



Paul "Fritz" Remmele

Fritz joined Topeka South Rotary in 1987. He was another of the many members sponsored by Don Schnacke. I think Don could have started his own chapter of Rotary with members he had sponsored.

Fritz was one of those Rotarians who did not make a big splash. As far as I know, he didn't hold any offices in Rotary, nor to my knowledge, did he win any awards, but he was someone you could count on being here every Friday. Also, he and his wife, Janice, enjoyed the Rotary Holiday party and would attend every year.

I got to know Fritz through Jim Brown as they were good friends. I suppose their friendship may have begun professionally, since Fritz was an architect and Jim was a contractor. I can recall them talking about at least one or two jobs they were both involved with such as some housing that was built at Brewster Place several years ago.

But their friendship went beyond just professional, as I know they would have coffee together several times a week. Jim always gave Fritz a hard time because Fritz would pick the places with the strongest coffee.

Fritz was more of a listener than a talker and every Friday, Jim, with his dry sense of humor, would keep Fritz laughing. I always looked forward to seeing them.

As I said, Fritz was more of a listener than a talker, and I don't know who talked him into giving a talk at Rotary about his military experiences in WW II, but it was one of the most memorable programs I can recall.

I'm sure you have all heard a low-keyed speaker before, someone who can under- state an event or experience. Well, Fritz took the cake that day.

He told us that he was in the Navy in the Pacific in WW II and served as either a radar or sonar operator on a navy ship. I don't recall if it was a battleship, a destroyer or what. But he proceeded to tell us that his ship was one of the many ships involved in the support of the marines in the battle on Iwo Jima.

I don't recall that he went into much detail but he ended by saying that one day he took a break and went up on deck. And while he was up there he could see some Marines raising the American flag. And that was about it.

Well, as you no doubt know, the battle of Iwo Jima was one of the fiercest and bloodiest battles in the Pacific. It lasted from February 19 to March 26, 1945: and over 6800 marines were killed and over 19000 wounded. And the battle was immortalized by Joe Rosenthal's photo of the raising of the US flag on top of Mt. Suribachi by 5 marines and one navy corpsman.

Tom Brokaw has described those who served in WW II as the Greatest Generation, and says that most of them returned home to their families and jobs and didn't talk much about their experiences.

I think Fritz Remmele would fit that description.

Fritz and Janice moved to Houston, Texas several years ago to be closer to their daughter and son. I think he stayed in touch with Jim Brown for a while, and the last I heard he was having some health problems. Then Jim got sick and passed away and I hadn't heard any updates on Fritz until last night. Janice and my wife, Char are both in the PEO and Char learned that

Janice was in town so she called her. Janice told her that Fritz has been diagnosed with Alzheimer's and is not doing well. They have come back to see their daughter in KC.

Janice also said that a past president has been very good about sending cards to Fritz. She couldn't recall his name but I think it might be Kip Slattery.

I guess I'll end by saying that Fritz was one of those Rotarians like Ed Gibbons or Don Schnacke or Jerry Bergen or Albert Dimmitt, that if you didn't see them when you came to Rotary on Friday, you might think you were at the wrong meeting.