

John Hein

Attorney, Davis & Kuelthau, Retired
Member Since 2003

John Hein embraces life. A Renaissance man with an appreciation of knowledge, sports and the arts, John's adventuresome spirit energizes those around him.

After 50 years of practicing law with a focus on professional liability and business litigation, and commercial real estate, John now seeks out new passions in retirement, among them personal growth and public service through Rotary.

Born in Milwaukee, John credits the local school system for inspiring his lifelong love of music.

"I feel fortunate to have grown up in Milwaukee in the 50s. The schools had an outstanding music program. It started me on my musical career and surrounded me with peers who were college oriented."

John played French horn in a youth orchestra co-founded by RCM, which is now known as the Milwaukee Youth Symphony Orchestra. It rehearsed and performed concerts in the room at the War Memorial in which RCM meets. John received a scholarship to attend Lawrence University where he continued with the French horn and majored in economics. Interested in a career in law since high school ("I thought it was a good profession"), John devoured books about the law and judges.

His time at Lawrence shaped his life in profound ways. Inspired by an uncle who was a literary missionary in Africa, John participated in a six-month school program in Costa Rica. Initially assigned to study the productivity of corn at different altitudes, John shrugged off that work at the urging of an economics professor named Jules LaRocque. Instead, LaRocque encouraged John to study local businesses that had received international development loans to determine how the loans benefited the community. This scholarship stoked John's interest in international development, which he has maintained throughout his adult life in his work on Immanuel Presbyterian Church's Mission Committee as well as Rotary's World Community Service Committee. John also serves as Rotary District 6270 Chair of the International Service Committee and Global Grants Committee.

John and LaRocque built a long-lasting friendship. LaRocque wrote John's recommendation for a Root-Tilden public service scholarship, which John won, sending him to New York University Law School.

During his time at Lawrence, John met a striking young woman two years his junior from Oklahoma named Sara. In the two years they were apart after John graduated and moved to New York, John regularly sent Sara flowers, impressing her dormmates.

"I'm a bit of a romantic."

They married soon after Sara's graduation. When asked to identify his proudest personal achievement, John doesn't skip a beat:

"Marrying my wife."



John and Rotarians in 2014 welcomed by a volcano puff

After Sara joined John in New York, the two took advantage of the vibrant arts scene. John highlights one particular concert in Carnegie Hall he'll never forget: a performance by the legendary Spanish guitarist Andres Segovia.

“One man, several guitars, with the hall filled and it was magic.”

Although John wanted to be a Wall Street lawyer, he saw some of his peers struggle to raise families in the city. John and Sara didn't want to move to a bedroom community, so when John received an offer to clerk for the Chief Justice of the Wisconsin Supreme Court, they returned to Wisconsin. They soon realized it was where they belonged.

“I was privileged to live in New York City for three years, but whenever I went there, I kissed the ground every time I came back to Wisconsin.”

John speaks of his professional career with warmth and gratitude.

“I'm fortunate to have spent 50 years practicing law. It was a profession, not a job.”

He is especially proud of his tenure serving on the State Bar of Wisconsin's Board of Governors.

Today, John and Sara reside in Milwaukee at St. John's on the Lake. Sara has a fascinating connection to Rotary through her work as a Masterson Method Certified Practitioner with the therapy animals at the MKE Urban Stables (four horses, two miniature horses and two miniature donkeys). John and Sara have three adult children and three grandchildren.



John's wife Sara with staff from the MKE Urban Stables

John hasn't slowed down much in retirement. In addition to his Rotary work, he spends his time reading three books at once (usually nonfiction with his book club, and a fiction and nonfiction book on his own), pursuing his love of music and enjoying time with Sara. A longtime member and Elder of Immanuel Presbyterian Church, John continues to sing in its choir.

His 2025 goal?

“To be able to play 18 holes of golf and shoot under 90 from the forward tees.”

John came to Rotary through his colleague Hugh Brown, a partner at his firm and a man John considers his “soulmate in the law.” The two enjoyed many wide-ranging conversations on their weekly walk between the old First Wisconsin building and the War Memorial.

After visiting Guatemala in 2014, John became hooked on the mission. He encourages everyone to participate in this extraordinary work firsthand. John devotes much of his time to the District 6270 International Service Committee, encouraging clubs in our District to engage in global service projects.

“Rotary is the best way I know to stay abreast of current events and be of service in Milwaukee and abroad.”

Editor's Note: *Rotary People of Action* is a bi-monthly series written by a group of Rotarians. This feature was written by Elizabeth Evans Draper.