

Palo Alto Rotary Pinion

July 21, 2025

Writer: Sally Tomlinson



Celebrating 103 years of Service

UNITE FOR GOOD 2025-2026

President **BRUCE GEE** opened with a mutual roomer-zoomer wave, and then invited **RALPH ADAMS** to welcome visiting Rotarians and guests. **ERIC JENSEN** introduced Audrey Jacob who once was a member of our club before moving to Santa Cruz. **STEVE EMSLIE** introduced his guest Vicki Axelrod Feinstein.



PRESIDENTS CLUB

ERIC JENSEN joined in honor of his granddaughter, Willow, who just turned two years old this week. **RANDA HOFFMAN** celebrated her new office which means she no longer has to work from home. **RICHARD KELLER** joined in honor of his longtime friend, **STEVE MADSEN**, who will be moving soon to a senior living residence in Richmond, Virginia to be near his daughter and her family. **BRUCE GEE** joined to recognize his recent emotional roller-coaster. He went from the wedding of his daughter to the funeral of his 40-year friend Jim Gable, where he gave the eulogy. Both events brought into focus the importance of long friendships. Reminded of long friendships, **JACKIE WHEELER** joined in honor of her friend that she had the pleasure of knowing for 60 years

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

Referring to the principles of integrity and duty emphasized by his alma mater, West Point, **RALPH ADAMS** spoke of our duty as Rotarians. The four-way test is hierarchical, so that all rests on the first test, is it the truth? His thoughts about the importance of truth recently surfaced on a visit to the National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, Alabama. This museum honors over 4400 people who were lynched in our country between 1877 and 1950, their names engraved on plaques. Ralph concluded his sober remarks with the West Point plea, "Help me to strengthen my heart to do the harder right and not the easier wrong."



CLUB NEWS AND UPDATES

At the President's invitation, **GINNY LEAR** asked us all to please pay our dues! You can pay online through the website, in person at a meeting, or you can mail a check. Thank you!

ROTARY LIFE HACKS

In line with his desire to make our meetings useful, President **BRUCE** introduced a new activity called Rotary Life Hacks. This is your chance to share or hear easy tricks that make life easier!

The rules are: The hack can be explained in 30 seconds and will save you at least a minute, giving you a 200% payback. Bruce provided two examples.

- Tying your shoes: Instead of the double knot that is a pain to untie, BRUCE suggests

that all you have to do is twist the lace twice around before tightening the loops. This Pinion writer is stumped as to exactly how this works, so perhaps the next Life Hack can offer a demonstration!

· Finding photos on your phone: Open the photo app, find the search button, enter Rotary (for example) and up will come all of your photos of Rotary activities! If you have a life hack, tell BRUCE so he can give you 30 seconds at the podium.

PROGRAM



BETSY BECHTEL introduced our speaker, **Ken Yeager**, former Santa Clara County Supervisor and Professor of Political Science at Cal State San Jose. Betsy has known Ken since they both worked for the County

Board of Supervisors in the 1970's. He was the first openly gay elected official in Santa Clara County. He has served for 28 years in public office, finishing his last term in 2018. Ken spoke to us about his career in politics and his advocacy for LGBTQ rights.

Ken opened by noting that in addition to knowing Betsy for 40 years, he has known **SHERRI SAGER** equally as long.

In the mid-1970's, there were no protections for gay rights at the state or national level, so it was left to cities to act. A number of liberal cities passed laws, most notably Miami, but this resulted in a Christian extremist backlash. With horrible depictions of gays, Anita Bryant, Jerry Fallwell, and Jack Robinson started the Save the Children campaign, which was the beginning of the anti-gay rights movement. Miami voted overwhelmingly to repeal their liberal law. The Board of Supervisors in San Jose passed non-discrimination ordinances, but anti-gay rights extremists put anti-rights

measure on the ballot in 1980, and with a huge amount of anti-gay campaigning, the measure eliminating rights won by a 75-25% margin.

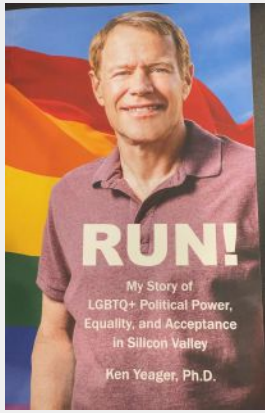
Ken was driven to speak out in 1984 in an op-ed after hearing elected officials saying that gay people should not get society's stamp of approval. The op-ed was his first public coming out. He then joined to form BAYMEC, the Bay Area Municipal Elections Committee, an LGBTQ political action group. Over the years, they met with politicians and had some productive conversations. Then in the mid-1980's came AIDS, God's retribution, sparking a new version of anti-gay efforts. Ken asked the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors for funding to help those suffering from AIDS and they approved his request in 1986.

When he won a seat on the San Jose / Evergreen Community College District Board, he was the first openly gay person to be elected, which was reported on CNN. Each of his political wins became a "first" as he moved into different roles. Ken won a seat on the San Jose City Council despite heavy anti-gay campaigning against him. After he was termed out, he ran for a seat on the SC County Board of Supervisors with strong endorsement from the SJ Mercury news, winning with over 50% of the vote, which avoided the need for a run-off. When CA passed a law permitting same-sex marriages, as a County Supervisor he was able to marry couples.

Since retiring from politics, he has stayed active in BAYMEC and other non-profits.

In response to questions, Ken explained that the national right to gay marriage may be





challenged. He believes that people can change their way of thinking about LGBTQ people when they get to know individuals, but that may be harder for trans people. It will be important not to give up. The fight for trans rights will be a tough fight.

Ken stayed to answer questions and to sell

copies of his autobiography, "Run! My Story of LGBTQ+ Political Power, Equality, and Acceptance in Silicon Valley".

MEETING

MEETING ADJOURNED

President BRUCE closed the meeting with thanks to our speaker.

MEETING VOLUNTEERS

- Greeters: Matt Dolan, Eric Jensen**
- Welcome Desk: Rebecca Gerald**
- A/V: Dana Tom**
- Pinion Writer: Sally Tomlinson**
- Pinion Editor: Ginny Lear**

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

July 28 12:15-1:30pm Club Meeting	David Mariani, Mariani Investments Topic: <i>The Imperiled Honeybee and the Emergence of the Bee Bank</i>
August 4 12:15-1:30pm Club Meeting	Zareen Khan, author and restaurateur, in conversation with our own Henrietta Burroughs
August 11 12:15-1:30pm Club Meeting	Herb Ritter, District Governor, 5170 Topic: Plans for 2025-2026
August 18 12:15-1:30pm Club Meeting	ERIC JENSEN, leads us in a Hands On, Sleeves Up Project
August 25 12:15-1:30pm Club Meeting	STEVE EMSLIE, presents 3 NEW MEMBER TALKS