



The Rotary Club of Williamstown, Massachusetts

Club Number 6549; District 7890 Every Tuesday, Noon, The Williams Inn

March 2017

Anne R. Skinner, Editor

The 'End of the World'

Chip Lovett, Williams chemistry professor, has a wide range of interests, including running marathons. In 2010 he and his wife visited Belize (it was either that or Switzerland for their winter vacation) and by the end of the visit had bought some property in Placentia. They built a house and began to look around. The peninsula where the property is located is one of the poorer areas of the country. Many children at best have a few years of primary education. High school tuition of roughly \$500/year is prohibitive. So in 2012 Chip started the End of the World marathon (named after a 19th century description by Aldous Huxley of what was then British Guyana). It is one of a group of 'peace marathons', as well as a destination marathon. As the peninsula is 15 miles long, there can be a half-marathon of one length, and then a marathon of a round trip. In 2013 Chip learned that the Placentia Rotary Club had a scholarship fund but no money so he turned over the fundraising to them. Since then they have raised tens of thousands. Local businesses, mostly resorts, are major sponsors. The resulting student recipients are very motivated, and the club provides mentors. Running has not been a part of Belize culture but local participation has been climbing. There are now kids running clubs for boys and girls. In 2016 nearly 200 runners came from 8 countries, 17 US states, and Belize. Hank Art (Williams biology professor) has won his class almost every year! A feature of this marathon you won't see in Boston is competition between water stations for best set-up, costume and theme. Although local Rotarians are helping, every December Chip leaves for Belize with four suitcases of signs, medals, trophies, and bags with sponsor logos! At 3:30 a.m. he calls the bus drivers to pick up the runners. The amount of local help has increased – the first couple of years he painted the mile signs on the road himself! What with the organizational details he has actually never run the race. We collected some Happy Dollars to help in a very small way this example of "Service Above Self".



Money, money..

Rob Abel, Williams '91, has spent 16 years (so far) at what is now Mountain One Investments helping individuals and trusts manage their money. With the variety of clients he has to be multi-knowledgeable. He describes current times as

“interesting”; we know what that means. Everyone is inundated with information both good and bad, and it’s not easy to sort it out. He tries to educate his clients on some of the better sources, but it is hard when equally smart people are saying diametrically opposite things. Where will the market be on 12/31/17? It will either be up, down or unchanged! Overall there’s good news on the economy. Consumer confidence is up; wage growth is also. However, there’s also a lot of uncertainty on the political scene. The market may be anticipating change that has not occurred and may be harder to accomplish than the current administration assumed. There’s definitely a right way and a wrong way; it’s just that you don’t know which is which until afterwards! Rob has a master’s degree in psychology, which he finds really useful as he looks at behavioral finance. He does recommend that everyone have a financial advisor who can advocate patience. For most people what they could get is much greater what they actually get for their investments, especially if decisions are based on an emotional reaction, such as trying to time the market. They need to look long-term and not panic if there is some shrinkage in their assets; in the long-term assets are most likely to increase. Rob would not be surprised if there were a correction of as much as 20% (that’s 4000 points on the Dow, FYI) sometime, but he has no idea when. Finally in answer to a question he supports a ‘fix’ for Social Security of raising the cap on taxed income. It turned out that Rob was speaking to us on his birthday (also Valerie Hall’s)!



And you thought MassMOCA was about art!



Joe Thompson, Executive Director of MassMOCA (and Williams '81) did discuss some of the art that will go into the newest space at the museum. However he focused much more on the economics not only of his operation but also the overall need for economic development in the area. His main push – convert daytrippers to overnight visitors, something Steve O’Hern mentioned as well. The economic multiplier

ranges from 4 to 6. How to do this? Cross-marketing, not just of the different museums in the area but also the other attractions such as hiking, or biking. In fact he is so enthusiastic about the latter than he is putting a bike path through the MassMOCA campus as part of the Adams-Williamstown bike link. Let us not minimize the benefits of MassMOCA, though. The museum yields something like \$20M/year, mostly from direct benefits such as admission fees and sales, but also significantly from the new businesses that have sprung up in North Adams. As he said, before 1999, if you lived in Williamstown and wanted to go out for dinner, it would not have occurred to you to go to North Adams. Now it is more like 50:50. The Porches is one of the most successful lodging options not just in North Adams but in the county as a whole. This is not to neglect the museum itself. It had already doubled in size from the initial buildings and is increasing by roughly 50% again with the newly renovated Building 6. Even better from a visitor’s point of view, the pathway through the various exhibits is non-linear, so one doesn’t see the same things twice. And the exhibits in the new space will come from long-term partnerships, such as the one with Laurie Anderson

whereby she will have studio space for 15 years and during that time will exhibit works as they are completed. Collaborating with the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation will bring works from the residency at Captiva Island. There will be plenty to bring people back time and again. And don't forget the music festivals, an essential part of the effort to bring people to the area during 'shoulder seasons' when tourism could use a boost. Those are now about 50% of the museum's programming. With all this going on we should be very grateful that Joe could find time to come and speak to us!

Club News

Fundraising update

Our Great Breakfast Buffet at the Commons has netted us \$1000 so far! That's above last year. Thanks to all who helped.



Heads up!

We still have gift certificates from Casino Night. On April 4th we will run a silent auction for them, so come and bid on them while listening to a superior talk. Or contact Maureen before then and get one for only \$20.



And why do we do all this fund-raising?



The Berkshire Food Project has a new stove, thanks to our District Grant! When it has been installed we will have a celebratory meeting in North Adams.

PREVIEW OF COMING ATTRACTIONS

April Schedule

- Apr. 3rd — Board Meeting, 5 p.m., Williams Inn
- Apr. 4th — Jim Mahon on the future of Cuba
- Apr. 11th — Brent Heeringa on Mindburner, a password storage app
- Apr. 18th — Jeff Thomas on his start-up business incubator
- Apr. 25th — Jennifer Trainer Thompson on Hancock Shaker Village

The editor thanks Fred Ley and Linda Sweeney for photos and notes.