

# Palo Alto Rotary Pinion

**Weekly Newsletter**

**Date:** January 26, 2009

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## UPCOMING PROGRAMS

**February 2 – Stanford Knight Fellow, Dionne Bunsha – Who's Riding the Tiger? Exploring the Underbelly of the Shining India Tiger.**

**February 9 – Dr Jennifer Tremmel – Woman's Heart Health**

**February 16 – DARK – Presidents Day Observed**

## **OPENERS**

DARYL SAVAGE led the Pledge of Allegiance. Mike announced that, AXEL MERK will speak on the economy at Ming's on Wednesday, February 11, 4:30-5:30.

## **VISITORS AND GUESTS**

DICK MANSFIELD introduced Wendy Kuehnl, guest of LYNDA STEELE.

## **OPENING REMARKS**

DAVE SMULLIN spoke of "The Way Through Uncertainty." As an example, he mentioned a letter from a friend who spoke of his parent's reaction to the uncertainty of victory in World War II after Pearl Harbor. They said they had the choice to either "freeze in fear or forge ahead," and chose the latter. Today's times are also very uncertain, and President Obama is appealing to service above self as the response. Dave concluded that while our finances may be threatened, "the feelings we bank as we help others cannot be taken from us."

## **4<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL COMMUNITY AWARDS DINNER AND AUCTION**

KEVIN CURRY described his team of "Irish Mafia" working on this event: DENNIS SHEEHAN, PATRICIA O'BRIEN, AND BRIAN STEEN, converted to BRIAN O'STEEN for the occasion. He listed the features that should motivate all to attend: a special tribute to SAM WEBSTER, Irish Dancers, the Jazz Connection, and the a cappella Stanford Harmonics. BRIAN also urged members to donate wine.

## **CHINESE NEW YEAR**

GLORIA HOM noted that this day was Chinese New Year, when people are encouraged to do only what they enjoy. At Ming's on Friday, 1/30, 6 P.M, there will be a great celebration and feast, including wine, with a program narrated by VICKY CHING. At a mere \$50/person, you'll never find a better bargain, and reservations will be accepted through 1/28.

## **OTHER ANNOUNCEMENTS**

MIKE reminded members that the Club is feeding the homeless on Wednesday, 1/28. MIKE MCMAHON reported that he and the following members participated in the Club's hands-on project with Habitat for Humanity on 1/10: LE LEVY, BOB WHITEHAIR, JOAN PLASTIRAS, BILL FOGARTY, ADRIAN MIKOLAJCZAK, WALT HAYS, and KAREN SINGER and her husband. WALT HAYS thanked members for contributing to Polio eradication, and asked those who forgot their checkbooks to write one at home, to The Rotary

Foundation, and mail it to him at 355 Parkside Drive, Palo Alto 94306. Blue badges were awarded to BILL JOHNSON, who only took about 10 years to achieve it, and to LEN ELY.

## **PRESIDENT'S CLUB**

STEVE PLAYER joined for three reasons: (1) a great trip to Antarctica; (2) in honor of the passing of former member RIX SNYDER, who founded the Stanford Travel Program; (3) and the fact that this was the 91<sup>st</sup> birthday of SAM WEBSTER.

## **PROGRAM**

DARYL SAVAGE introduced our own BILL JOHNSON, to speak on the topic, "Are Newspapers Dying—and Do We Care?" She noted that the *Palo Alto Weekly* was the first newspaper in the country to do an online edition, and currently gets 130,000 hits/month. For this and other reasons—such as publishing DARYL'S column—BILL was named Editor of the Year.

BILL'S talk contained a LOT of information: Newspapers are suffering in "implosion," with the large ones hurt the worst. Sample statistics: According to the Pew Center on the Press, 40% of the population now get their news online, compared with only 20% last year. Among those aged 18-34, only 18% read a printed paper; McClatchy stock is down 94%; jobs in the field are down 1/3 since 1990; and the LA Times and Chicago Tribune are bankrupt.

How did all this happen? It was a "perfect storm" of combined factors, including: (1) Craig's List, which is taking away much of profitable classified advertising; (2) industry complacency, since they were used to profits as high as 30%; (3) the general decline in the economy starting in 2007; (4) the fact that online editions give readers the opportunity to write back and have their comments published; (5) the green movement, which disapproves of the enormous use of paper, as well as other inefficiencies in printing; (6) the biggest rise in history in the cost of newsprint in 2008 (35%); and (7) big acquisitions, incurring big debts, that were made in 2006, just before the crash.

Why should we care?? The Media News Company now owns all the dailies in the Bay Area except the Chronicle, owned by Hearst, which has been losing money for years— and is the main creditor of the Mercury-News. In times past every city had a daily that covered local news. Then most of those were merged into metropolitan papers, which continued to cover local news until the crash, but now can no longer afford it. Also, one of the main services performed by newspapers is investigating and holding institutions accountable, and that service is getting harder to afford.

The solution? Within 5-8 years, the *Weekly* will probably no longer do a print edition. It is also exploring providing news to mobile phones. Older people still prefer print and they own many small businesses, so the challenge is to convince them to advertise online.

## **NEARBY MEETING PLACES**

[Palo Alto Rotary - Meeting Information](#)