

Palo Alto Rotary Pinion

March 2, 2026

Writer: Randa Hoffman



Celebrating 104 years of Service

UNITE FOR GOOD 2025-2026

President **BRUCE GEE** opened the meeting thanking **JAKE YOO** for securing today's outstanding speaker, promising an interesting program. Zoomers were lively and engaged before the meeting began.

President-elect **CHARLIE WEIDANZ** called on members with guests.



Marguerite Gong Hancock, President and CEO of the new Palo Alto Museum, was a guest of **IRIS KOROL**.

Marguerite will be speaking to the club in the coming months with exciting news about the

museum, but wanted to come meet the group first.

STEVE EMSLIE introduced his guests Maria and Stuart Korets.

RANDA HOFFMAN introduced guests Andres Calzada from Leadership Palo Alto, brought by **KANIKA SABHARWAL**.

Jennie Savage was welcomed for her third visit — President **BRUCE** noted she looks ready for a membership application!

Honored to have **Steve Wright, PDG of District 5150** and **Dan Gerald, PDG of District 5160** join us on Zoom, as did Esther Yoo, wife of **JAKE YOO**.

PRESIDENTS CLUB

BRIAN STEEN and his wife Sandra sing in the Bay Choral Guild and shared two upcoming concerts: March 7th at Campbell Methodist Church and Sunday at First Congregational Church in Palo Alto, at the corner of Embarcadero and Lewis, closing with a magnificent piece by Johann Sebastian Bach. General admission: \$30; seniors: \$25. Tickets and subscriptions are available on the website.

CASH ALAEE shared heartfelt remarks about recent developments in Iran and how his family members here and those living there are feeling.

RANDA HOFFMAN joined with two entries: thanking **ERIC JENSEN** for excellent advice given back in December, and thanking **KANIKA SABHARWAL** for the warm welcome at Heritage Bank — where Rosie the dog came along and was treated so sweetly. Their first visit to the bank!

CHINESE NEW YEAR DINNER MARCH 5th

GLORIA HOM came to the podium brimming with excitement about the Chinese New Year Banquet at Chef Chu's Restaurant, Thursday, March 5, 5:30–8:00 p.m. **GLORIA** has a special connection with Chef Chu — she calls, he picks up! The menu is exceptional, and Chef Chu himself will



share the history behind each dish. "You will not go home hungry," she promised. LAST CALL brought in a few more diners! We will have a roomful of delicious fun!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Members **STANS KLEIJNEN and JOOP VERBAKEN**, just back from two months in India, presented highlights from visits to 2 Rotary clubs and 3 club-supported projects. They took 5 club banners to exchange and returned with 2 banners for BRUCE. Projects included the Mumbai Royale, an eye hospital



in Pune (recently receiving a \$5,000 club grant, having treated 800,000 patients), and a Center for Street Children in Mumbai supporting 85 kids. STANS and JOOP also personally gifted 100+ books for the children. WCS Co-Chair STANS encouraged

members to join the World Community Service committee.

Environmental Committee Co-Chair **RANDA HOFFMAN** shared that she and KATHY MERRILL, president of the Mountain View Rotary Club, planted a tree on Valentine's



Day as part of a local environmental project — a love tree! They plan to do it again in May.



"CRABSOLUTELY!" ANNUAL FUNDRAISER

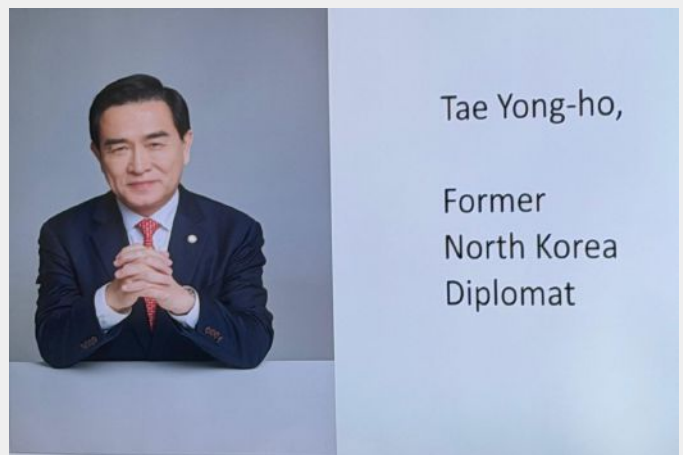
BRUCE noted that the annual Rotary fundraiser will be **April 18th at Mitchell Park**. Silent Auction items are requested by **SALLY TOMLINSON**.

Details to follow, Save the Date!

A live auction item there will be a [cruise by luxury yacht highlighting the UNESCO Treasures of Ancient Greece, circumnavigating the Peloponnese, September 17-26, 2026](#).

PROGRAM

Today's speaker was introduced by JAKE YOO, who noted that the more he researched the speaker, the more impressed he became. The club was honored to welcome **HON. TAE YONG-HO**, a former North Korean diplomat and current Congressman, joined us live from South Korea — where it was morning.



Tae Yong-ho,
Former
North Korea
Diplomat

His topic is titled: "Life in North Korea from the Heart of the Regime - and Freedom"

Born in Pyongyang in 1962 into the privileged class, Hon. Tae spent decades as a diplomat, genuinely believing the North Korean system was the best in the world. That belief began to crack when he was posted to Denmark and saw firsthand that everything he'd been taught about capitalism was false. "The paradise road I had been taught about was not North Korea. It was Denmark." He remained inside the system for nearly 40 more years because of guilt by association — in North Korea, a defector's entire family is punished and stripped of everything. The turning point came when his eldest son was

finally able to join him in London in 2014. That night, the family decided they would never return. "As a father, I realized what I could give my children was not money or property, but freedom." He described quiet but powerful signs of change inside North Korea: 400,000 private markets, South Korean culture smuggled across the China border, and a growing underground Christian network — which he compared to the church movement that brought down the Berlin Wall. On reunification, he was clear: it must be achieved peacefully. He called on America to treat North Korea as the dictatorship it is and raise global awareness of human rights violations. "We should not compromise with dictators." A very interesting Q&A followed. The room — and the Zoom — were moved and inspired.

MEETING ADJOURNED

President BRUCE closed the meeting, with warm thanks to everyone, especially today's volunteers, and to Hon. Tae for his courage and his extraordinary personal story. BRUCE also thanked everyone for coming and especially today's club volunteers.

MEETING VOLUNTEERS

- Greeter:** Sophie Tsang
- Welcome Desk:** Rebecca Gerald
- Hybrid Host:** Dana Tom
- Microphone:** Garry Lim
- Pinion Writer:** Randa Hoffman
- Pinion Editor:** Ginny Lear

UPCOMING PROGRAMS & EVENTS

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| March 5 5:30-8:00 PM | Chinese New Year's banquet, Chef Chu's Restaurant Plan on a festive evening! |
| March 9 12:15 - 1:30 PM Club Meeting | Ken Graham, Chair Advisory Committee for RotaCare Free Clinic Topic: Update on Clinic Reboot |
| March 16 12:15 - 1:30 PM Club Meeting | Christina Passariello, CNBC Bureau Chief Topic; AI: From a Journalist Perspective |
| March 23 12:15 - 1:30 PM Club Meeting | Jon Osaki, filmmaker and E.D. of the Japanese Community Youth Council in SF Topic: Alternative Facts: The Lies of Executive Order 9066 |
| March 30 12:15 - 1:30 PM Club Meeting | Vicki Veenker, Mayor of Palo Alto Topic: Goals and Challenges for 2026 |
| April 18 5:30-8:30 pm Mitchell Park | Annual Crabfest and Pasta Fundraiser Proceeds benefit Local Charities and Community College Scholarships |