

Rotary Minutes 14 Jan 2020

Rotary Club of Honolulu
Royal Hawaiian Hotel Monarch Room

PRESIDING: PRESIDENT Paul Saito

The inspiration, given by **Rob Hale**, who related his grandson's Christmas Letter which drew many smiles and much laughter. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by **Craig Robinson**. The singing of "God Bless America," was led by **Lyla Berg**, accompanied by **Craig Robinson**. **Michael Marsh** introduced our visitors. **Rotary** visitors included: **Mike Ferguson** from Fairbanks RC (enjoying Hawaii respite from the cold); **Peg Jackson** Lafayette RC of Lafayette CA, **Rock Jennison & Evelyn Steifel** of Greeley RC of Greeley CO.

Birthdays this week include:

Brent Lewis on 14 Jan, **Karin Holma** on 19 Jan, and we failed to recognize **Max Besenbruch** last week who celebrated his birthday on New Years Day.

Club Anniversaries:

Last week we failed to recognize the Club anniversary of **Phil Whitney** who celebrated **43 years** of membership on 4 Jan.

This week's anniversaries are:

Mike Herb 19 Years (Sponsor from member Bud Smyser)
Dawn Marie 14 Years (Sponsor Pam Chambers)

Announcements:

Dementia in Hawaii: Care Option and Resources: **Rick Tabor** alerted members to the opportunity to attend a free seminar on Dementia at Chaminade University Clarence TC Ching Conference Center from 8 am-1pm on Saturday 18 Jan. Space limited. Reserve spot or get information by calling (808) 798-8706.

Paul Harris Sign Up: **Sam Haas** announced the next Paul Harris Day will be in lieu of the 25 Feb regular Club meeting. Sign-ups are solicited now from Club Members who can host at their organization or non-profit. Many formats can be considered and the sponsor is not required to host lunch and if desired can ask for members to Brown Bag or pay for catered lunch. Please contact Sam with any questions or for suggestions.

Philippines Project: **Dave Shanahan** announced the location (Dumaguete City Negros Oriental Island Philippines) Dates (15-21 Mar) the Cost (\$180 plus individually arranged RT Airfare) and the Orientation Meeting (29 Jan 6:30 pm at 3d floor Atherton Board Rm. Nuuanu YMCA Pali Hwy).

Speaker Presentation: Keoki Kerr Director of Communications HSTA (Hawaii State Teachers Association) and Former Broadcast Journalist.

Linda Coble introduced Keoki and described his 25 year television journalism career which preceded his current role as the Communications Director for the state's largest public employee union. After a brief description of his career highlights, **Linda** set about in a Talk Story format quizzing Keoki in ways that we have all delighted seeing her employ before. She expertly drew from him anecdotes reminiscent of his growing up and maturation in Journalism and later HSTA. We learned that both of them were born on the same day (10 Jan) 20 years apart. **Linda** asked Keoki what had been the spark for his journey to journalism and Keoki said it had been the searing effect of listening to a Congressional Debate forum at Central Union Church when he was in 4th grade. From that moment on, he was fixed in his passion to someday become a journalist of the stature of those he saw at that debate. He related how he would tape record news broadcasts and transcribe them and delightfully befuddle his parents (steered usually with double martinis) with his ½ hour newscasts wherein he would use bulletin boards and every clock in the house to create his broadcast set. He would create his own content by telephoning up legislators and officials to interview them pretending to be a woman in hopes that his pre-adolescent voice would not give him away. At 16 he got a job as a production assistant at a local radio station and during this period would send away for how-to books on covering specific types of stories. At 20, searching for a break-in job in TV journalism, he surmised that going for the 3 out of 3 rated TV station KITV would give him the best shot at doing substantial vs petty tasks. Soon Keoki was being asked to do more and more. One of the highlights he pointed to during his early years was the opportunity to interview Ferdinand Marcos and directly confront him to answer whether he was supporting sedition and overthrow of Corazon Aquino in the Philippines during his "retirement" in Hawaii. Asked how TV News had changed he related that of course Technology had made great strides since his early days but that other issues were of perhaps more profound and troubling nature. These included: fewer people in the newsrooms providing less depth, breadth and experience; the one-man-band paradigm of now being required to seek out, write, film, and broadcast stories; the requirement to maintain and continuously refresh their social media presence; and the disappearance of "beats," where expertise could be achieved over time, to one of everyone does everything. He said one of his continuing guides was a passion to "Comfort the afflicted and Afflict the Comfortable." Now with his several years out of TV journalism, **Linda** asked him "Do you miss it"? He replied "yes but "it" is no longer there." The changes he had earlier described had made the departure easier.

Accused by colleagues of "going to the Dark Side" when he departed journalism to work in communications, he would protest that certainly by representing teachers who are near universally recognized as overworked and underpaid he really should be credited for merely going to the "Beige side." At HSTA he has sought to expose the stories that spark improvement. The Hawaii teachers have the lowest cost of living adjusted pay in the country. The hemorrhage of teachers from our system has been enormous and includes not just the effects of the bow wave of boomer retirements but troublingly the youngest teachers as well. The slang "GBD" – "Gone by December" is a refrain for students who look in sadness to the turnover especially among new teachers. Emergency hires as gap fillers are for the most part under or unqualified for the subjects that they are being brought in to teach. Some progress is being made but it is slow- things like critical skill pay differentials for up to \$8k/yr are helping somewhat. Initiatives and timetables to get A/C in sweltering classrooms have been too slow. Millennial Teachers are

voting with their feet. Simple solutions are not going to get us to where the system has to move. We need a holistic approach that attacks a host of issues simultaneously. These issues include such items as teacher housing, recruitment incentives, retention initiatives, classroom resources, wrap around services for the neediest of children who are distracted from learning for lack of basics like a way to clean their clothes, proper meals, and things like dental checks. HTSA does have a comprehensive 5 year plan, nearly ready for release, which will address this need for a holistic approach. Getting our legislators and senior state government officials, most of whom send their own children to private school, to be forced to confront the needs head on will be a full spectrum communications effort of HSTA.

Following his interview by **Linda** several members asked questions. The last question was “Who were the most memorable people you have worked with”. Keoki offered that the venerable KITV News Director Wally Zimmermann had given him some valuable advice after a Frank Fasi interview in which Keoki had curtly demanded answers from the clearly reticent former Mayor. Wally said “Make sure you keep the audience on your side”. He said he learned that day the Golden Rule which now, being on the other side of the reporter questions, he certainly appreciates in the journalists he now confronts.

Keoki and **Paul** signed a book “**Look Both Ways**” which will be donated to Palolo Elementary School.

Next week’s meeting is in the Regency Room and will feature **Rick Blangiardi** President and GM of Hawaii News Now.

Meeting was adjourned at 1 pm.

Respectfully submitted, **David M Shanahan**, Scribe