



# Palo Alto Rotary Pinion

Weekly Newsletter

Date DECEMBER 13, 2010

Reporter: DONALD MORGAN

Editor: NICK NICHOLS

PRESIDENT MIKE led the Pledge at 12:15 and called the meeting to order at 12:30.

## VISITING ROTARIANS AND GUESTS

At MIKE's request, the following Visiting Rotarians introduced themselves, both former members of our club: Lisa Axelrad, of the Sunnyvale Sunrise Club; and Klaus Heineman, of the Gualala, CA Club.

DICK BUSH introduced Jazmine Chase, a recent grad interested in employment in Silicon Valley. STEVE EMSLIE introduced Tommy Fehrenbach. BARBARA MITCHELL introduced school board members Melissa Baten Caswell, Barbara Klausner, and Camille Townsend.

## OPENING REMARKS

SAM GORDON talked about the tendency of the media to emphasize bad news and ignore good news. He noted a recent New York Times lament that Army football team seniors had lost four times to Navy, rather than a celebration that Navy seniors had won four games against Army (a reminder that some found painful). He added the seeming media consensus that this is the worst time our nation has experienced, with which he compared the burning of the White House in 1812 by the British, the onset of the Civil War in 1861, and the much more recent dot com collapse. Asserting varying biases of the media, who receive good remuneration for writing what their supporters want to hear, he advised his audience always to consider the source, stay calm, think creatively, and not settle for the status quo.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS AND AWARDS

NINA MOORE reported that the Holiday Party had provided a wonderful time for those fortunate enough to attend. She singled out HERSH DAVIS for his help at the bar, and spoke appreciatively of 15 volunteers who worked the party. She praised E.J. HONG's daughter, Natalie, for her singing, and E.J. for making her available. NINA added that JOYCE CUSICK had done a lot of behind-the-scenes work, and concluded with thanks to VICKY CHING for making her home available. On behalf of the Club, PRESIDENT MIKE unveiled a token of appreciation for VICKY, a statue of the Buddha about two feet high, to add to her art collection at home.

ROGER SMITH spoke on behalf of the Palo Alto Rotary Endowment, pointing out complete local control and the enduring nature of the organization. For tax planning purposes, he said gifts should reference the Fund's federal tax identification number, 94-2815253.

JACK WOODSON invited Red Badgers and others to attend the next quarterly meeting of the Endowment Fund, the following morning at nine.

DAVE THORNTON reviewed the Club's support for its meals for the homeless program at the First Presbyterian Church. Thirty-one members helped serve dinner and clean up during the year, for a total of 1,600 meals. The leaders of the church's efforts greatly appreciate our assistance. At DAVE's request, those present who had helped stood up and received a round of applause.

DICK BUSH joined the President's Club respecting his guest Jazmine Chase's interest in local employment.

YORIKO KISHIMOTO joined the President's Club for two causes, appointments to the Mid-Peninsula Open Spaces Program and a Save Caltrain summit on January 29, 2011.

PRESIDENT MIKE reminded the group of the barbeque in Fremont on January 2 to welcome ROTARY INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT RAY KLINGINSMITH.

## THE PROGRAM

DIANA DIAMOND noted that a recent impartial international ranking of student performance placed the U.S. 17<sup>th</sup> overall, with Shanghai (not all of China) first. She then reviewed the academic qualifications and professional experience of today's speaker, Kevin Skelly, the Superintendent of Palo Alto Schools.

The Superintendent's topic was "Palo Alto Education: Navigating the Tip of the Iceberg." Noting the presence of all five School Board Members, he thanked the Club for its support of education. He had been a Rotarian for some years and was proud to be a Paul Harris Fellow. He praised the all-around merits of Palo Alto public school students, who score very high on SATs, college admissions, and athletic competitions. They compare favorably with Shanghai, but the same is not true nationwide. What a school system needs most depends on its economic and cultural environment. Those schools at the top need better-qualified teachers, and should emphasize continuing professional development of their faculties. Major issues surround funding of public sector pensions, which have been based on an unrealistically high eight percent annual return on investments. Current tenure protections warrant modification, but not abolition. Teacher unions are quite powerful and inflexible. Principals should have more control over retention, and should place a high value on creativity of both teachers and students.

Superintendent Skelly responded to questions from the audience after completing his prepared remarks. Following a warm round of applause, PRESIDENT MIKE told him the Club was presenting a dictionary to the Green Oaks Academy in East Palo Alto in his honor.

**UPCOMING PROGRAMS**

[Palo Alto Rotary - Speakers Schedule](#)

December 20 – **West Bay Opera**, Holiday Program

December 27 – Dark (No meeting)

**NEARBY MEETING PLACES:**

[Palo Alto Rotary - Meeting Information](#)