotarian, led this effort, and after learning which of the kids at the shelter attended what grades at which schools, Zack determined what each of these schools required each student in each grade to supply. Zack then provoked a bidding war among local office supply stores regarding which would offer the greatest bargains, and the largest subsidies, in connection with these backpacks and school supplies. After the competition had concluded and the purchases were made our club members transported them to the hall where we meet, stuffed and labeled the backpacks, and delivered them to Safe Haven Arlington. The final result was that our youngest Rotarian led the program that benefitted our youngest citizens.

And speaking of children, no report of our club’s activities this year would be complete without mention of our annual sponsorship of Webb’s fifth graders’ attendance at Camp Grady Spruce and our provision of transportation, backpacks and other supplies without which it is doubtful that more than a few of these kids would ever experience anything like summer camp. This year, with the able leadership of Lynn Stavinoha, we once again provided backpacks for 105 fifth graders and a few extra for the teachers who accompanied them and acted as their counselors. We also distributed Camp Grady Spruce T-shirts and gift sacks to each fifth grader as he or she boarded the bus that was to transport him or her to camp the day they departed. The gift sacks included lip balm, hand sanitizer, tissues, notebooks, pens, pencils, a flashlight and a note wishing each child well.  As always, they were a big hit.

Rotarians stuffed the sacks and went to Webb for the sendoff. A few weeks later, in what has now become an established tradition, we met in Webb’s library where past club president and barbeque aficionado Walter Virden and several other Rotarians served us Walter’s extraordinary barbeque with all the fixin’s. We then listened as a number of the students and teachers who had boarded those buses regaled us with tales of their adventures at camp and thanked us for our help. It was reported, among other things, that many of these students did not want to take off the T-shirts with which we provided them and that some wore them for days. Significantly, this adventure cost these students, their parents, their teachers and their school precisely the same price: *nothing*. Between our club and district funds, we paid the entire cost of this adventure for every student and teacher in attendance. If that isn’t a good reason to feel proud to be a Rotarian, I can’t imagine what would be.

But, as always, our greatest contribution to Webb Elementary School was our Webb scholarship program. In fact, as Webb School Scholarship Committee Chair Bill Hinds likes to say, having reached its second decade of awarding college scholarships, our Webb scholarship program is no longer a program but an institution. At the Webb sixth grade graduation held three weeks ago, Bill distributed certificates to 107 sixth graders. Bill explained to these graduates and their parents that every one of those certificates may be redeemed for a four year college scholarship by any Webb graduate who also graduates high school and makes application.

And as Vice President of the Arlington Rotary Foundation, Bill knew that he wasn’t just making empty promises but that a large sum of money—money that is carefully invested, well managed and constantly replenished —stands behind this program. In fact, thanks to the efforts of Arlington Rotary Foundation President Peter Scott and those who came before him, and using the system model developed by past club president Jim Fulgham, not one penny of the foundation’s principal has been spent sending Webb graduates to college. Rather, each of the 240 students our club has assisted with scholarships to date have received funds derived from interest generated by the foundation’s investments and income generated by its annual golf tournament and other fundraisers. In fact, our incredible team of money managers and fundraisers has now made it possible for us to increase our scholarship stipend from $500 per semester to $750 per semester and, as of last week, to $1,000 per semester, with adjustments based on what each student receives from other sources. And with the matching funds offered by UTA and Tarrant County College, a Rotary Webb scholarship is now worth $12,000 per student. If that weren’t enough, we also have an entire committee whose task is to meet with Webb graduates, their parents and others at Lamar High School and to assist them in completing the Free Application for Financial Aid or FAFSA form, which often results in the acquisition of grants, loans and additional financial assistance to supplement the tuition and textbook money they get from us and the matching funds offered by UTA and TCC.

But behind this guaranty are stringent requirements. As Bill likes to say, the Arlington Rotary Foundation is not an entitlement. In fact, we stress accountability. But as I stand before you this evening, this program has generated 72 full graduates and, during the Rotary year just ended, sent 62 students to college during the Fall 2014 semester and an additional 42 during the Spring 2015 semester.

And speaking of the Arlington Rotary Foundation, it is worth noting that former club president and current Assistant District Governor Peter Scott just completed his third and final Rotary year as President of the Arlington Rotary Foundation. His successor, Al Clark, also a former club president, was elected June 18, 2015. But before he leaves this position we should all stand in awe of Peter and the job he and his committee have done during the last three years. When Peter began his duties the foundation’s assets totaled $1,065,344. This year, the balance of the funds on hand in the Arlington Rotary Foundation as of June 23, 2015 was $1,357,675.59, an increase of $292,331.69. And, although not all the numbers are in, it appears that this year’s golf tournament generated a record net profit of about $33,000, nearly twice last year’s figure, which was itself a record.

Thus, as I stand before you this evening, our Arlington Rotary Foundation has on hand nearly 1.4 million dollars with which to fund our Webb Scholarship Project, to purchase water filters and drugs for our Honduras water project, to send Webb’s fifth graders to camp, and to do all the other things that make Rotary such a worthwhile endeavor. This is in no small part by reason of the herculean efforts of Peter Scott and the Arlington Rotary Foundation board he has led. The foundation board members for the Rotary year just ended were Joyce Stanton, Clete McAlister, Derrick Kinney, Walter Virden, Dan Blumberg, Al Clark, Sally Hopper, Peter Scott, Clay Petsch, Bill Hinds, Scott Hendricks, Lynn Stavinoha, Earl Harcrow and Steve Vincent. I ask that all of them who are present stand up and take a bow for this extraordinary performance. (applause) And this amazing feat would not have been possible without the efforts of The Rotary Golf Tournament members, Peter Scott, Kris Landrith, Sarah Knotts, John Dancer, Bill Hinds, Clete and Susie McAlister, Paul Sturiale, Kellie McDonald, Bill Hinds, and Zack Maxwell. I ask that those of them who are present stand up and also accept our recognition for a job well done.

But most of all I ask that we recognize Peter for his three years of diligent effort and the amazing results he has produced. Peter, I know you’ve just stood twice, but honestly, will you accept our congratulations for all that you’ve done for the foundation, this club and the Webb students, Honduran citizens and the others who have benefitted from all that you have done during the last three years? (more applause) Peter, honestly, if you have the slightest interest in serving as Secretary of the Treasury, we can start making calls right after tonight’s meeting.

 I do, however, have a word of criticism. It involves our golf tournament’s optics. You will recall that Peter hired sports celebrity Babe Laufenberg to attend this year’s annual Rotary Golf Tournament. And those of you who view online social media or read our club’s weekly publication, *The* *Hubcap*, have likely seen the photos of Joyce and other Rotarians posing beside Babe. If so, you may have noticed a slight difference in their heights. All I can say is that if we really want pictures we can use to promote our golf tournament then we either need shorter celebrities or taller Rotarians. Oh what the heck…maybe a stool or a phonebook would help.

And there were a couple of other notable things in which our foundation was involved. With the able assistance of Scott Hendricks, Don Mebus, and myself our club this year distributed 125 Sawyer water filters and more than a thousand doses of Albendazol, a drug that kills water-borne parasites and diseases, to residents of Gracias a Dios, an area of Northeastern Honduras populated largely by Mesquita Indians. This brings to about 25,000 the number of Hondurans who no longer suffer from diarrhea, worms, disease, and the other ill effects of polluted water by reason of our club’s Honduras Water Project, which is now in its eleventh year. And the foundation and board have already appropriated another $10,000 for another round of filters and drugs for the coming Rotary year. Together with funds Scott has arranged for from our Rotary District, Rotary International and a number of the other Rotary Clubs in Texas and Oklahoma, this $10,000 is expected to grow to $50,000 and to buy enough filters and drugs to do the same for thousands more Hondurans.

Many of you don’t know this but Scott had a heart attack in January and, according to his wife, spent much of his convalescence preparing for our last trip to Honduras in April. And even after this short recovery period Scott would not hear of throttling back during the trip, much less staying home, but insisted on the arduous schedule in the remote areas where our filters do their work. I’m telling you: I was there and watched it, and it is not overstating it to say that Scott’s Rotary spirit overcame his physical condition to push him toward his goal – and ours -- of providing clean water to each of the 80,000 people who live in Gracias a Dios and that nothing, not even a physical malady this serious, could hold him back. Scott, if you would, please stand and let your fellow Rotarians show you how they feel about the incredible, sustained effort you have put forth for these many years.

And we did something new. With the financial and managerial assistance of Steve Zimmer, Steve Vincent, Earl Harcrow, the foundation and others we partnered with an organization called Power From the Son that is engaging in a new form of philanthropy. The organization offers a rent-to-own program whereby residents of third world countries, including those who reside in Gracias a Dios, can acquire light emitting diode, or LED, lights, solar panels that convert the abundant sunlight in the region to electrical energy and commercial batteries to store that energy until it is used to power these lights. Sounds a lot like engineering, doesn’t it? (Pause for laughter.) In this fashion several thousand Hondurans have now acquired LED lights to replace the candles they were using before. The lights cost no more than the candles and, unlike them, do not cause fires or produce unhealthy smoke that fills the small huts in which most of these people live. At this moment the demand for these lights in Gracias a Dios far exceeds the supply. But, because those who receive these lights are actually paying for them, the amount of money available to purchase and ship them is growing, too. And so is our pool of investors.

And there was so much more. We had a social event every quarter this year so we could make our members’ entire families a part of Rotary. Once again Steve Zimmer graciously allowed us the use of his palatial home for our annual holiday party and again insisted on absorbing the entire cost so that the proceeds of the event might be donated to the Arlington Rotary Foundation. We attended comedies at Theatre Arlington. There were fireside chats for both our new and established members which spouses were encouraged to attend so that they might learn what Rotary is all about. We created a Facebook page for the club. We accompanied Nichols Junior High School students to the Perot Museum in Dallas as chaperones. We donated fifty books to the Webb library to honor the fifty speakers and others who presented our weekly programs. We watched and listened as orchestras, bands, high school performers and others played wonderful music, sang and danced for our entertainment.

Seven beautiful Miss Cinderella candidates visited the club and explained how their selling tickets to the annual ball supports the Boys and Girls Club of Arlington, prompting many Rotarians to purchase tickets. We gave thesauruses to every Webb third grader and made sure that no Webb student left school for the Summer without a book they had chosen and that we had purchased for them. We donated food to Mission Arlington. We sent a record number of club members to the recent district assembly. We joined the other six Arlington Rotary clubs in putting on an adoption awareness picnic at which prospective parents got to meet and interact with children who are available for adoption. We presented Rotary awards to a boy and girl at every school in the Arlington Independent School District. We once again staffed the three concessions stands at the River Legacy Foundation’s annual cardboard boat regatta, an event that again generated well over $50,000 to support the River Legacy Science Center and its outdoor education programs for underprivileged children. And we presented two scholarships to Arlington High School students. President Joyce announced a four-week “Sprint for the Community” and we were off and running. In truth, there isn’t time for me to describe everything we did this year or to acknowledge everyone who participated. But in the future, if you hear someone describe a group of people as being as busy as bees, please feel free to correct them. They’re not as busy as bees. They’re as busy as Rotarians.

There is, however, another group that deserves our recognition. Our Hubcap staff did not complain, did not shirk their responsibilities and did not fail to produce a professional quality publication for fifty of the last 52 weeks, pausing only for Christmas and New Years. I know they made it look easy. But believe me, it’s not easy. And it’s unrelenting. But up to the task were Editor Sally Hopper, Publisher and layout specialist Patrick Jones, member profile author Diana Kunde, and Reporters Bonnie Harris, Carey Walker, Lynn Stavinoha, Cynthia Jensen, Joy Nunn and Kellie Reichert, and photographers Zack Maxwell, Paul Sturiale, and Bill Hinds. In fact, Carey Walker deserves special mention as he ran for and was elected judge this year but never missed an assignment or a deadline. As their managing editor I can tell you that this group worked hard to produce the now digital weekly publication we call *The Hubcap* and that I am personally proud of the outstanding job they did in maintaining interest in a publication that includes neither yellow journalism nor nudity nor even editorials, but just the facts, M’am. And amazingly, seamlessly, as if guided by an unseen hand, *The Hubcap* arrived in each of our email inboxes each week complete with Joyce’s Journal, our President’s weekly column, a full recap of the preceding week’s meeting, the usual collection of announcements, and photos that would make most professional editors jealous. I ask that those present who contributed to this incredible effort stand and let us express our appreciation for all that you have done.

Clete McAlister, our President-Elect, did an outstanding job attracting and selecting programs for our weekly meetings. Some focused on our city and its development. Others were of purely historical interest. There were programs regarding various aspects of science and of past and ongoing efforts to improve our society. And there were several sports-themed programs.

But, as usual, our best programs were offered by our club’s own members. Among these were the classification talks presented by four Rotarians. Larry Jordan told us about banking and the process by which governmental entities borrow large sums of money via the sale of municipal and other bonds. Victoria Farrar-Meyers told us of her first doll, whom she named “And Justice For All,” and about how that noble sentiment led her to a life in academia. Patrick and Jennifer Jones spoke in detail about the history of The Salvation Army, the extraordinary work it does in Arlington and elsewhere, and their involvement in it.

And our members offered a few more serious programs as well. Matthew Fielder, an active member of our club, told us of his experiences during “Operation Iraqi Freedom,” complete with photographs, and provided what can only be described as an insider’s view of the first gulf war. Rotarian Steve Vincent explained in detail his and other volunteers’ adventures attempting to import into Liberia and install the equipment necessary to electrify 35 buildings in the country, including a hospital in a remote area. Steve’s account included the administrative, political and practical hurdles he and the others had to surmount to accomplish the extraordinary amount of work performed to accomplish these objectives and the devastating effect the Ebola outbreak had on those he came to know in Liberia and their families.

But, best of all, during our last meeting before Christmas our own David Mosser, head minister at the First United Methodist Church in Arlington, told us about stories. Rev. Mosser began by telling us that stories have functions: bringing people together, teaching modes of behavior, explaining how the world works, and entertaining us.

And then he told us a really good story about a single woman who purchased gifts and cards for members of her family but somehow mixed them up and mailed them to the wrong recipients. There was wit and wisdom as well as more than a few moral lessons wrapped up in the tale, which I respectfully nominate as our best program of the last Rotary year.

Of course, none of this would have been possible without the efforts of our hardworking board. They are Joyce Stanton, Clete McAlister, Derrick Kinney, Joy Nunn, Susie McAlister, James McCroskey, yours truly, Bill Hinds, David Petter, Tim Moloney, Tom Ware, Valerie Landry, Patrick Jones, Earl Harcrow, Lynn Stavinoha, Sally Hopper, Paul Sturiale, Peter Scott, Don Proctor and Jim Fulgham. I ask that all of you stand and allow us to acknowledge your service to our club, our community, and our world.

So, as you can see, it’s been quite a year. Many ups, a few downs, and an absolute flurry of activity. I hope that you will all agree with me that, like the activities that comprised it, it has been well engineered. And I hope that all of you enjoy the next one.