

Palo Alto Rotary Pinion

February 6, 2023



Chartered: May 1, 1922

WELCOME

President **KAREN ROHDE** called us to order for our February 6 meeting and asked President-Elect **LIZ KNISS** to introduce visiting Rotarians and guests: Song Wang paid us a call as a new member of University Rotary.... Guest Bing Wei has been active in Stop Asian Hate and is Co-VP of Neighbors Abroad for its sister city relationship with the Yangpu District of Shanghai.... Jack Adler, a longtime resident of Palo Alto who now lives at the Moldow Center, was the guest of **LE LEVY**.... Gary Anwyl, former Scoutmaster of Troop 5 under our club's sponsorship, was the guest of **GEOFF ZIMAN**.... Joy Oche, a member of our city's Parks & Recreation Commission, joined via Zoom as the guest of **ANNE CRIBBS**.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

LINNET KWOK presented our Thought for the Day, a poem by Jean d'Ormesson called "The Train of Life." At birth, we board the train and meet our parents. We believe they will always travel by our side, but at one station or another, they step down. As time goes by, other significant people board - siblings, children, friends, and even the love of our life. Some passengers join and leave unnoticed; we don't even realize that they vacate their seats. A successful journey means having a good relationship with all the other passengers, giving the best of ourselves because we don't know which station will be the one where we step off. We must travel in the best possible way: loving, forgiving,

giving, and sharing.... Linnet closed by thanking each of us for being one of the passengers on her train.

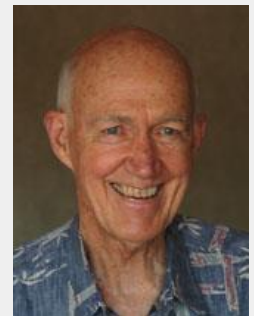
IMPORTANT CLUB ANNOUNCEMENT

Our last Monday at the Elks' Club will be February 27.

STEVE EMSLIE and **BRUCE GEE** led our meeting space task force, supported by **GINNY LEAR, IRIS KOROL** and **DANA TOM**. With the goal of finding a venue that allows us to continue our hybrid format, is affordable, and provides flexibility about whether to purchase lunch or just beverages. Based on the Task Force's recommendations, the Club's Board voted on it this Wednesday.

PRESIDENTS CLUB

When President **KAREN** called for donations to the President's Club, **ROGER SMITH** voiced praise and appreciation for **WALT HAYS**, recalling the work **WALT** had done with him in efforts to "rightsize" the City Council. **ROGER** donated \$2,000 toward our club's charitable work in **WALT'S** honor....**ARIELLE HENDELL** joined the President's Club to honor **MATT DOLAN'S** daughter Lizzie, who was a young woman of great sweetness and even greater courage.



BEN THRELKELD shared that his daughter Brooke, a senior at Paly, is conducting a research project on how “circular” business models can help individuals reduce their environmental footprints. She is collecting used spectacles, administering a short survey on sustainable eyewear, and with Ben’s participation hosting a free eye exam clinic for needy patients.



To help you can -

- **Donate used spectacles** at Cambridge Optometry, 250 Cambridge Ave., from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. before February 23.
- **Complete a short survey** on sustainable eyewear that you’ll find attached to a February 7 email message from Ben.
- **Contact Ben** if you know of a needy person who could benefit from a free eye exam and a pair of glasses made with donated frames.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

LE LEVY made an announcement regarding the “Rotary Cranks,” an affinity group for avid cyclists; please see Le for information.... Our Chinese New Year celebration for the Year of the Rabbit was a huge success, thanks to work by **GLORIA HOM AND MATT DOLAN**, covering for GLORIA during her



travels. Host Larry Chu explained and masterfully presented ten memorable courses.... Our next social event will be a **TGIF** on the last Friday of the month, February 24, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the home of Rick & President-Elect **LIZ KNISS**.

SERVICE CORNER

President KAREN thanked **STEVE EMSLIE** and **BRUCE SWENSON** for assisting with our monthly food packaging and distribution activity at Nuestra Casa in Redwood City.

On the 1st Wednesday of every month, Rotarians have the opportunity to prepare and distribute food to insecure families at **Nuestra Casa**. The next opportunity is **March 1st**, at Rise City Church in Redwood City, from 2:00 to 4:00 pm and 4:00 to 6:00 pm. Please contact **CHARLIE WEIDANZ**. **GEOFF BALL** called our attention to vitally important decisions that are being made by the Palo Alto City Council regarding use of natural gas (methane) in commercial and residential buildings in relation to the city’s goal of aggressive reductions in greenhouse emissions.

DISTRICT 5170 ANNOUNCEMENTS

On January 29, Rotary District 5170 held a successful fundraiser, “Bright Winter of Hope,” that raised money to send generators to the Ukraine. Members of our club were able to contribute \$2,625 to the relief fund, approximately enough to purchase five generators at the discount price of \$550 each negotiated for Rotary; the event raised more than \$60,000 in all. The generators will provide power and heat to save lives in subzero temperatures

An “International Women’s Day” event is planned for Sunday, **March 19**, also at the Summit Center (\$60 for Rotarians, \$30 for guests).

The District Conference will take place Saturday, **April 29**, in a new one-day format at the Computer History Museum. More information is available for all of these District events as rotarydistrict5170.org.

THE ROTARY FOUNDATION

Our club is proud of its strong tradition of international service and the contributions of our members to the Rotary Foundation that support the humanitarian work of Rotary worldwide. **CASH ALAEE** is working to complete our club's Rotary Foundation drive for the current Rotary year. To date, we have contributed \$18,583 to the Foundation, still \$1,417 short of our goal of \$20,000 for the year. You also contributed \$3,314 to the End Polio fund, exceeding our goal of \$2,000. Keep in mind that half of what you give comes back to us in funds for our club's chosen World Community Service Projects.



Rotarians who contribute a cumulative total of \$1,000 to the Rotary Foundation are recognized as Paul Harris Fellows. Additional gifts over time are recognized with Paul Harris emblems set with small gems that recognize members' additional contributions. President KAREN announced the names of our club's members who have recently attained new awards within the Paul Harris program: **NANCY PETERS, KAREN ROHDE, STEVE PLAYER, KATIE SEEDMAN, JAYNE BOOKER TOM GRACON, E.J. HONG, JULIE**

JEROME, SUSAN LUTTER, DANA TOM, and DAVE SMULLIN. In addition, KAREN had the privilege of recognizing **GEOFF ZIMAN** with a Paul Harris "Major Donor" award, an honor conferred on those who have contributed in total \$10,000 or more. Congratulations, GEOFF! We're proud of you and grateful for the example you have set.

TODAY'S PROGRAM

Our speaker for the day, joining us via Zoom, was Professor Jeb Barnes, introduced by Sally Tomlinson. A graduate of the University of Chicago Law School, Jeb was a commercial



litigator in Boston and San Francisco before leaving the practice of law to pursue a doctorate in political science at the University of California, Berkeley. In 2001, he joined the faculty at USC, where he teaches classes in law, American politics, and public policy. He has written on topics ranging from disability rights to the asbestos crisis and litigation reform.

The question that Professor Barnes asked us to consider was whether the Supreme Court of the United States is truly a court of law or, as some would argue "a court of politics." He said that he hoped to offer a perspective that pushed back against what he called "the dichotomies presented by our polarized media." One argument that we hear is that Supreme Court Justices are merely politicians in black robes. Senator Elizabeth Warren has called them, or some of them, "overtly partisan." Former President Trump excoriated the Court for partisanship whenever it refused to support him. On the other hand, former

Justice Stephen Breyer declared forcefully that “we are not nine junior varsity politicians.” The late Court of Appeals Judge Patricia Wald, former Chief Judge of the DC Circuit, observed most of the matters that appellate judges must consider are technical and regulatory issues that have little to do with politics.

Professor Barnes noted that the present Supreme Court comprises six Republican appointees and three Democrat appointees. He argued that if the Court is truly political, we would expect to see most issues determined by 6 to 3 or 5 to 4 majorities, with the nine Justices almost always following the lead of their parties. What the numbers show – based on information published online in the SCOTUSblog.com statistics pages – is that although the number of unanimous decisions has indeed declined, the most common majorities are 9 to 0, 8 to 1 and 7 to 2 – in other words, decisions that do *not* reflect the expected 6 to 3 pattern or a 5 to 4 majority resulting from a single Justice breaking ranks. For example, Justice Kagan, whom you might expect to be outvoted on partisan issues, is nevertheless in the majority 58% of the time; Justice Gorsuch, supposedly a member of a six-member conservative “block,” is in the majority 78% of the time but dissents in 22% of all cases. [In the current Term, Gorsuch is in the majority 75% of the time, Kagan 69%.] Overall, 70% of decided cases do not follow the 6 to 3 or 5 to 4 split that you might expect on a partisan basis.... In response to a question, Professor Barnes agreed that the direction the Court takes is also determined by its decisions about which matters it will hear; he observed that dissenters often plant “dicta” in their opinions that send signals about the issues members of the Court may wish to hear about in the future.

TODAY’S VOLUNTEERS

Greeter: **Jerry Underdahl**
 Welcome Desk/Cashier: **Katie Seedman, Rebecca Gerald**
 Meeting Set-Up: **Bruce Winterhof**
 Microphones: **Dana Tom**
 Zoom/Hybrid Host: **Ben Threlkeld**
 Pinion writer: **Hal Mickelson**
 Pinion editor: **Ginny Lear**

UPCOMING MEETINGS/PROGRAMS

February 13 Club meeting of 12:15-1:30 pm	Tim Bond , Artistic Director at TheatreWorks
February 20 No meeting	PRESIDENTS DAY DARK
February 27 Club meeting of 12:15-1:30 pm	Mayor Lydia Kou <i>2023 in Palo Alto</i>
March 6 Club meeting of 12:15-1:30 pm	1ST MEETING at NEW LOCATION: Soon to be announced