

MEETING OF JANUARY 16, 2007

Minutes of Meeting of Jan. 9, 2007

- Conrad Welker presided over the meeting.
- John Ed Thomas provided the invocation.
- Robert Cummings led the Club in the Pledge of Allegiance.

- Kristy Gould introduced today's visiting Rotarians and guest including:
 - ✓ Jack Gay of the Petal Club
 - ✓ George Karnes was a guest of Frances Karnes.
 - ✓ Forest Hartel was a guest of Robert Simmons.
 - ✓ Jennifer Hawkins was a guest of Tina Lowrimore.
 - ✓ Bebe McLeod was a guest of Bill McLeod.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- 1) Greeters for the day were Bill MacLauchlan and Burrell Kyzar.
- 2) Conrad extended condolences to Tom Light on the loss of his father over the holidays.
- 3) Conrad also announced that the District has a new club; the Hammond Ponchatoula Sunrisers. It meets Tuesdays at 7:30 A.M. at Annette's Country Kitchen on Highway 190 in Hammond, LA. The President is Jarrod Goudeau (jarrodg@bellsouth.net); the Secretary is Buffy Bivona (k9-275@yahoo.com). The President-elect is Kirk Soileau (kirk.soileau@gulfstateshs.com).
- 4) Freddy Walker provided club members with the details of the

Rotary Natural Disaster Conference that is to be held in Bay St. Louis this coming weekend. Volunteers from the club were requested for attendance. Walker also announced that the club was sending a check in the amount of \$300 to offset some of the conference expenses.

- 5) Conrad also announced that Ray Hymel, affectionately regarded as the Jambalaya King, on the West Bank passed away in Pensacola over the holidays. Ray would have become the new District Governor this coming year. He will be missed in Rotary.
- 6) **NOTICE TO MEMBERS:** During December Southern Oaks requested an increase in the meal charge for our meetings from \$8.00 to \$9.00 per meal. There had been no increase in the four years that we have been meeting here. A look at current availability indicated that this is the best location for our meetings. Meeting space, parking space, food and location have served us quite well. This is the only place available that can accommodate us this well at this cost.

The board agreed to accept the \$1.00 increase in meal charges with it to be reflected in fourth quarter billings in April. Additional costs before the fourth quarter will be born by the club. Any member wanting more information on this matter should discuss it with any board member.

LAST WEEK'S PROGRAM

Billy Scruggs introduced the speaker, Judge Bob Helfrich, Circuit Court Judge for the Twelfth Circuit Court District. Judge Helfrich discussed the relatively new Drug Court for the Twelfth Circuit Court District. The Drug Court is only one of 2,400 across the nation and was begun in October 2003 with a start up grant. According to Helfrich, the state of Mississippi is very fortunate to have a funding mechanism available for drug courts throughout the state. He estimates that five-million dollars of state funding is provided for drug courts in Mississippi. Nationally, the federal government provided \$10 million for drug court funding last year and is expected to provide about the same level of funding for this year.

The District court has just over 130 participants from age 17 through ages 56. It is estimated that the state is saving approximately one-million dollars per year above through the program based on what it costs to house prisoners. Helfrich says that 30 percent of all felonies committed across the country are drug related and that those jailed for crimes have a 68-percent recidivism rate. The Drug Court has a 16-percent recidivism rate. The District's Drug Court has graduated thirty participants since it was established. It is anticipated that another 15 to 20 will graduate every six months in the future.

Helfrich says the Drug Court is just one of many programs aimed at easing the prison population problems in the country. He noted that in 1971 there were 200,000 prisoners in the United States. In 2003 that population had grown to 2,100,000.

THIS WEEK'S PROGRAM

Billy Scruggs will introduce Jon Mark Weathers, attorney, as the speaker. He was born in Natchez, Mississippi on November 4, 1948. He was admitted to

the bar in 1972 to practice in Mississippi State Courts; U.S. District Courts of Mississippi; U.S. Court of Appeals, Fifth and Eleventh Circuit and U.S. Supreme Court.

EDUCATION: Pearl River Junior College (A.A. 1968); University of Southern Mississippi (B.A., 1970); University of Mississippi (J.D., 1972).

HONORS & APPOINTMENTS: Delta Theta Phi (President, 1972), Vice Chairman, Moot Court Board (1972), City Attorney, Richton, Mississippi (1972), District Attorney, Twelfth District of Mississippi (1976-1980, July, 2003-Present).

MEMBER: The Mississippi Bar; south Central Mississippi Bar Association; American Bar Association; American Trial Lawyers Association, Bar Association of the Fifth Federal Circuit, American College of Trial Lawyers, American Board of Trial Advocates.

ROTARY INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Some Rotary clubs in Hong Kong decided the best way to teach some students a lesson was to take them to court – or least a mock court.

As part of an adopt-a-school project, clubs in District 3450 (Hong Kong) worked with the Education and Manpower Bureau of Hong Kong to teach secondary school students about crime and punishment.

The clubs teamed up with their local schools to give students hands-on professional expertise. Ten clubs and nine schools participated and planned activities such as career talks, vocational visits, mentorship, and a mock trial, where the Rotary Club of Kingspark turned students at Hotung Secondary School into lawyers.

Alexander Mak, past district governor of District 3450, explained, “The main goal of the mock trial is to enable the students to understand the operation of our legal system, cultivate a critical way of thinking, broaden their exposure, make informed judgments toward civic and legal issues, and understand that many things can be looked at from different angles.”

Seventy students participated in two trials – one involving the case of someone accused of breaking into a car and stealing money from it, and the other case involved the defendant allegedly possessing illegal drugs. The students were divided into four groups – each group was assigned to either the prosecution or defense of one of the trials.

To train the students, club members took them to a local police department. The policemen explained their duties – what equipment is at their disposal, how to handle suspects, and how to take and prepare witness statements.

Then both Rotarians and law experts helped train the students in honing their legal skills. The teams of prosecutors

were trained by lawyers from the Department of Justice in Hong Kong. The two defense teams trained with a criminal barrister. Two police inspectors and one immigration officer also helped out as the prosecution’s witnesses.

The experts taught the students how to examine witnesses without asking leading questions, present evidential materials, argue before the court, and make closing statements.

“Although these students had no prior legal training, we managed to turn them into confident prosecution and defense lawyers,” said Mak.

The students did so well that Magistrate Adrian Ching, who served as the judge in both trials, said their performance was even better than some of the newly trained lawyers she saw in her court.

The mock trial program was so successful that more Rotary clubs and schools want to participate in the program next year. Mak is working on packaging the project so it can be easily replicated.

Furthermore, the students loved the experience. One student even plans to improve her English so she can attend law school.

Editor: Gary Garner