



## SPRING Weekly

# Reader

Volume 194, Issue 259, April 20th, 2017

The Plano Rotary Club  
[www.PlanoRotary.com](http://www.PlanoRotary.com)

## Improving the Odds

### UPCOMING MEETINGS

**Apr 20**

**Jim Whiddon**

*The Old School Advantage*

**April 27**

**Marvin Jolly**

*Collin County Real Estate Update*

**May 4**

**Bill Slicker**

*The History of the Rotary  
Foundation*



### APRIL BIRTHDAYS

Daniel Askari	Apr 04
Rutledge Haggard	Apr 05
Robert Reed	Apr 07
Lawrence Flannery	Apr 09
Andy Sayers	Apr 11
Kirk Bell	Apr 12
Jeffrey Beckley	Apr 21
Alex Johnson	Apr 22
Ricardo Kasmiskie	Apr 27
Jerry Kezhaya	Apr 28



**P**RESTIDIGITATION is the avocation of our speaker today, odds-maker **Norman Beck**, but even though **Nancy Humphrey** and **SPIRITWARE'S** guest, **Joanne Dozzi**, asked for a sample of sleight-of-hand, Mr. Beck had something else on his agenda. So clearly we must invite him back for his other talent as a Master



Magician, consultant to the **David Copperfields** of the world, according to his guest, **Tim Durkin**.

**King David** commanded silence at 12:16, anointing **Ray Huffines** for the Invocation and **Mike Booher** for the Pledge. **Howard Matson** drew the Greeting Straw, and **SERGEANT KRAMER** announced a "round number" (o) of Visiting Rotarians.

Alan introduced his guest from **COMPETITIVE EDGE REALTY**, **Joanne Dozzi** ("Maresy dotes & dozzi dotes & little lambsy divey"), and **John Caldwell** announced that his guest, **Ross Shamshiri**,



would be inducted on the 20<sup>th</sup>, since we don't have a regular meeting on the 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Kelly Palmer** rose to the challenge of the **3 MINUTES OF FAME** speech. He browsed his family tree for inspiration. He comes from a ubiquitously military family. His Granddad was on the cover of *National Geographic*. His uncle served from Nor-



mandy beach to Germany. He and his brother-in-law served in the military. AND he goes off bird hunting with **Johnny Lewis**. His Mom was a **Rotary Anne**. He has been married for 25 years to **Mary**, and he's been a banker for 34 years. Whereas **Jo Via** comes from a family seven generations deep in Texas, he can only boast three generations.

Jason announced no **3 MINUTES OF FAME** draw for next week as there is no regular meeting next week. "You're off the hook."

**King David** emphasized that yet again, urging us to RSVP to **Karen Sheldon** to attend the 11-1 Mayoral Candidate Forum at **Capital One**.

The following week (20 April) **David** would like high attendance to honor **Herb Hoxie's** 56 years of Rotary. All living DGs have been invited to attend.

**Nancy Ms. Wonderful** Humphrey took over for the AWOL **Mr. Wonderful** to read us the list of April birthdays (see left). **Rutledge** claimed to be 37 ("two years younger than **Jack Benny**"). David urged skipping the HB2U singing, to which Nancy eagerly consented, then surmised that September will win the lottery only to amend that later in the meeting to July, which had netted \$500. But April has a fighting chance.

Birthday Boy **CAPTAIN KIRK** said he'd accept a gift card from **T.J. Maxx**. Then he noted the flyers on our tables detailing our **two STUDENT CITIZEN OF THE YEAR** banquets, May 25-6. Sponsorship starts at \$250, gaining one four seats (total; not at each

continued on page 2

event). But seats can be purchased for \$20. Of course, there are higher levels (up to \$2500 and beyond) of sponsorship; contact **KIRK** for details and perks.

**King David** apologized for being required by **Emperor Dendy** to announce the Emperor's insistence that all Clubs be represented at the RI Foundation's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration on Saturday, May 13, at the *Frontiers of Flight Museum*. He wants five volunteer couples to hold down the PRC table at the event.

**SPIRITWARE** Feigenbaum noted a clipboard with a sign-up sheet for Rotary regalia. He asked that no one spill coffee on it (as had happened last meeting). **David** noted a 1:30 dedication event on 24 April at Jack Carter Park Playground, 2800 Maumelle Drive. He urged us to attend.

Program Chair Alan Feigenbaum rose to explain that today's speaker, Norman Beck, spends time in the company of "gamblers and cheats." "Politicians?" one member wanted to know. Norman has been described "as an intellectual and an illiterate."

When it was time for Norman's rebuttal, he commented that "everything he said about me is true except 'illiterate.'" He noted the somber suit he was wearing and said that it should be accompanied by "You may not kiss the bride" or "Will the defendant please rise." But he'd rather it went along with "**Checkmate!**" or "Give me Shakespeare for \$1,000."



Since Norman handicaps long-odds events for a living, he bet us that at the end of lunch, we'll have "one piece of business that you can use." He's the VP for Claims and Security for SCA Promotions, which, for substantial fees, guarantees payouts on holes-in-one and other less likely outcomes.

He said that it's his "checkered upbringing" that predisposes him to "like chess so much." (Crickets. Nobody laughed. We were clearly a tough crowd.) His past included a stint as "a bartender in a whorehouse" where "the best customer was the sheriff," who got 2 shots of scotch to everyone else's one. He obviously knows how to hedge his bets. His résumé went on to include magician, professional bridge player, and insurance salesman from which he honed his actuarial talents.

But it's not just math that's needed; it's reading the fine or missing print! Once he was challenged to bet on con-man's inability to shoot a hockey puck through a plexiglass cutout just wide enough to pass the puck. When the huckster lined up the puck behind such a cutout to aim at a far one, it shot through the first hole successfully, and Norman was out \$5,000. It was his "first big mistake."

And for his second big mistake, the magician pulled the following tale out of the hat. That was the time he bet against golfers being able to hit a 360 yard drive into a 40 yard target. The cheat there was that the drive was made from the top of a casino onto asphalt. It was "a \$20,000 mistake" in failing to read the fine print, according to the *New Yorker* article on him.

But his magician's avocation saved him from taking a million dollar bet that a Houdini-clone couldn't extricate himself from 100' of rope. He found a rope in a hardware store, dragging it out to the consternation of the store owner who asked, "Why are you dragging that rope around the store?" to which Norman retorted, "Have you ever tried pushing one?" (Crickets. Maybe it's his timing.)

He had to travel to Canada to insure another \$1M bet (on Blackjack this time). He was stopped at the border and asked if there were any drugs in his car. "No, officer. Trust me; I've looked." His audience had no sense of humor, and he was subjected to a **TYT**. (Take your time.) After a four-hour inspection, he was free to pass. Not one to leave an inconsistency untested, he tried the line again on a second pass and was **TYT**ed again, from which he safely concluded that border patrol officers aren't a successful audience for a comedy club.

In his career, he has taken "promotional risk coverages" of as little as 42¢ and as much as \$2.5B! But there was one bet he was loath to take. When his encroaching deafness sufficiently irritated his girlfriend, she handed him an audiologist's business card and gave him his marching orders. Home from the examination, Norman was called to return to **Dr. Peters** to learn he had acoustic neuroma...in his case, brought on by a brain tumor the size of a baseball. His choices were:

1. A 12-hour surgery followed by a week in the ICU and a year of recovery IF everything went well, or
2. An early death.

He was so shaken that he wrote his girlfriend a note instead of trying to tell her.

Then his vocation kicked in, and he sought out the advice of Dallas' best malpractice attorney. The lawyer couldn't understand why he had come, being as yet uninjured and not seeking to sue. Norman was doing his due diligence, checking on the litigation history of his surgeon. After all, "50% of doctors graduate in the bottom half of their class."

He interviewed three people on whom **Dr. Lazar** had operated (but neglected to debrief three corpses). He took donuts to ply an RN in the hospital's employ, who confided that Lazar had a Napoleonic Complex and was of the opinion that it was "his way or the highway," but he was undoubtedly the best surgeon. Whereas others might have gone to another doctor for a second opinion, Norman sought out a second doctor to interpret surgeon-speak for his waiting mother and girlfriend.

On the day of the surgery, 28 August 2013, he "took my Montblanc pen and wrote letters of goodbye" to his loved ones. Then he laid out the suit in which he wished to be buried and went to the hospital.





During surgery, his heart stopped thrice, and three times his Best Friend in the World started it up again. It had been the “*saddest day*” when he laid out that suit but the “*happiest day*” when he hung it back up. He hopes we remember our happiest days likewise.

Kelly Palmer noted that Dr. Peters has started a Cochlear Implant Foundation.

John Caldwell wanted to know how to beat the house as outlined in *Bringing Down the House*. Norman directed him to another book, *Beat the Dealer*. He said that he’ll not play most casino games except Bridge (which he plays at the Master level) and Blackjack but only if they play with enough decks to foil card counters.

**Janis Allman** asked the embarrassing question: “*Are you banned*” from casinos? Norman confessed, tongue-in-cheek, that “*I don’t gamble at all.*” When working a casino, he stays at another hotel so as to avoid conflict of interest. And “*I have been known to catch cheaters.*” His best advice is “*Trust, but cut the cards.*”

**Jamie Schell** noted that his sister has had the same surgery, and they got 95% of the tumor. Norman admitted a like success.



**King David** handed Norman our desk organizer and called Jamie to the podium to hand **Mark Geller**, **CAPTAIN KIRK**, and **Jamie** (!) their Paul Harris + 4 pins. Jamie

fêted not only their generosity but the Foundation’s good works, especially abroad.

**Rutledge Haggard** asked about new outbreaks of Polio, and Jamie said he was not aware of any countries beyond Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Nigeria. (Guinea & Madagascar)

**King David** led us in the 4-Way Test and released us from our vows at 1:00.



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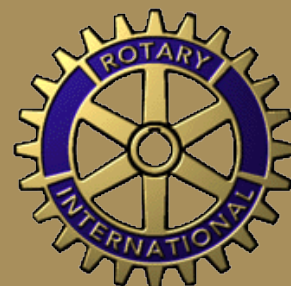
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Thank you Kenny Wilson

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## Guests & Visiting Rotarians

### Guest

Joanne Dozzi

Ross Shamshiri

### Visiting Rotarian

None

### Guest of

Alan Fiegenbaum

John Caldwell

### Home Club

## Proposed Members

### New Member:

### Proposed by:

### Classification:

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