

Potomac-Bethesda Rotary Club News

Rotary Club Calendar

July 19- 6:30pm Rotary Club Meeting

Welcome Back Returning Rotarians

Phil Meade from Russia

Todd Nitkin from Africa

Ted Asfaw from Africa

Bob Nelson from the Rotary International
Convention and Presidential Conference

Note: Due to a family emergency, author Jan Pottker is unable to make her presentation tonight. Her talk has been rescheduled for September 6.

July 26 - 6:30pm Rotary Club Meeting

Jim Lawrence, Department of State

Weapons Removal and Abatement

*"Pulling the Dragons Teeth – Clearing a Path
to a Safer World"*

August 2 - 6:30pm Rotary Club Meeting

Barry Anderson

Head of the Budgeting and Public

Expenditures Division at the Organization for
Economic Cooperation and Development
(OECD) based in Paris

August 9 - 6:30pm Rotary Club Meeting

Adrianna Logalbo

Partnership Development Officer

United Nations Foundation

"Nothing But Nets" Campaign

September 6 - 6:30pm Rotary Club Meeting

Jan Pottker, Author of *Janet and Jackie and
Sara and Eleanor*

Potomac-Bethesda International Rotary Club

Charter Member Dick Alsmeyer Sells Potomac Home; Moves Residences to Sebring, Florida, and Frederick, MD

We bid a fond farewell to Charter Rotarian **Dick Alsmeyer** and **Helen** as they depart the Potomac area. They have been so active in the Potomac-Bethesda Rotary Club and we thank them for their over 27 years of service. Dick plans to rejoin Rotary in Sebring, Florida. Here are excerpts from the resignation letter and reply from President Don:



Dear President Don,

Please present my request to the Board of Directors that because I have now moved from Potomac to Frederick, it is inconvenient to travel to meetings of the Club. Therefore I ask that my membership in the Club be terminated. I will be returning to Sebring, Florida in early August and plan to apply for membership in either the Rotary Club of Sebring or Sebring Sunrise. When in Frederick, I plan to make up there.

New Addresses:

2527 Mill Race Road, Frederick, MD 21701-6812
Office telephone and fax remain the same.

Sebring: 3270 Lakeview Drive, Sebring, FL 32780
Telephone 863-385-8929.

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With fond memories of all the members,
Richard H. Alsmeyer

President Don wrote to Dick, "I was sad to receive your membership resignation. On behalf of the Potomac-Bethesda Rotary, I would like to express my sincere appreciation for your longtime and significant contribution. We would not have a club today were it not for you and the other charter members. This is an exciting new period of life for you and Helen and we wish you the very best of everything."

From the President of Rotary International

Dear fellow Rotarians,

It is the privilege of every incoming president of Rotary International to choose a theme for his year in office. For each president, the challenge is to find a theme that will encapsulate how he feels about Rotary, convey his message, and motivate Rotarians around the world for the year of service ahead.

Immediate past president Bill Boyd chose *Lead the Way*, and this was a wonderfully appropriate theme. His timely call to serve as the "heroes, not celebrities" that our communities need has inspired us all, and his leadership has given us a stronger Rotary.

For me, *Rotary Shares* was the natural choice as the 2007-08 theme. I have always felt that the essence of Rotary is about sharing. Every day, in every club, Rotarians share with others in too many ways to count. We share our time, we share our talents, and we share

our resources. We share our kindness, and we share our love.

In Rotary, sharing doesn't mean giving away the things you don't need for yourself. In Rotary, sharing means giving of yourself, freely, for the good of others. It means taking the time to see what our communities need and to decide which of those needs we can meet most effectively. It means sharing what we have with those around us, as well as with those we will never have the chance to meet.

All of us came to Rotary to share what we have with others and to share our friendship and fellowship with other

Rotarians. We share Rotary with others through bringing in qualified new members, and we share Rotary with the next generation by focusing on youth.

Rotarians have so much to share, and there is so much that the world needs from us. Our vocational classification system ensures that every club contains a full range of business and professional skills. Within every Rotary club, there is a world of talents, skills, and abilities. Each club has the resources to tackle nearly any obstacle - if there is the will and the commitment to do it.



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This year, I will ask all of you to say yes to the challenges that being a Rotarian will bring you. Through this year's emphases of health, literacy, water, and family of Rotary, we have an enormous range of opportunities for service. Those projects, those possibilities, those open doors all await us in the months ahead. All we need to do is say yes.

Yes, I will turn that idea into a project, and I will lead the project to completion.

Yes, I will share my skills, time, and resources with my club and with those who need my help.

Yes, I will share Rotary with others, by bringing a qualified new member into my club.

I look forward to a year in which we demonstrate that *Rotary Shares*, by sharing the best of ourselves with our clubs, our communities, and the world.

Wilfrid J. (Wilf) Wilkinson
President, Rotary International

RI's New President Believes Rotarians Can Change The World, One Person At A Time.

By Past District Governor Tom Wilkinson, as told to Nancy Shepherdson *The Rotarian* July 2007

Rotarians are a hard-working, idealistic breed. We all care about people and believe in the values captured by The Four-Way Test. And many Rotarians perform incredible acts of generosity. Nevertheless, if I may go out on a limb here, I'll make a prediction: My brother,

Wilf Wilkinson, is going to impress a lot of Rotarians as the new president of Rotary International by his intense devotion to Service Above Self.

Please don't think I'm boasting about my big brother. Wilf and I are Canadians, and everyone knows that most Canadians are rather shy when it comes to bragging about themselves. So I'll introduce you to Wilf and let you make up your own mind.

But let's just say that the fellow who convinced the Canadian government to give more than US\$180 million to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative might be someone special.

"It was Wilf's unstinting application of both persistence and patience that persuaded the government to release the money," says Past RI Director John Eberhard, chair of the Canadian Rotary Collaboration for International Development. "Wilf is a very persuasive person when faced with a cause he truly believes in. He spent a lot of time developing the relationships necessary to get the job done."



In 45 years of Rotary service, Wilf has collected his share of Rotary memorabilia. At home in Trenton, Ont., he relaxes with a memento of his polio work.

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Rotary beginnings

Wilf was new to the town of Trenton, Ont., when he was asked to join the Rotary club there in 1962. At his first club meeting, Wilf realized how lucky he was to have been drawn into a group whose ideals so exactly matched his own. One of Wilf's four sons, Peter, told me, "Dad's philosophy is 'to whom much is given, much is expected.'" Wilf sees those high expectations reflected in The Four-Way Test, which, according to Peter, "is something my dad really believes in."

In fact, Wilf believes in it so strongly that he and his partners created their own version of The Four-Way Test for their firm, Wilkinson and Company. The "Wilkinson Way," a list of 10 ethical principles, has hung in the reception room in the main office for decades. Wilf retired in 2001, but the Wilkinson Way is still displayed on the wall, a tribute to the rock-solid ethical foundation that enabled the firm to grow from a one-man office to three locations totaling more than 100 employees.

A firsthand observer of those principles at work is Ontario's premier, Dalton McGuinty. "I knew that Wilf was a tremendous leader long before I knew about his ascension within Rotary, or his professional success, or his many contributions to the community," he wrote to me recently. "And that is because I work closely with two of his sons: John, an elected member of our provincial parliament, and Peter, who is my chief of staff.

"Someone once said that if your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more, and become more, then you are a leader," the premier noted. "Well, judging

from their sons' idealism, work ethic, and commitment to serving others, it's clear Wilf, and Joan, are great leaders."

Wilf's desire to serve has been the key to his becoming a leader in Rotary. To this day, he feels strongly that you should never seek a leadership position within the organization. Just do what you are asked, and opportunities to serve will come your way. Wilf also never lets a day end without thanking as many people as he can, in writing. It's no surprise to me that, a mere five years after joining, Wilf became president of his Rotary club. In 1971, he became governor of District 707 (now 7070, covering parts of Ontario), and his rise in the leadership of Rotary International had begun. But he was more interested in changing lives, and he would soon get a chance he had never imagined to do just that.



A model citizen, Wilf is a familiar and welcome face throughout Trenton, whether at the local hospital, the nationally renowned ballet school, or his Rotary club.

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A turning point

Wilf vividly remembers his visit to southern India in 1982 to help Rotary clubs there promote a measles immunization program. At the time, the disease was killing millions of children on the subcontinent. At a club meeting, Wilf watched as a doctor cradled a crying baby in his arms and administered the vaccine. "It was a life-changing experience," Wilf remembered recently. "I saw the tremendous needs, and the dedication of Rotarians there to solve those needs."

Ken Hobbs, a longtime member of the Rotary Club of Whitby, Ont., and a doctor who made it his goal to eliminate measles in India, recalls how my brother got involved: "In 1980, Wilf and several other past district governors in Ontario approached me to join [the] measles committee. Wilf handled the financial part of the project. He also helped persuade the Indian government to provide cold-storage areas for the vaccine. And he got the Canadian government to pay to ship the vaccine to India from Rahway, New Jersey."

P.V. "Puru" Purushothaman, past governor of District 3230 (India), remembers Wilf's trip well. "The Salem group of Rotary clubs had vaccinated 150,000 children against measles in 45 days," Puru told me. "When he landed in Salem, they saw a friendly, bright young Rotarian with a captivating smile, which made it easy for people from all walks of life to approach him."

As he arrived in Salem in the state of Tamil Nadu, a surprised Wilf was greeted by fireworks, rockets and a festival. "The news of

his arrival traveled fast," Puru remembers. "When he was to visit a remote village to vaccinate children, in the absence of a communication system, the village people thought of a bright idea: to fire rockets and firecrackers as he passed a certain road crossing. When Wilf arrived at the village, it was a festive occasion, with children flocking around him and wanting to shake hands with him. Wilf was touched."

Even before the measles project was over, Wilf had been tapped to apply his skills to another need. In 1986, Gerry Wooll, then chair of the Canada PolioPlus Committee and past RI treasurer, named him vice chair and treasurer of the PolioPlus program in Canada. The task was daunting: to raise C\$10 million from Rotarians across Canada. Less than three years later, they had raised \$12 million, and based on that success, he was asked to head up the Canadian advocacy effort that has secured more than US\$180 million for PolioPlus from the Canadian government.

'Just keep asking'

To hear it from Wilf, a tall 77-year-old with wispy, white hair who is rarely seen without a crisp suit, conservative tie, and pocket handkerchief, those money-raising forays were all in a day's work. "The secret of fundraising," he has told me, "is being convinced of the need, having the courage to ask, and not being discouraged when someone says no. You'll get a donation from about every fourth person, so just keep asking. And you'll get something eventually from the person who turned you down last time - if you ask again next time." Then the

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task is to see that the money raised is spent wisely. His first fundraising project, back in the 1960s, was to rebuild his church in Trenton, a feat that was accomplished in record time. Since then, my brother has never encountered a project that he couldn't raise money for – the local hospital, Loyalist College, and the Cheshire Homes for adults with physical disabilities, to name a few.

As a forensic accountant, Wilf is adept at analyzing problems by listening and gently posing questions. "Have you thought of this?" is his familiar approach to difficult problems that often stymie other folks.

When Wilf was involved with refugee camps on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border in the wake of the U.S.-led bombing in 2001, for example, the problem wasn't money: Rotary clubs had raised US\$1.7 million in less than four months for refugee relief. The committee leading these efforts was headed by Past RI Director Lynmar Brock, and Wilf remembers: "What we had to do was figure out how to spend the money. The great lack was blankets, boots, coats, and all kinds of winter gear. The committee wrote specs for what was needed and put them out for bid to local companies. It also had to consider how it got the material distributed to the camps so it wouldn't end up on the black market."

As he traveled through the Khyber Pass in 2002 to inspect the camps and begin the process of relocating people back to their homes, Wilf learned that many of the refugees were farmers whose fields were now studded with land mines. So, he and fellow Rotarians helped local clubs set up training in

trades such as plumbing, electrical, and carpentry work, thereby providing returning refugees with marketable skills.

Centennial convention chair

This international exposure prepared Wilf for the challenge of chairing the 2005 Chicago Convention Committee. To celebrate Rotary's centennial, nearly 40,000 people came from 200 regions of the world, one of the largest turnouts for any RI Convention. Rotary Foundation Trustee Louis Piconi, who chaired the 2005 Chicago Convention Promotion Committee, credits Wilf with much of that success: "His sincere appreciation for every level of effort is a characteristic not seen as often as it should. He has the [ability to] endear people all around the world."

My brother's gentle touch has guided a host of other projects. A decade ago, he decided that a defunct Rotary club in Stirling, Ont., needed reviving. He called up the editor of the local paper and gathered a dozen people for a meeting. The reborn club was chartered a few months later and has since gone on to raise more than C\$200,000 to turn an old train station into a community center.

But Wilf's service extends beyond Rotary. In 2001, in honor of his active commitment to his church, he was awarded the Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice medal by Pope John Paul II. Right up to the time he became president-elect of RI, he was executive director of the Quinte Ballet School of Canada, one of the country's leading dance schools.

Yet all his community involvement has never pulled my brother's focus away from his family. Wilf and Joan have a tradition that

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allows them to stay close to their four sons and eight grandchildren. When their oldest son, Bill, left home for university, they would call him every Sunday afternoon, and to this day, they've kept up that weekly communication with all their sons – Bill, Peter, John, and Stephen, a member of the Rotary Club of Barrie-Huron, Ont. And Peter recalls from his high school days that whenever he had an important basketball game, he could always count on his father cheering him on from the stands. Even if the game was 200 miles away. Even if it was tax season.

Where it all began

Wilf is still deeply moved whenever he talks about our mother and father and how they continue to inspire him, even though they've been gone many years now. Our father helped build our parish church in Montreal, where we grew up, and eventually went on to chair the Holy Name Society for the Archdiocese of Montreal. "I saw what could be done by a simple person, in simple ways," Wilf says about our dad.

My brother has a story about a Holy Name Society meeting he went to with Dad. Some young fellows were talking about how they had worked hard on a fundraiser but still lost money. Dad said, "Here, I'll make up half the loss, and we'll see what we can do about the other half." And, drawing his wallet out of his pocket, he did just that. That was a lesson about appreciating peoples' efforts that Wilf never forgot. He learned a lesson about leadership that night too: Our father was elected vice president of the society at that same meeting.

At the time, Wilf was recovering from a childhood experience that changed his life. For two consecutive winters, he had been bedridden with pleurisy and pneumonia. While other boys ran and played outside, my brother explored the world through National Geographic magazines. But when our baby sister succumbed to the same illness, Wilf was devastated. I am nearly certain that those two terrible seasons of sickness and tragedy fuel his deep passion for helping others whenever he can.

Once he recovered, my brother worked hard to improve his physical fitness, going out for football and track at school. On the football team, he played so hard that he endured repeated concussions. Wilf always had time to help his siblings – he has six sisters and three brothers – with their homework, and he worked to achieve the highest honor in Canadian scouting. He would later be recruited into Rotary by the district scouting commissioner, proving that no good deed goes unrewarded.

That pursuit of excellence, unsurprisingly, is also reflected in Wilf's career. In the early days, Wilf worked full time for an accounting firm in Montreal while attending classes at McGill University. Though warned by his superiors that very few people who were married with children ever completed the national examination requirements to become a Chartered Accountant on the first attempt, Wilf accomplished this feat and was awarded the designation in October 1958. He's also a Certified Fraud Examiner.

But his professional achievements encompass

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more than a successful business. In Canada, becoming a fellow in the accounting profession is a special honor conferred by one's peers. Wilf was elected as a fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario (FCA) in 1979, according to David Wilson, a Rotarian and past CEO of that organization. He also received certificates of outstanding merit from both the Ontario institute and the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants.

"Along the way," Wilson added, "numerous other honors joined Wilf's FCA. But what was always clear was that personal recognition was never the reason he gave so generously of his time and talents. He accepted the honors with true humility and modesty and just kept on giving and giving."

Wilf's wife, Joan, has always been a full partner in his Rotary life, accompanying him to RI headquarters in Evanston, Ill., USA, for the extended stays required of a president-elect of Rotary International. She plans to continue to do so during his year as president. According to Peter, "My mom says my dad's hobby is going to meetings."

A member a year

Though his leadership responsibilities keep him away for long stretches, Wilf manages to remain very involved in his home club, where he continues to serve on the membership committee. Perhaps that explains one of his principal goals for Rotarians this year. He's told me, "I want Rotarians everywhere to accept the responsibility of bringing in one new member each year and mentoring that person to become a committed Rotarian."

Wilf deeply believes in the power of one person, one Rotarian, to make a difference. Earlier this year, he went back to Pakistan to accept an award on behalf of Rotary from President Pervez Musharraf. In their meeting, Wilf challenged the Pakistani leader: "You were reported to be the last country to eliminate smallpox. Will you make a commitment not to be the last to eradicate polio?" He suggested that Musharraf help the process along by creating video promotions and earmarking government funds for the cause. The president became so involved in his discussion with Wilf that his attendants had to come in three times to remind him to end the meeting. Musharraf finally did bring their meeting to a close – but he did promise to do more for the eradication efforts in his country.

In fact, the effect my brother has on leaders and ordinary Rotarians alike makes it hard to be skeptical when he reveals his most daring dream for Rotary: "World peace is possible, and Rotary can help achieve it." Impossible? Maybe. But I've learned that when Wilf Wilkinson says he can make something happen, only a fool bets against him.

Tom Wilkinson, past governor of District 7820 (Canada; Saint-Pierre and Miquelon), is a retired educator from Prince Edward Island and charter president of the Rotary Club of Charlottetown Royalty. Nancy Shepherdson is a freelance journalist based in Illinois, USA, and a member of the Rotary Club of Lake Zurich.

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