

Art Pratt

Warren Haviland, 2007 Chairman of the Art Pratt Foundation, has asked me, Joe Harris, as the only member of the Old Mission Rotary Club who was fortunate enough to have known Art Pratt, to write a personal introduction of Art for the members of our Club.

Our First Contact with Art

In 1959 Art called my office. He had heard I was president of the Kearny Mesa Rotary Club. Art was very anxious to join our Club. He explained that he had been a member of the Beverly Hills Rotary Club for many years, but that he had resigned when he and his wife, Janet, moved to San Diego. He and Janet were avid travelers, and he loved meeting Rotarians at the Rotary make-ups during their travels. They were leaving on an around the world trip very soon. He desperately wanted to be a Rotarian again so he could attend meetings. I explained that as president I didn't have the authority to grant immediate membership, but I would expedite the process. I acquired Art's information and his ship's itinerary. The president of the Beverly Hills Rotary Club was very cooperative, and in fact, recommended Art Pratt, with his congratulations to the Kearny Mesa Club for acquiring such a great Rotarian as a member. All of the Directors approved Art's application, and Roy McCotter sent a telegram to Art aboard his ship, which was in Hawaii. The telegram read "Congratulations Art, you are a member of the Kearny Mesa Rotary Club."

Art Pratt was a 17 year perfect attendance Rotarian with the Beverly Hills Rotary Club when he joined the Kearny Mesa Rotary Club. Art loved Rotary, lived by the rules of Rotary, and was admired by all of our members. He was a perfect example of the American Dream. Art started his career bottling Coca-Cola with a \$5,000 investment, and at one point owned the bottling rights to the 13 western states.

Art and the Library Group

The Kearny Mesa Rotary Club had a group of about 15 to 20 members who enjoyed a cocktail before lunch occasionally. The bar became known as the "Library". Rotarians from all over San Diego visited the Library for the stories, the sports talk, the dumb blond jokes, etc. Jack Garidella, Vince Severino, Dan Mooney, Carl Stinson, Jim McClellan, Ken Carrol, and others always had something to share. When Art heard of the Library meetings, he was there the next week. Art's doctor limited his drinks to three per week, and he saved his ration for the Library. Several of the members drank non-alcoholic beverages. I did not work on the afternoons of the Rotary meetings, so I was able to join Art in a cocktail.

Art and the Chickens

Art told a childhood story at the Library one day. When he was a young boy, Art lived on a farm, and neighboring boys would visit and see what mischief they could find. One of Art's chores was to feed the chickens shelled corn, and one of the boys said "let's have some fun with this!" He took several grains of corn, drilled holes through each grain, and tied a piece of string between the grains. The boys gleefully mixed the tied grains into Art's bucket of corn, then watched as he began throwing handfuls on the ground around the hen house. Two chickens would eat separate grains tied by the string and they would become a chicken "team" harnessed by the string. Art said it was very comical the way the chickens would strut around like the Budweiser Clydesdales. In a matter of a few minutes the dangling string would tangle with something and the chicken would jerk free without harm.

Janet is Out of Her Mind!

Art and Janet bought a home south of Friars Road and west of the Padres' ballpark. In those days, the sixties, when the Ringling Brothers Circus came to town they performed at the

ballpark. At the Library one day Art told us that one of Janet's best friends had called him and with deep concern in her voice said "Janet should be taken to a doctor because *she's out of her mind!*" It seems that she and Janet were talking on the phone when Janet suddenly interrupted their conversation to announce "I have to get off the phone, I see the elephants coming down Friars Road." Not sure if those elephants were pink or if Janet had an even more serious problem, the friend thought she'd better alert Art to Janet's condition. Art said he tried not to laugh as he explained to Janet's alarmed friend that there was a railroad ramp off Morena Boulevard from which the Ringling Brothers train unloaded. At their house, Janet had a perfect seat to watch the short circus parade right up Friars Road to the ballpark.

The Kearny Mesa Rotary Art Pratt Foundation

When Art died, his estate, as planned, donated approximately \$50,000 to the Kearny Mesa Rotary Club. The money was used to start the Kearny Mesa Rotary Art Pratt Foundation. The Foundation was transferred to the Old Mission Club when the two clubs merged.

This Foundation has been a wonderful tribute to Art Pratt, and has provided many valuable gifts to our community. The grants have become larger each year as the funds have grown. The Art Pratt Foundation presently has approximately \$2,800,000. The growth of this Foundation has been exceptional, thanks to all present and past Directors and Board members, and especially the stewardship of Jim McClellan, our Morgan Stanley broker. Special thanks to Bill Turnquist, past President, for his many years of service in accounting for the Foundation.

My hope is that these personal stories will help every Old Mission member feel they actually knew Art Pratt. He was a genuine man; humble, honest, ingenuous in performing any

task, and sentimental about (among other things) his first horse used for delivery of Coca-Cola so many years ago. He would be very proud of the good work Old Mission Rotary Club and its Art Pratt Foundation is doing.

Compiled by: Joe Harris, D.D.S.
October 2007