



The VFW graciously hosted the Naples Rotary for our January Evening Meeting this past Monday. Not only were the atmosphere and service warm and friendly, but we were treated to a delicious buffet dinner as well! Thirty-three members, along with eight guests, gathered for a memorable evening that was sure to touch the hearts of all...



President Jack opened the meeting, as we rose along with him, to recite The Pledge. In light of it being so close to the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., John French chose a very appropriate song. He led us in the singing of "America". In his Blessing, Steve said, "We bow our heads in thanks, Lord, for giving us the resources to serve others". Our guests were then introduced, and that included Sharon, Alvaro, Kathleen, Mindy, Frank, Jean, Tad, and Jessie.

After the introduction of guests, Pres. Jack extended warm words of thanks to our hosts at the VFW. (We look forward to being with them again in February!) Letters of thanks from the sixth graders were passed around for us to read. The students really seemed to appreciate their thesauruses! Their letters, which contained rich vocabulary along with artistic embellishments, were a pleasure to read! Kudos to their teachers as well!! Jack noted that at next week's meeting, we will have a Club Assembly. Members' input will be welcomed, and, as a club, we shall see where the next six months will take us.

After a scrumptious dinner of "comfort food at its finest", Jack shared a Rotary Moment with the group. He and Sharon had been to Thompson Hospital to visit Al Mann, who is recovering from pneumonia. He is coming along well, and in "true Al Mann form", he greeted Jack, and called Sharon "Sweetheart"! What a guy!! I assume he is also the oldest WW2 veteran in Naples, - 104 coming up soon in March.

Jack also informed us that more information on Kalahari will be forthcoming from DG Mike Slovak. Kalahari boasts the largest indoor waterpark in the USA! The theme is focused on the family this year, and this District Conference, which is slated for May 3rd-5th, promises to be one of the best!

The program tonight was a memorable one, as the presenter was Fellow Rotarian, Tom Hawks. Fellow Rotarian, and Tom's cousin, Woody Hawks did the introduction. Woody, in his eloquent way of speaking, said that a generation in human terms, is about 20 years. In 1957, the seventh child of Richard and Skippy Hawks was born, and that happened to be Tom

Woody, evidently, was the second one to see Tom after he was born. Woody said that the winds picked up, and the seas began to rage, when, at middle age, Tom became afflicted with pancreatic cancer. Woody shared a poem with us entitled “The Captain of My Soul”, serving as a prelude to the talk Tom gave about his personal battle with Stage IV Pancreatic Cancer.



If ever there was inspiration to be gained from knowing someone, it certainly can be found in Tom! He began his presentation by saying, “There is hope!” As blue bracelets were being distributed among us with the words “Hawks strong”, we knew we were about to hear a testimony of courage, strength, and faith.

Tom said that he feels like “Humpty Dumpty” sometimes, as his cancer has appeared in other organs.



His approach is to “find it early, and be aggressive”, and with that being said, Tom has developed some personal goals that include physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being. The physical aspect has included many diagnoses and four major surgeries.

Tom is working on deep breathing, exercise, nutrition, and palliative pain management as a means of dealing with this part of his illness. His personal goals extend deeply into the emotional aspect, as Tom has set himself some guidelines. These guidelines include maintaining a positive attitude, learning to “detach”, living, laughing, and deriving the support of family, friends, and pets. (Are not these the attributes that we see in Tom on a regular basis?)

Finally, the spiritual aspect, which Tom sees as the most important, completes the trio of goals. Meditation, prayer, and gratitude form a significant part in Tom’s outlook on life. He focuses on awareness and “living in the moment”. His poignant talk was completed when he showed us pictures of the main reason he has acquired such a positive outlook...his children and grandchildren! Much love, admiration, and thanks to you, Tom, for sharing your courageous story with us this evening!

I apologize for not having further details regarding tonight’s meeting. Bo and I had to leave a bit early. Bo talked with Jack yesterday, and Jack said that there were many, many Happy Bills which came forth in appreciation of Tom’s wonderful program! Have a great week, everyone, and we’ll see each other for the Club Assembly on the 21st!