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President's message

Dear fellow Rotarians and members of the family of Rotary,

People from all over the world have multiple reasons for joining Rotary. Many new Rotarians each year join for the same reason I did — because Rotary is a great way to benefit your career. When I was a new attorney starting out in Alabama, Gay and I became partners in her father's firm. He instilled in us the value of joining Rotary as a way to build relationships and demonstrate to potential clients that we were serious professionals who held firm to values even more robust than what our profession required.

Rotary's commitment to vocational service is built on the highest ethical standards in business and professions, the recognition of the worthiness of all useful work, and the dignifying of each Rotarian's occupation as an opportunity to serve society. That last point is so important. No matter our profession, we all contribute mightily to the world when we conduct our work with integrity and always adhere to The Four-Way Test.

I have made balancing the demands of Rotary with professional and family commitments one of my priorities as president. No Rotarian should feel pressured to put in more time than a volunteer position should ever demand. This is true for several reasons, one of them being that the work we do in our day jobs is just as important to Rotary as the work we do in the organization. We carry our Rotary values everywhere, and our professional success helps build a case for Rotary every day we go into the office.

This is particularly important in our efforts to reach younger new members. We want to see a Rotary where no one is ever asked to choose between being a good Rotarian and being a good parent, business owner, manager, or employee. When we ask busy young people to join us, we should not be asking them to give up their time and freedom. We should be rewarding them with an experience that makes everything they already do even more inspiring.

Providing greater balance within Rotary will have another benefit as well: It will create opportunities for other Rotarians, including Rotaractors, to step up and take a leadership role on projects and committees. This will ensure that they remain engaged in our clubs and inspired to be Rotarians for life.

Throughout the world, Rotary is admired for its vocational service and for the time-honored values we instill in all business relationships. As we continue our work to grow Rotary, let us remember that vocational service remains a crucial selling point to potential members.

Rotary Connects the World, and by making Rotary's vocational service work known to people in more professions and at different stages of their careers, we will help grow our organization and make it stronger and more diverse.



MARK DANIEL MALONEY
President, Rotary International



**No matter our profession,
we all contribute mightily to
the world when we conduct
our work with integrity.**



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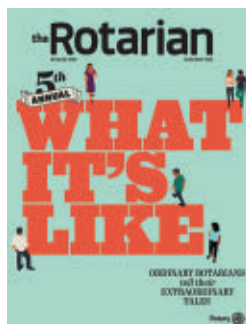
28 WHAT IT'S LIKE TO ...

Donate a kidney to a friend. Receive a kidney from a friend. Fly a chopper in Vietnam. Plant a garden with the first lady. In our fifth annual What It's Like feature, Rotarians have some amazing stories to tell.

Illustrations by Sébastien Thibault

“When I looked out the side window, I discovered that the front wheels of my van were hanging off a cliff.”

— Mikah Meyer, page 36



ON THE COVER: Five years into our annual What It's Like feature, we showcase 17 more remarkable stories from Rotarians. Illustration by Sébastien Thibault

OPPOSITE: Joyce Azzam overcame physical challenges and other obstacles to climb the highest peaks on every continent, ending with Mount Everest. “It was not about Everest or conquering the summit,” she says. “It was about that girl who wasn’t given permission to dream.” Photography by Elia Saikaly



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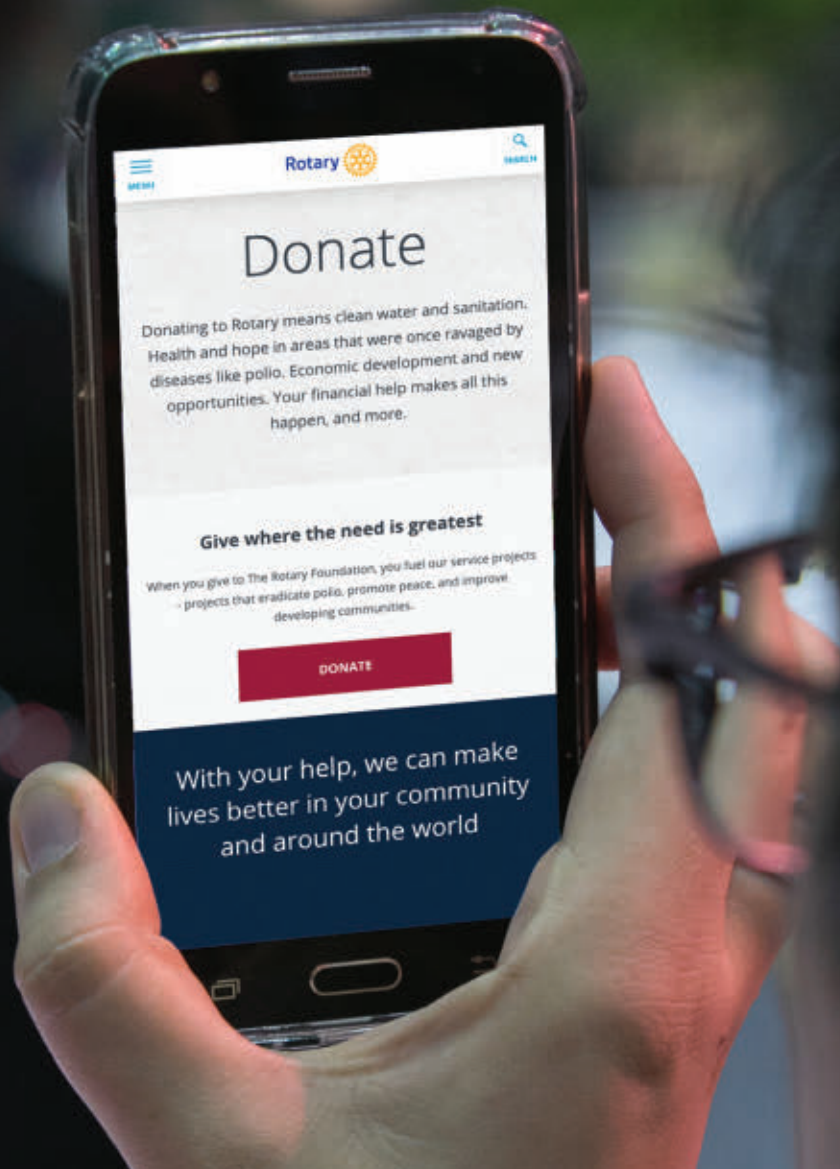
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Speaking of polio

I was delighted to read “The Plus in PolioPlus” in the October issue. I was pleased that Sir Emeka Offor was credited with providing invaluable support to produce the Speaking Books audiobook *Yes to Health, No to Polio* for Nigeria.

Following the great success of the first polio-focused Speaking Book, *A Story of Health*, in Pakistan in 2013, a similar but much larger project was proposed for Nigeria. When the process got delayed, our Rotary partner UNICEF went directly to Sir Emeka Offor and explained the urgent need for 15,000 Speaking Books in the Hausa language to convince local communities to allow their children to be vaccinated. It took just 15 minutes for Sir Emeka to hear about the need and agree to fund the entire project. The books were so successful that UNICEF ordered an additional 30,000.

On a personal note as both a Rotarian and a polio survivor, I am extremely proud and honored to have played a small part in our global mission to End Polio Now. The success of this low literacy book program for Pakistan, followed by Nigeria and then Afghanistan, can be attributed directly to the global collaboration and networking ability of Rotary.

The project started with our Rotary club in Hilton Head Island, South Carolina. It quickly expanded when Past District Governor Bernie Riedel met with Past RI Vice President Anne Matthews and suggested that Speaking Books could be used for educating at-risk people about the importance of polio vaccinations. This was immediately brought to the attention of Rotary PolioPlus staff members Carol Pandak and Amy Edwards in Evanston. Just a week later, Aziz Memon, chair of the Pakistan PolioPlus Committee, confirmed his order for a large quantity of Speaking Books in Urdu and Pashto.

That resulted in Nigeria following suit with *Yes to Health, No to Polio*, and when the UNICEF polio team moved on to Afghanistan, they again turned to Rotary for assistance in creating a local version in Pashto and Dari, *Grandpa Knows Best; A Story of Polio*.

That’s the power of Rotary teamwork.

BRIAN JULIUS

Hilton Head Island, South Carolina
Speaking Books founder



Laying down arms

Rotary’s vision statement is “Together, we see a world where people unite and take action to create lasting change — across the globe, in our communities, and in ourselves.”

In “A New Debate on Nuclear Arms” [October], 2018-19 Rotary Alumni Global Service Award winner Tom Sauer set the stage for Rotarians to protect our brother and sister Rotarians — and ourselves. We must abolish nuclear weapons, because it is clear that we cannot count on luck or rational decision-makers for stewardship of the weapons or their deadly radioactive materials that last for tens of thousands of years. Through the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty of 1968, China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States pledged to abolish nuclear weapons. And in fact, over the years some 50,000 of them were destroyed by Russians and Americans working together.

Would it be so difficult for Rotarians to say to each other: “You are not my enemy and I will not allow my government to harm you” — together?

ANN FRISCH

White Bear Lake, Minnesota

Build goodwill

I am writing in response to the negative letters regarding David Sarasohn's July column "Wishful Thanking" [Inbox, October]. Ouch! How could this ever inspire anyone to submit anything to your magazine? I liked his story and have made subtle changes in how I respond to someone's expression of gratitude. I usually say "Sure," but now, thanks to David's article, I will say "You're welcome" or "My pleasure" or something to let the person know I appreciate their taking the time to be kind and appreciative.

As Rotarians, we're supposed to "build goodwill and better friendships." Perhaps in the future, critics can refrain from responding negatively to something they disagree with — or write their own article and get beaten up by other people with similar personalities. They could also practice another mantra: "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you."

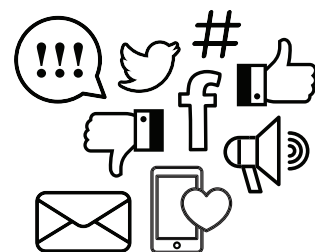
MARY KAMINSKI
Houghton, Michigan

Merci!

Inspired by your story "The Thinkers" back in March, I attended a meeting with the Rotary Club of Paris Académies at Le Procope while on vacation in Paris. The Parisian Rotarians welcomed me with enthusiasm and curiosity, and I thoroughly enjoyed my first global meeting in French. I had each of the featured Rotarians sign their picture. Hopefully, you will share my experience with your readers — taking *The Rotarian* to a new level.

BILL MAXWELL
Brockville, Ontario

Overheard on social media



In October, we ran a story about Secily Wilson ("Wow Factor"), a Florida Rotarian who empowers women facing challenging life situations. We asked on Instagram how you empower women in your community. Here's what you told us:

- "Through education and building confidence — especially to speak up."
- "By not treating them as inferior in any way. Equal means equal!"
- "First and foremost by empowering yourself; then you can inspire others."
- "By giving them platforms and the opportunities to spearhead something big."
- "Building on the legacy of empowered women who came before me."
- "Forging new paths to strengthen the next generation."

Check out Rotary International's Instagram story on 15 January for an interactive poll about our What It's Like issue.



ANDREW ESTEBO

In October we detailed how PolioPlus grants can make a dramatic difference in people's lives beyond vaccination. A hand-operated tricycle makes life easier for Nigerian polio survivor Musa Muhammed Ali.

The editors welcome comments on items published in the magazine but reserve the right to edit for style and length. Published letters do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors or Rotary International leadership, nor do the editors take responsibility for errors of fact that may be expressed by the writers.

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SERVICE ABOVE SELF



The Object of Rotary

THE OBJECT of Rotary is to encourage and foster the ideal of service as a basis of worthy enterprise and, in particular, to encourage and foster:

FIRST The development of acquaintance as an opportunity for service;

SECOND High ethical standards in business and professions, the recognition of the worthiness of all useful occupations, and the dignifying of each Rotarian's occupation as an opportunity to serve society;

THIRD The application of the ideal of service in each Rotarian's personal, business, and community life;

FOURTH The advancement of international understanding, goodwill, and peace through a world fellowship of business and professional persons united in the ideal of service

The Four-Way Test

OF THE THINGS we think, say, or do:

- 1) Is it the **TRUTH**?
- 2) Is it **FAIR** to all concerned?
- 3) Will it build **GOODWILL** and **BETTER FRIENDSHIPS**?
- 4) Will it be **BENEFICIAL** to all concerned?

Rotarian Code of Conduct

The following code of conduct has been adopted for the use of Rotarians:

AS A ROTARIAN, I will

- 1) Act with integrity and high ethical standards in my personal and professional life
- 2) Deal fairly with others and treat them and their occupations with respect
- 3) Use my professional skills through Rotary to: mentor young people, help those with special needs, and improve people's quality of life in my community and in the world
- 4) Avoid behavior that reflects adversely on Rotary or other Rotarians
- 5) Help maintain a harassment-free environment in Rotary meetings, events, and activities, report any suspected harassment, and help ensure non-retaliation to those individuals that report harassment.



**A message from the
editor in chief**

JOHN REZEK

**Do you ever
wonder what it's
like to work at
The Rotarian?**

This issue marks the fifth time we have put together a What It's Like package in which Rotarians tell stories about the extraordinary things they have accomplished, survived, and celebrated. This annual issue has become a favorite among you, our readers. But do you ever wonder what it's like to work at *The Rotarian*?

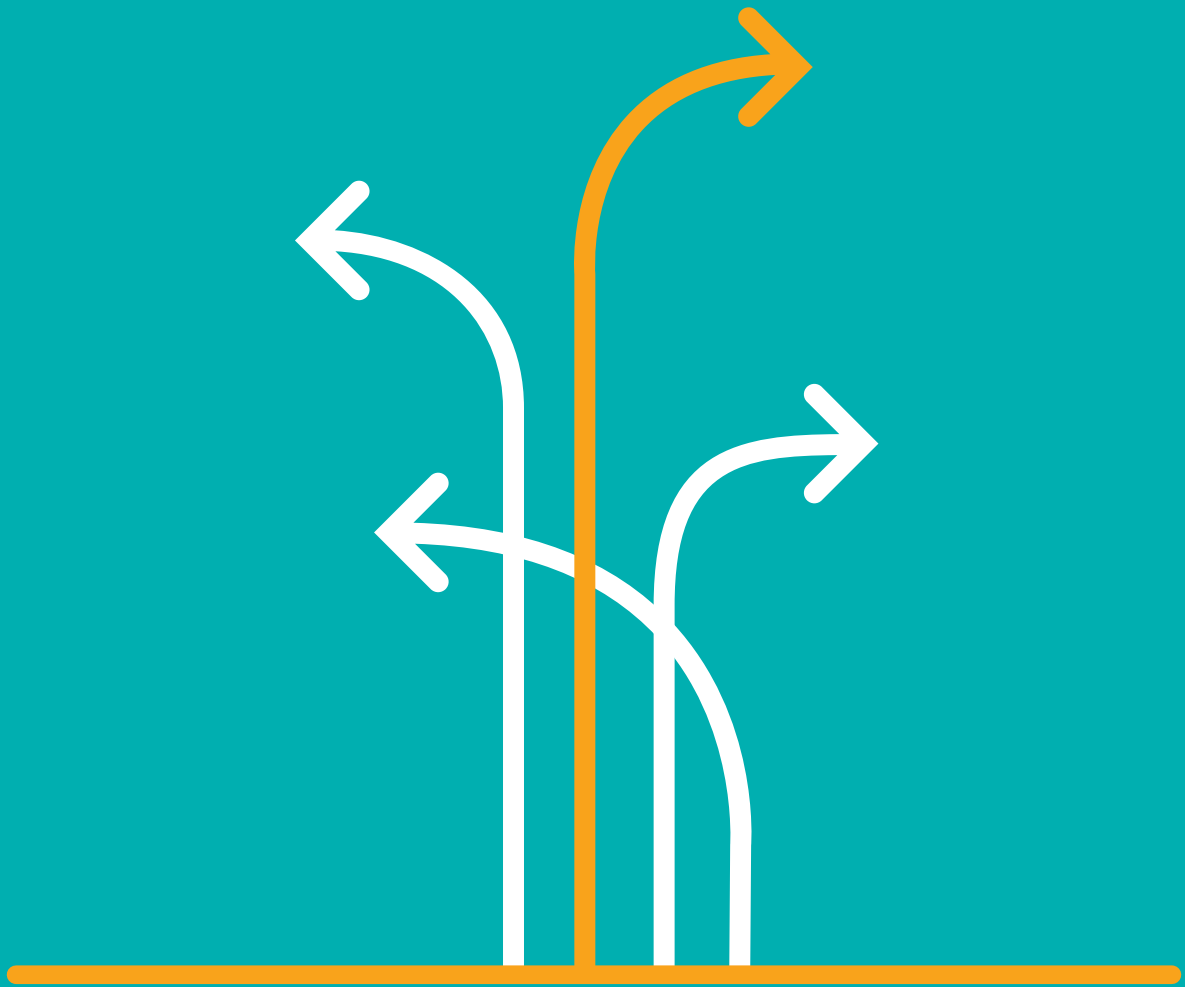
In many ways, this magazine is like any other. We come up with ideas, write, fact-check, and edit (and re-edit) stories, assign art and photography, design pages, and write (and rewrite) headlines. We have deadlines. We have editorial meetings. We have doughnuts.

But that doesn't begin to describe what it's like to work at *The Rotarian*. There's a certain alchemy here. One element of that is our team: Collectively, we have hundreds of years of magazine experience — at major consumer periodicals, esoteric publications, scholarly journals. But more than our experience, what makes our group so extraordinary is our great respect for one another's ideas and opinions; our true enjoyment of each other's company, senses of humor, and baking skills; and our dogged determination to make this magazine the best it can be.

Another element of our bewitching brew is our fellow staff members here at Rotary — in Evanston as well as New Delhi, Tokyo, Zurich, and Rotary's other international offices. These are the people who make sure your grant projects succeed; who help young people get involved in Rotary through Rotaract, Rotary Youth Exchange, and peace fellowships; who help clubs become more flexible and innovative; who connect Rotarians with one another through the convention and through Rotarian Action Groups and fellowships; who provide expertise in our fight against polio and in our areas of focus; and who are helping to map out Rotary's strategy for success in the coming years. We on the magazine have the privilege of collaborating with these interesting and dedicated people who have given us many great ideas for stories.

The final element that makes working at *The Rotarian* so magical and rewarding is, of course, Rotarians themselves. Without you, we wouldn't have a trove of fantastic projects, inspirational people, and fun clubs to write about in every issue. The work you do, the friends you've made, and the people in whose lives you've made a difference provide the foundation for this magazine every month. We wouldn't want to know what it's like to do anything else.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "John Rezek". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline.



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TOGETHER, WE

LEARN

Education fuels innovation and progress. That's why Rotary members encourage lifelong learning: exchanging ideas and inspiring generations of problem solvers. Learning together to explore what's possible — that's what people of action do. **Find out more at [Rotary.org](https://www.rotary.org).**

our world



Easy rider

MARCELO MÉNDEZ
Rotary Club of Reynosa 76, Mexico

In 2019, before taking on the presidency of the Rotary Club of Reynosa 76 in Reynosa, Mexico, Marcelo Méndez set aside some time for a road trip. "I knew when I got elected president that I wouldn't have time, so I decided to do it before my term," he says.

The trip he had in mind was on a grand scale. Over 34 days, he racked

continued from page 11

up more than 13,000 miles on his Triumph Tiger 800 XRx motorcycle, riding to Alaska and back.

He often traveled back roads rather than major highways. “For a motorcycle rider, the back roads are the best,” he says. “They don’t have a lot of traffic, like all the 18-wheelers. And the views are amazing.” He camped half the time and stayed in hotels the other half. And to help prepare for his term as president, he visited Rotary clubs along the way.

Before leaving home on 21 April, he researched clubs on his route to figure out which meetings he could make. “I wanted to see how their meetings are run,” he says. “I wanted to see how clubs do different things.” Méndez visited the Rotary clubs of Greater Southwest Lubbock, Texas; Santa Fe Centro, New Mexico; Salida Sunrise and Kremmling, Colorado; Anaconda and Missoula, Montana; and College in Fairbanks, Alaska. He showed up unannounced, but he always got a warm welcome. “As soon as I walked in the door at any meeting, they’d say, ‘Hey. You are welcome here. Have some lunch or breakfast and tell us about your club.’ It was amazing,” he recalls.

Gary Olson, who is now president of the Salida Sunrise club, says he was happy to have Méndez at his club’s meeting. “We always welcome visitors,” he says. “But it’s a rare day that we have an unexpected international guest. We were all impressed that he was taking



Marcelo Méndez rode through British Columbia on his way to Alaska, passing scenic spots such as McLeese Lake (above). For his trip, he packed plenty of his club’s flags to exchange at clubs along the way. His visit to the Arctic Circle (below) was short but memorable.

the ride to Alaska, and I think more than a few of us were a little envious.”

At one club meeting, Méndez saw members placing donations in a glass jar and talking about their recent blessings. He has adopted that practice for his 22-member club: “I have a blessings donation jar now at our meetings. We’re going to fill that jar with moments of happiness.” The cash will be used to help someone in need.

Méndez also brought back the idea of partnering with another club to purchase chairs that convert to cots, which will be donated to two local hospitals.

“When people are in the hospital, a lot of times their family members don’t have any place to rest,” he says. The planned project also includes buying two surgical delivery tables.

Olson says the Salida Sunrise club will consider working with the Reynosa club when it reviews its grant projects for

2020. “The fact that we can put a friendly Rotary face — someone we have personally met — to a suggested project is a huge plus every time,” he says.

Méndez’s biggest challenge was getting through a snowstorm in Wyoming,

“For a motorcycle rider, the back roads are the best: They don’t have a lot of traffic ... and the views are amazing.”

he recalls: “Roads were blocked, and I got lost.” He visited Yellowstone and Grand Teton national parks and saw a lot of wildlife: bison, bears, moose, elk, bighorn sheep. He crossed the Arctic Circle but didn’t stay long: “I took a few selfies and came back.”

With all that he learned and experienced, Méndez has started thinking about another road trip, this time to Argentina. “Then I will have traveled all through the Americas,” he says.

—ANNEMARIE MANNION



COURTESY OF MARCELO MÉNDEZ

**“ We are diverting
70% of the trash by disposing
of organics and liquids in
separate receptacles. ”**

Joe Richardson



Waste not, want not

As the owner of a summer camp, Joe Richardson has long been dedicated to environmental issues. The Bar-T Mountainside Challenge & Retreat Center and Summer Camp in Maryland runs on solar and geothermal energy; composting toilets save water. Richardson also runs after-school programs that include opportunities to learn about environmental issues. So when a teacher at a local high school asked him to help start a program to stop food waste from ending up in landfills, Richardson, a member of the Rotary Club of Southern Frederick County (Urbana), Maryland, seized the opportunity. He knew a lot about the logistics of garbage, having served on a special commission of Frederick County focused on the county's waste stream. He combined all his knowledge and developed a program at Urbana High School to keep "Lunch Out of Landfills" that has rapidly expanded to other schools around Frederick County.

THE ROTARIAN: Why is it important to keep food waste out of landfills?

RICHARDSON: When you bury organics, they generate methane, which is a greenhouse gas. And there are transport costs for trash. We've reduced the amount of trash hauled to landfills.

TR: How serious a problem is food waste in school cafeterias?

RICHARDSON: It's eye-popping. Before our program, Urbana Elementary School produced about 210 pounds of trash a day. More than 100 pounds of that was food, and 40 to 50 pounds of it was liquids. So we are diverting 70 percent of the trash by disposing of organics and liquids in separate receptacles — and that's before we separate out the recyclables.

TR: In expanding the program, you focused on elementary schools. Why?

RICHARDSON: In high schools, you have to break habits ingrained for 10 years. But by the time our fifth graders are in high school, they will see sorting waste as simply what you do.

TR: How did your Rotary club get involved?

RICHARDSON: We wanted to broaden the program but couldn't get funding. My club contributed to keep the program going for a year. Then

other Rotary clubs raised \$20,000 to fund an expansion to more schools for this year. But I don't want Rotary clubs to pay for this. The money that is saved on dumpster pickups can then go to paying for the organics removal.

TR: What have you learned since you started the program?

RICHARDSON: You can't set up the program and walk away. Rotarians and other people volunteer in cafeterias the first few weeks, helping kids to throw things into the right bins. But then you have to monitor the contamination of the waste stream. Serious contamination with things such as plastic straws in the organic waste bin becomes a deal-breaker for the composting companies. You have to get the principal and building services to buy in. You have to have a place to take the organic waste for composting. If you don't have all of that lined up, it's hard to get started.

TR: Does the program help students recognize food waste as a problem?

RICHARDSON: The kids certainly are aware. I was visiting a school to check on the program. In the office I heard a parent ask, "What's going on in this school? My daughter yelled at me for throwing a banana peel in the trash." I'm over-hearing all this and thinking, I want to give that kid a high-five.

—HANK SARTIN



People of action around the globe

Salvadoran per capita spending on health care was \$293 in 2016, compared with the world average of \$1,026.

El Salvador

Mustering assistance from doctors, dentists, nurses, and U.S. Rotarians, the Rotary Club of Santa Ana, El Salvador, conducted a five-day medical mission that provided free health care to more than 4,000 people from a region surrounding Santa Ana, the country's second-most populous city. From 30 June to 4 July, the Salvadoran and American volunteers screened patients for general medical, pediatric, cardiologic, psychological, dental, and vision needs. They also provided medications and prescription glasses, and referrals for follow-up care as needed. Area mayors coordinated transportation for patients, and El Salvador's Second Infantry Brigade provided logistical support.

Sweden

As part of a trend that combines exercise and environmental awareness, 15 members of the Rotary Club of Stockholm International and five family members converged on a city island, Långholmen, for an up-tempo park cleanup. The *plogga* — a Swedish portmanteau of *plocka* (to pick up) and *jogga* (to jog) — yielded 14 bags of trash in about an hour during the April outing, says Anthony Pearce, a club member. "Day by day, we have seen our streets and woods piled up with trash," says Pearce. "We had to do something about it." The club inaugurated its *plogga* pledge in 2018 after a visit to the club by a founder of the fleet-footed movement.

Hungary

For the Rotary Club of Budapest-Center, support for children undergoing bone marrow transplants has become a long-term commitment. Since 2015, the club has donated equipment including an industrial clothes dryer, 11 computers, and funds toward reconstruction of Démétér House, which provides lodging for patients of Budapest's Szent László Hospital and their relatives. The facility has been home to as many as 40 families a year. The young patients, on average, spend more than a month undergoing treatment. In tandem with the Démétér Foundation, the Budapest-Center Rotarians have also organized programs such as a Halloween party and an Easter egg hunt for the children.



United States

Every week, the Rotary Club of Summit County (Frisco), Colorado, offers \$5 raffle tickets for sale. The winner receives one-third of the total money raised that week. One-third helps fund a three-week trip across the southwestern United States for the two visiting exchange students that the club hosts annually. The final third goes toward “the big pot,” which is distributed only if the weekly winner draws the ace of spades from an ever-shrinking deck of cards. The big pot had grown over nearly a year to a record \$7,000 the week Bob Ashley drew the ace.

A month after his windfall, Ashley announced that his jackpot had funded two \$1,000 gifts to

charitable projects. He then distributed 100 envelopes, each with a \$50 bill, to club members, with the instruction that they direct the money to a cause outside their normal spheres of giving. Inspired, members promised to match Ashley’s \$50 with \$50 of their own for their various causes. “It became the unspoken rule: ‘Heck yeah, we can match it,’” says club member Stu Dearnley. “It was extraordinary — the coolest thing to happen to our club.” Topped-up donations went to a range of causes: ocean cleanups, tigers in India, guinea worm eradication, and search-and-rescue operations in the Summit County area, which is renowned for its ski resorts.

Japan

Tanabata is a festival celebrating the astrological tale of two lovers exiled to separate ends of the Milky Way. In the legend, Orihime and Hikoboshi — the seamstress star and the cowherd star, respectively — are permitted to reunite only once a year, ushering in a period when the country is resplendent with colorful floats, lanterns, balloons, and paper scrolls inscribed with wishes. The Rotary Club of Sagami-hara Hashimoto used the festivities to raise money and awareness for End Polio Now. Working with members of other local clubs, the Rotarians collected about \$12,000 over three days of the Hashimoto Tanabata Festival in Sagami-hara in August.

— BRAD WEBBER

Kanagawa prefecture in Japan has about two temples for every 10,000 people.



Three Rotary alums build on their friendship

AFNAN AGRAMONT AKIYAMA had been working all day, but the water wasn't coming. It was 2009, and the recent college graduate had been hired by a nongovernmental organization to help install water pumps in rural regions of his native Bolivia — areas where getting water had required a long, arduous trek to a river for some families. The work had been going well, but in one community, the pump Agramont Akiyama and his team had just installed wasn't working.

He thought about calling it quits for the day. But when the water finally started flowing, he was glad they had kept trying. "Right after we finished, we were surrounded by people with buckets," he recalls.

Ten years later, Agramont Akiyama is still working to provide clean water and effective sanitation and hygiene to Bolivians. With the help of a Rotary-funded scholarship, he obtained a master's degree in water management at what is now the Netherlands' IHE Delft Institute for Water Education. Agramont Akiyama teaches water management at Universidad Católica Boliviana San Pablo in La Paz and is a mem-

ber of the Rotary Club of La Paz-Sopocachi.

And the connections he made in Delft have led to an ambitious project in Bolivia. Last year, he and two fellow IHE alumni brought solar latrines to more than 60 families there, with plans for 112 more.

Initiated in 2011, Rotary's partnership with IHE Delft has resulted in more than 100 students receiving scholarships to study water management and governance, urban water and sanitation, or water

“Students on their own initiative started something and took it from inception to final delivery.”

science and engineering. The goal: “to educate people in water and sanitation with the objective to link them to Rotary WASH [water, sanitation, and hygiene] activities,” says Henk-Jaap Kloosterman, a member of the Rotary Club of Voorburg-Vliet, The Netherlands, and host area coordinator for the scholarship program.

“We’ve had seven cohorts of students graduate and return to their own countries, where many of them work in the water sector. They leverage the skills they’ve learned in Delft in a professional environment and in Rotary projects.”

The Bolivia latrines project, however, is special: “This is the first example where students on their own initiative started something and took it from inception to final delivery,” Kloosterman says.

For the eco-latrine initiative, Agramont Akiyama recruited two fellow IHE alumni, Scott Taggart of Canada and Mariel Cabero Ugalde of Bolivia. They focused on five communities in Bolivia's Comanche municipality — where, though only 50 miles from La Paz, there is no wastewater treatment.

The three alumni brought different strengths to the project: Agramont Akiyama and Cabero Ugalde were in the water management track at IHE, while Taggart studied sanitary engineering. “The three of us have different backgrounds. Mariel is very good at training programs. Scott is a more technical person, with good insights for the design,” Agramont Akiyama says.



From the initial community needs assessment through the building of the solar latrines, Rotarians worked closely with local residents, some of whom were trained to deal with any technical problems after the installation. The latrines took advantage of existing water service to provide running water for hand washing and solar-heated water for showers.

The Bolivian government had brought water to the Comanche region but had no sewage system to deal with human waste. “They had what we would call outhouses, but the waste wasn’t sealed, so it could infiltrate the groundwater,” says Taggart, who designs wastewater and drinking water systems at Suez Water Technologies and Solutions in Ontario. “Some of them didn’t have doors, and they didn’t have any way for you to clean yourself after using the facilities.”

Supported by a \$68,000 global grant — obtained by the Rotary clubs of Voorburg-Vliet and La Paz-Sopocachi, with support from the Rotary clubs of Delft and Sneek in the Netherlands and Cloppenburg-Quakenbrück in Germany, and from Districts 6920 (Georgia, USA) and 1850 (Germany) — and in cooperation with the Universidad Católica Boliviana San Pablo, Engineers Without Borders Bolivia, and CEDESBOL, a local farming association, the project was broken down into several phases. First, Agramont Akiyama and Cabero Ugalde coordinated local workshops to discuss residents’ water and sanitation concerns with them. “We didn’t want to tell

people what to do, but to have a more reflective process in which we shared ideas and discussed different elements of water and sanitation in their communities,” says Agramont Akiyama.

Once they had assessed the community’s needs and developed a plan for eco-latrine, on-site training sessions taught local families how to build the latrines, which were based on an Engineers Without Borders design. “Our latrines used some of the water service built by the government,” Taggart explains. “So each latrine had a functioning sink and a shower, and then we ran [solar] coils on top of the roof so they could have warm showers. And then there’s a toilet in there and a fecal containment chamber where the waste collects. This chamber has a section with a clear plate over it so that solar radiation can enter and ‘cook’ it for two years, drying it and inactivating all the human pathogens. By that time, it’s soil, so it can be spread on the ground without causing any health issues.”

The families building the latrines showed a great deal of dedication to the project. “For

one family, it was a two-hour walk to get the materials to their home,” Taggart says. “These latrines are made from bricks and concrete, so it’s a fair bit of work if you have to bring that on a two-hour walk.” That kind of commitment ensures that the latrines will be well maintained: “If you build something yourself, it has more value to you. They built this and they know everything about it, so if something needs repairing, they remember how they built it in the first place.”

Some families adapted the latrine blueprints for their own needs, such as obtaining hot water to wash clothes. “In other words, they started to play with the design, and we considered this great, because they took total ownership of the project,” Agramont Akiyama says.

In the second phase of the project, supported by Rotary clubs in Canada, an additional 112 eco-latrines will be constructed. In the meantime, Rotary will remain visible in Comanche. “Most things in the village are made from earthen bricks,” says Taggart. “Our latrines are also earth-toned — except for the doors, which are bright Rotary blue.”

—ANNE FORD



SNAPSHOT **Nowshera, Pakistan**

Health worker Parveen Ajmal (left) and Tayyaba Gul of the Rotary Club of Islamabad (Metropolitan) cross the Kabul River to reach communities in Nowshera. As part of Rotary's commitment to eradicating polio, clubs sponsor health camps, fund permanent immunization centers, work with religious leaders to support vaccinations, and train health workers who visit families regularly. Because Rotary members live in the communities they serve, they build relationships that allow the work to continue amid the challenges of the campaign.





JANUARY events

1

Fit to sprint

EVENT: New Year's Day 5K

HOST: Rotary Club of Brentwood, California

WHAT IT BENEFITS: Local charities

WHAT IT IS: If fitness is your New Year's resolution, this race is the perfect way to kick off the month. Last year more than 230 athletes joined the fun, and even more are expected to lace up for the neighborhood course this year.

18

Glow with the flow

EVENT: Just Glow With It 5K

HOST: Rotary Club of Downtown Ormond Beach, Florida

WHAT IT BENEFITS: Local charities

WHAT IT IS: This evening run along the beach lights up the night: Participants are covered in glow-in-the-dark paint and carry glow sticks. The whole family is welcome to participate.

18-19

Art attack

EVENT: Fine Arts & Crafts Festival

HOST: Rotary Club of Venice-Nokomis, Florida

WHAT IT BENEFITS: Local youth organizations

WHAT IT IS: A host of talented artists and crafters bring their wares to this fest, which features painting, jewelry, ceramics, glass, photography, sculptures, mixed media, and crafts.

25

As seen on TV

EVENT: Amazing Race to Recovery

HOST: Rotary Club of Colonie-Guilderland, New York

WHAT IT BENEFITS: Second Chance Opportunities

WHAT IT IS: Competitors in this *Amazing Race*-inspired event complete tasks and overcome obstacles in a local shopping mall. Proceeds support an organization that runs a community recovery center for those affected by substance abuse disorders.

26

Just keep swimming

EVENT: Great Australia Day Swim

HOST: Rotary Club of Brighton, Victoria, Australia

WHAT IT BENEFITS: Local charities

WHAT IT IS: Whether you're looking for a 650-meter swim or a more ambitious distance of 1,400 or 2,500 meters, you'll find a challenge in this open water swim. There's also a "junior dash" of 200 and 300 meters for eight- to 12-year-olds. All are welcome to enjoy live entertainment and food.

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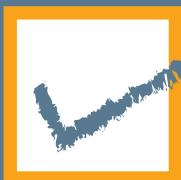
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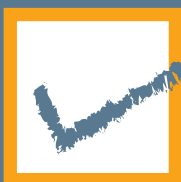
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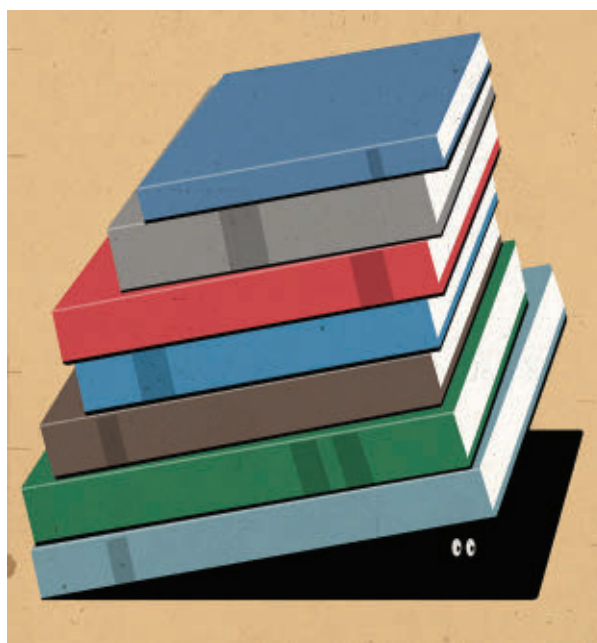
Here's a recommendation:
Don't saddle me with your favorite books

by JOE QUEENAN

Few things in life are more feared than the book that comes highly recommended. Or the gifted book. Or the gifted book that you strongly suspect might be a regifted book.

Sometimes a warning, sometimes a threat, a gifted or recommended book is an attempt to force you to participate in a pleasure you would prefer to avoid. It is a search for validation, affirmation, honor. It's not enough that I like you. It's not enough that I enjoy your company. It's not enough that you're the person I would want by my side if I got into a fistfight in a dark alley with 365 Oakland Raiders fans. You also want me to respect you. Or at least you want me to respect your taste in books. This is asking too much of another person. Far too much.

Here is the basic problem. I like you. You seem to know a lot about trout fishing. Your thoughts about the inverted yield curve are jaw-droppingly perspicacious. I enjoy hearing you talk about that time you hitched a ride with Bo Diddley outside Macon. But I'm not interested in your book recommendations. Not now, not ever. In fact, I wish you had never told me that you liked books with names like *Knee-Deep in the Dead* or *Scourge of the*



Saracen Scimitar or *Let Us Now Praise Famous Yokels*. Until then, things seemed to be going along swimmingly. Now you've got me worried.

Tourists are warned to never study maps while walking around New York. It makes them look like "marks." Something similar happens when you foolishly take a gander at other people's book collections. Once the cormorant has spotted you, you have turned into dinner. I have made the mistake of picking up a book at a friend's house — merely to test its weight — only to be told: "Go ahead, take it. I'm probably not going to get to it for a while."

Well, of course you're not going to get to it for a while. It's a 989-page biography of John Quincy Adams. And you will never have to read it because you just dumped your copy on me. You have vowed that you are not going to crack it open until I finish reading it, which you know is never going to happen because there will never be a time when I will say to myself: "Hold my calls; I'm going to finally hunker down with that John Quincy Adams biography." Not even if I live to be 115. So you are off the hook for life.

The recommended book is a deceptively cunning Rorschach test. It is an attempt to confirm that the quarry shares the same values as the predator. Giving people books they don't want to read is not just an invasion of privacy: It's a smack in the face. It's punitive. It's cruel. It is a socially acceptable form of sadism, the modern cultural equivalent of medieval hot pitch. *I'm upset with you because you didn't offer me your spare ticket to Hamilton on Broadway. So here's the 1,200-page biography of Alexander Hamilton that inspired the musical. Enjoy!*

People love to give you the book that changed their life. *The Little Prince*. *Dow 36,000*. *The Official Preppy Hand-*

book. *Cujo*. Frankly, unless the book explains how to cure lower back pain, I'm not interested. I am not interested in the book about octogenarian decathlon participants or the one about how the invention of tea cozies changed the world, and I am definitely not interested in the book explaining what *really* happened to that doomed Mars rover. I have my own reading agenda, and it does not resemble yours.

People are most likely to recommend books when the victim's immune system is at its weakest. Hearing that you are laid up in bed with a torn meniscus or typhus, they pounce like uncharacteristically empathetic hyenas, armed with exotic chocolates, bouquets of gorgeous flowers, and potboilers by Dan Brown. They are well-meaning but annoying, not unlike Marie Antoinette, herself a reader of light novels. When confined for weeks to my bed of pain, my philosophy regarding get-well gifts is: Leave the cannoli, take the Kate Atkinson.

The chronic recommender of books clings to an unyielding and implacable personal philosophy. *There is something missing in your life. It can be fixed by reading this book. Please let me improve you.* But most people don't want to be improved. Not if it involves reading a book about the deep state. With only a few exceptions — the Bible, the Koran — nothing important in life can be fixed by reading a book. This is particularly true of books written by or about politicians, or morally regenerated white-collar criminals, or plucky defensemen for the Red Wings. It should not be necessary to keep reminding people of this.

People who recommend books display a willful obtuseness and insensitivity toward their victims. They want you to like a particular book even though all the data available to them suggests that you will hate it. This is like offering an Ohio State Buckeye a book about Michigan football. It's like inviting a vegan to dinner and handing her a heaping bucket of Kentucky Fried Chicken. Why would

I enthusiastically accept book recommendations from only three people: my sister Eileen, my daughter, and my editor at *The Rotarian*.

you do that? Were you paying *any* attention to who I am? Did you not notice that I was reading a book *about* Anna Karenina, not a book *by* Anna Kendrick?

Why is it that even on our deathbeds we are still thinking about the precious time we squandered reading the “classics” assigned to us in high school? *The Scarlet Letter*. *Jude the Obscure*. *Death of a Salesman*. *Silas Marner*. We hated these books, not just because they were unreadable, which they usually were, but because we were forced to read them. That's what the compulsive book recommender is — your high school English teacher, Sister Regina Vindicta.

What goes through the mind of the obsessive book giver? Taking the charitable view, people sometimes give you books because they honestly believe that if you want to understand what's going on in the world, you need to read it. Incorrect. Not everyone is fascinated by the hidden structural causes of unemployment. Not everyone cares what Barry Manilow thinks about Bette Midler. Moreover, people don't all read for the same reason. Some people read to get information. Others read to be reassured. Most people read to be diverted.

I read because I like the way writers put words together, because language used well has actually changed my view of the world. *Great Expectations* is superhumanly inspiring to anyone growing up in a housing project. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is a personal invitation to the fun house. A James Ellroy novel is like a 450-page tenor sax solo. What the obsessive book recommender fails to understand is: Not everybody likes the sax.

I enthusiastically accept book recommendations from only three people: my

sister Eileen, my daughter, and my editor at *The Rotarian*. Everyone else I ignore. Still, in a spirit of woefully misguided human kindness, every few years I will stack up the books I have been given or have had recommended to me and vow to spend the next three months reading them and clearing the decks forever.

But I get only about 30 pages into the book about the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu before I give up. Then a few years later I try again. By then, another half-dozen books have been added to my reading list. The enterprise has become hopelessly Sisyphean. By the way, Sisyphus spent eternity futilely pushing a boulder up a hill. But he didn't spend eternity writing about it. Otherwise, I would have to read that book, too.

In my office I have a small pile of books I give to people when they ask me for something I think they might really enjoy: *Moon Tiger* by Penelope Lively, *Darwin, Marx, Wagner* by Jacques Barzun, *Meeting Evil* by Thomas Berger, *A Month in the Country* by J.L. Carr, *Light Years* by James Salter, *The Power and the Glory* by Graham Greene, *The Snow Goose* by Paul Gallico, and *Travels With Herodotus* by Ryszard Kapuściński. These are books I have read again and again, books that mean a lot to me, books that I honestly believe are as close to perfection as any human undertaking can get.

Sometimes I give them to people and they seem reasonably appreciative. But most times I never hear from them again. On almost no occasion has anyone come back to me and begged for a second “desert island” book recommendation. That's because they have, perhaps reluctantly, come to understand that these are books that *I* love, these are books that mean a lot to *me*, these are *my* desert island books.

Go find your own desert island. ■

Joe Queenan is a freelance writer based in Tarrytown, New York.

The dry eye blues

A dad laments putting the lack in lachrymosity

by JEFF RUBY

I am on the couch watching *E.T.* with my young son when the sniffles hit. Soon, as if someone has pressed a button, my tears begin to fall, thick and fast. When *E.T.* flies off in his ship forever and John Williams' music tugs and swells like some kind of sadistic woodwind tear-generator, I lose it completely. Sobbing. Gasping for air, for Pete's sake.

At some point, I realize my son has stopped watching the movie and is regarding me with a mixture of curiosity and horror. "Dad's crying!" he hollers.

Various family members come out of their rooms to gawk at the wet, heaving mess that Dad has become, but by this time I've begun to compose myself. My children know me as silly and embarrassing and even willfully dumb, but this is the first time they've seen me cry. Mortified, I vow it will be the last.

I would not call myself the strong, silent type. I'm weak and loud, actually, overemotional and periodically prone to senseless outbursts. And yet: I do not cry in front of my children.

At my beloved grandfather's funeral a few years back, with my kids at my



side, I didn't squeeze out a single tear. During my Great Cancer Scare of 2017, I spent a brutal week imagining them growing up without a father yet showed little emotion, only a steely resolve. In both cases, any loss of control was scheduled in advance, when I had a good block of time alone and would not have to rejoin society until mental equilibrium had been restored. In other words, I bawled my eyes out in private. But there was some kind of public barrier that I couldn't cross.

This is patently ridiculous. I know



that crying is normal for any human and is nothing to be ashamed of, regardless of gender or emotional IQ. I also know that it's good for you. According to William Frey, a neurology professor at the University of Minnesota and one of the leading academics to study crying, tears contain adrenocorticotropin, an indicator of stress. That could mean that *not* crying only increases stress.

Other men seem to have understood that intuitively. The Old Testament overflows with sensitive characters like Abraham, Joseph, and King David, all of whom

blubber without shame. Even the manly Esau, when he learns that Jacob has stolen his birthright, whimpers as only a guy who loses to his brother could. (He also weeps when they reunite.) Never once is there a stigma to those tears. Overt expressions of grief and joy reside within the normal range of response to biblical situations. Crying makes these men relatable, sincere, trustworthy — perhaps even heroic.

Or so suggests an anonymous 18th-century writer quoted in Tom Lutz's 1999 book, *Crying: The Natural and*



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Cultural History of Tears: “Moral weeping is the sign of so noble a passion, that it may be questioned whether those are properly men, who never weep upon any occasion. They may pretend to be as heroic as they please, and pride themselves in a stoical insensibility; but this will never pass for virtue with the true judges of human nature.”

When did this attitude change? Was it in the Victorian era, when views on masculinity and femininity were defined by each gender’s approach to

It was one of those terrifying moments when it hits you that the people in charge are not really in control after all.

emotion? Women were depicted as impossibly fragile time bombs prone to hot-flash hysteria and in constant danger of taking to their beds. The steady, sturdy gentlemen in their lives were expected to be disciplined, rational, and averse to tears. This meant that men were either (a) suddenly content to lead buttoned-up lives of taciturn rectitude or (b) suffering privately with consequences that came out in less emotionally healthy ways than simple tears. (See Jack the Ripper.)

The stiff upper lip remained a fixture of Western male culture through much of the 20th century. For my stern immigrant great-grandfather and war-hero grandfather, tears were allowed only at the cemetery and, maybe, the altar. Then my father came along. A wartime baby raised by women, he grew up to be a gentle, hugging mushpot, strong and sensitive and ahead of his time in preaching the gospel of empathy. When I wrecked his car as a teenager and was hysterical with guilt, he shrugged and asked if I wanted to shoot some pool. “You’ve punished yourself enough,” he said. By the time of the 1972 release of *Free to Be... You and Me* — a book and recording that

challenged accepted gender roles and officially made it all right for an entire generation of boys to cry — he had been saying it for years.

But here’s the weird thing: Only once do I remember my father crying, and that was because he missed my mom, who had been out of town for a week. It was one of those terrifying moments when it hits you that the people in charge are not really in control after all, and maybe Earth spins on an axis of chaos. I assumed that his crying represented the beginning of a breakdown of sorts and that things would never be the same. As it turned out, the moment was an aberration, a blip on the timeline. But this blip must have profoundly affected me, because I still insist on hiding within the same all-powerful Dad shell that sheltered my forefathers.

What do my kids make of all this? They’re growing up in a world that appears to have split in two. Meghan Markle, now known as the Duchess of Sussex, adopted the masculine pose of the stiff upper lip as she adjusted to life in the royal spotlight. How did that work out? “I really tried,” she reports in a recently released documentary, “but I think that what that does internally is probably really damaging.”

Meanwhile, a 2007 Penn State study by Stephanie Shields and Leah Warner suggested that crying in men can lead to a “positive evaluation” by other people. But as Shields explained, that favorable reaction can depend on the situation. When LeBron James sobbed uncontrollably on the court after finally bringing an NBA title to Cleveland in 2016, we understood: He had overcome a decade of criticism and heartbreak and ended 52 years of his hometown’s sports misery. Tears made sense.

Contrast this with the story of Adam Morrison, an All-American forward for Gonzaga University who, as he began to realize his team was going to lose during the 2006 NCAA basketball tournament, openly wept in a nationally

televised game. Cameras focused on his face, almost cruelly, as if judging this startling loss of decorum and forever solidifying his legacy. For some hoops fans, that's all they remember about Morrison: "Oh yeah, the dude who cried on the court." In sports, it seems tears are OK only when you're a winner. Or when you indulge in what's known as the "man cry," a single tear that streams down a male's face while he reveals no other emotion whatsoever. So finally we have a tactic that makes it OK for 50 percent of the population to weep, so long as it's laconic.

Back at home, as I navel-gaze about what this all means, my wife is matter-of-factly showcasing a full range of emotions for our offspring. This includes crying at everything from shaving commercials to photos of the family picking apples in 2013. *That* is strength and our children know it — and I'm pleased to say, all three of them cry constantly.

As for me, I keep waiting for the moment when I overcome years of conditioning, when real, raw emotion — not the reflexive Pavlovian response triggered by a fictional animatronic alien and a manipulative film score — boils over, and I show my children all of myself. They're waiting, too. It's only a matter of time. During a recent weekend in Albuquerque, one in which three generations of Rubys sat in a field at 5 a.m. to watch hot air balloons launch into the endless Southwestern sky, I asked my father about this not-crying business. "Tears were never close to the surface for me then," he said. "I suppose I showed my emotions in other ways."

But two days later, when he was saying goodbye at the airport, he pulled me in for one more hug and told me he loved me, and I saw his eyes welling up. He's 77, so maybe there's hope for me yet. ■

Jeff Ruby has written about his daughter Hannah and his son, Max, for The Rotarian; his daughter Avi awaits her moment in the sun.

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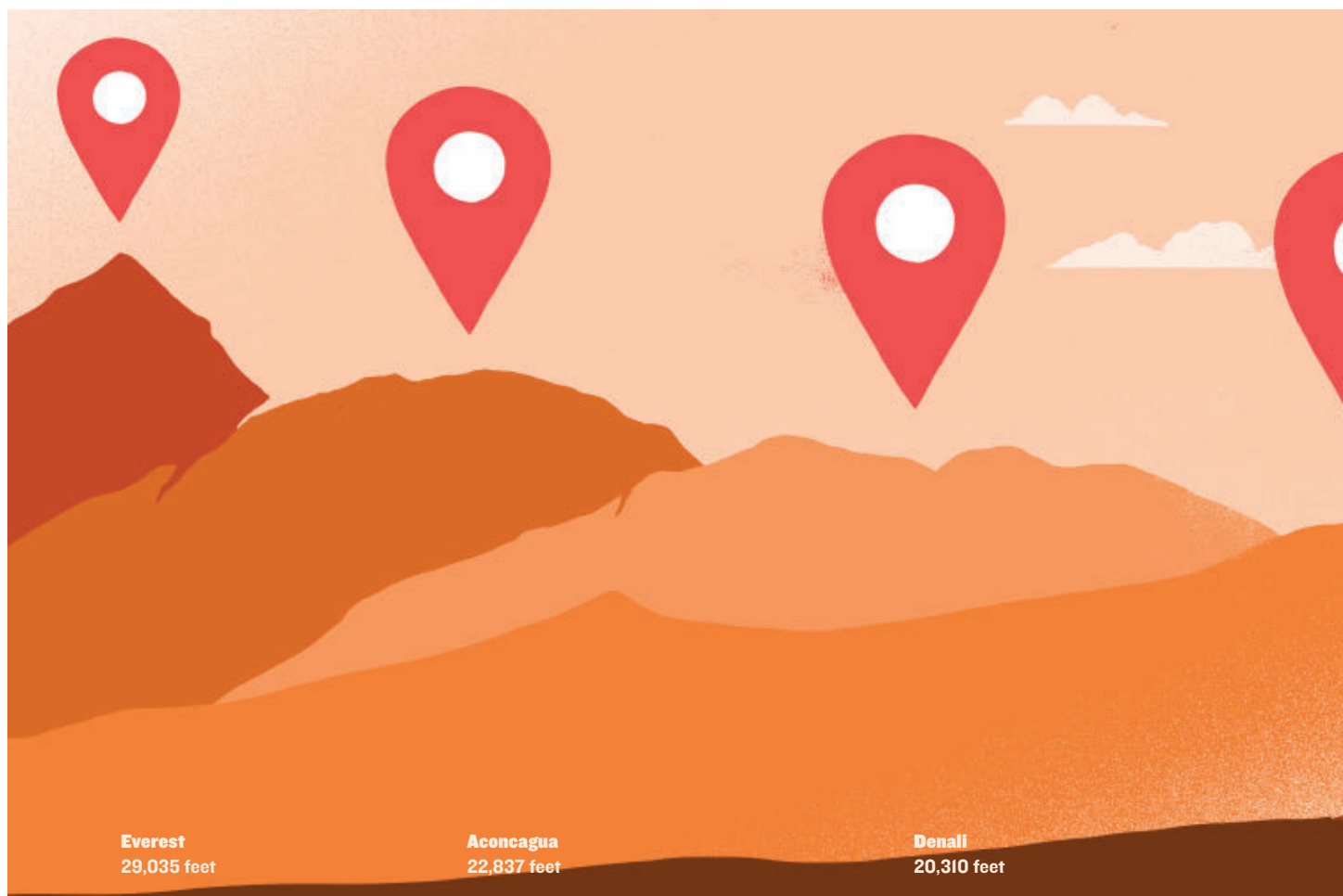
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WHAT IT'S LIKE TO...

Conquer the Seven Summits

JOYCE AZZAM

Rotary Club of Beyrouth, Lebanon

I STARTED HIKING IN 2005 and got serious about high-altitude climbs a few years later, when I won a scholarship to study in Europe and spent a lot of time in the Alps. In 2012, I developed this big dream to complete the Seven Summits, the highest peaks on each continent. But it wasn't something I ever expected to do.

I was born during the civil war in Lebanon, and what I remember from my childhood is moving from bunker to bunker, living underground. I was one of five kids in a very modest family. My dad painted buildings and did construction. For us, the focus was just to eat and survive, and later to get a good education and make a living. Nobody was thinking about climbing mountains.

I always feared heights, and I was never a sporty girl. In fact, I have a physical challenge called hyperlaxity, which is a condition where the joints in my legs are loose. My knees would bend backward. It looks very odd, and when I was young the other kids would bully me about it. They even called me "alien." I couldn't run more than 50 or 100 meters. I would challenge myself every day to run a little farther, using the pillars on the playground. I wanted to say to myself

that I am strong in front of all those kids. Maybe it started there, my desire to climb mountains. It's become a mission for me to tell everyone who has a physical problem, or another kind of challenge to overcome, that they can do the impossible if they want it badly enough.

I love being in nature; I feel more connected to myself. When I first announced I wanted to do the Seven Summits, my friends all thought I was crazy. They said I would lose so much time in my career. My parents said, "You're an architect now. It's time to get married and have kids." For them, this is the real path for a woman. I understood that they were just concerned for me. To climb requires so much time, money, and training, and I didn't have any of those. I had moments of doubt, for sure, when I wanted to quit, because all I could see was a wall before me. But what I would do is create a small



hole in this wall, then make it bigger and bigger until suddenly it became a door I could walk through.

At the end of 2016, I had given up. I was in a library working on my PhD thesis when I saw a Facebook post about Raha Moharrak, who is the first Saudi woman to climb the Seven Summits. I couldn't stop thinking about it. I woke up in the middle of the night and created a whole new plan. I gave it a name and a logo. Usually, you don't tell people you have a dream until you've done it. But for me it was the opposite: If I tell people my dream, then I have to make it happen.

One thing that helped a lot was that I started visiting schools. I would show the students photos from my climbs and I was always holding a Lebanese flag in the pictures. But the kids would still ask me, "Are you Lebanese?" Because they had never seen a Lebanese woman standing

on cliffs, hanging from a rock, or climbing with crampons. So I said, *I'm going to be the example for these kids*. One girl told me, "I'm going to be the second Lebanese woman to do this." It was so beautiful, and it showed me that I can do a lot of good for other people with this dream. A dream can't be complete if it doesn't have this service side to it, and that is why I'm a Rotarian. Because I believe in giving back and serving our society in any way we can. It's why I consider Rotary more than a club. It's a family that I have around the world.

Mount Everest was my last summit, and before I went there, I was worried, because I hadn't had time to train very well. But my brother Georges — he's my biggest supporter — said: "You can do this. You've been training for years. Just go slow and get used to it." And that's what I did. I climbed Everest just like a turtle.

On the summit night, there was a lot of traffic. And we had to step over people who had died on the way. That was very, very hard. But I also remember the beauty of that landscape, the blue of that dawn. I've climbed 28 mountains on seven continents, and there is nothing like standing on top of the Himalayas. Oh my God.

For me, though, it was not about Everest or conquering the summit. It was about fulfilling the dream of the Seven Summits. It was about that girl who wasn't given permission to dream — because of where I come from, my gender, my social class, my country, my physical limitations. It was about years of hard work and adversity. I felt complete inside. And it was a moment not just for me, but for women and girls everywhere. It was the proof that you can be faithful to your dream.

As told to Steve Almond

Scrub in on the world's first heart transplant

DEAN ROHRS

Rotary Club of Langley Central,
British Columbia;
past RI vice president

IN DECEMBER 1967, I was completing my nurse's training at Groote Schuur Hospital in Cape Town, South Africa. At that time, Christiaan Barnard was leading a team that hoped to perform the first successful human heart transplant at that hospital. There was a race between teams, because it was such a huge medical achievement. I was on "backup rotation" one night when I was called into the OR. It was just a coincidence that I happened to be on duty.

You have to understand, with a surgery like that, the room is crowded with people: the surgeons, their assistants, the anesthetists, the folks operating the heart-lung machine that keeps the patient alive. My job was just to do whatever needed to be done. I counted the cotton swabs used during the surgery, to make sure none were left in the patient. I fetched water. The surgeons would lean toward me and say, "Please mop my brow," because they were perspiring.

In the moment, you understand that you're doing something most unusual, but you're so involved with the process that you're just making sure you're watching and filling in wherever you can. I knew the man receiving the heart and his family; he had been on the ward for a long time and he was clearly dying. He would have been gone in 24 or 48 hours. And here was this young woman who had been in a car accident and donated her heart.



Because of the surgical draping and the number of people leaning over the patient, I had no sightline into the chest cavity. But I did see everything that went in and came out. I saw the needles the surgeons were using to sew tissue together and tie off the bleeders. I saw the suctioning and the cauterization. And I saw the new heart itself go in. It was very different back then in how they did harvesting, and far more dramatic. They had to carry the new heart from one surgical theater to the other. I saw it being brought into the OR and lifted into the patient. Of course there was drama, because you are putting something into somebody's chest that could give life but came from somebody who gave life. When I saw the new heart itself, I don't remember thinking anything other than, "Oh my God, that's somebody's heart."

Our surgery wasn't the first attempted heart transplant. There had been one earlier, but the patient didn't survive the procedure. Our patient survived for 18 days and was able to talk to his family. It wasn't his heart that gave out; he died of pneumonia, partly because the immunosuppres-

sant drugs weren't as effective back then. Still, because our patient survived, that surgery became international news. Nobody on that team could have anticipated how big the reaction would be. It was instantly a world-famous event.

I was only 25 when it all happened — that's 50 years ago now, good grief! Sometimes I feel a little embarrassed when people make a big deal out of it, because I was so peripheral. But that surgery did shape the course of medical history. And I have to give Professor Barnard credit. He was not always an easy man to work with, but it took a lot of courage to do what he did, because many people said back then that you can't touch the heart. It was culturally and religiously unacceptable. That surgery changed the way people thought about the heart, and it changed the way we treat heart disease to this day.

As told to Steve Almond

Fighting disease is one of Rotary's
six areas of focus.
Learn more at rotary.org/our-causes.

IN 1982, WHEN I WAS 20, I received my first invitation to join the French national soccer team and got to compete in the World Cup. I was selected Best Young Player of the tournament and scored a memorable penalty shot in the semifinals.

But the highlight of my career was our quarterfinal match four years later at the 1986 World Cup in Mexico. The game, against Brazil, began at noon on 21 June at Jalisco Stadium in Guadalajara. It was scorching hot and very humid, and we had to deal with the pollution and the high altitude. They provided oxygen tanks to help us cope with the severe conditions. I had never seen that before, and I haven't seen it since.

Some people called a contest between France and Brazil a dream match. The coach of the Brazil team said he thought it the equivalent of the final game of the tournament, and one journalist wrote that everything that came after would be anticlimactic. Two hours before the game, there were already about 30,000 fans there — eventually the crowd swelled to 66,000 — and most of them were Brazilians, chanting and dancing. So Brazil definitely had a home-field advantage.

For this matchup, our coach, Henri Michel, had changed tactics and told some of us to play different positions. We were all at sea and immediately realized the new system wasn't working out. Brazil scored after only 17 minutes. We had to reorganize quickly, which is not easy in the midst of a game. We went back to our usual positions, and shortly before halftime, Michel Platini, our captain, scored a goal.

In those days, water breaks were unheard of, and with the high caliber of play, the ball rarely went out of play. Our medical team filled small plastic bags with water and tossed them to us from the sidelines, making sure the referees didn't notice. About 15 minutes before regulation time ended, with the game still tied 1-1, Joël Bats, our goalkeeper, fouled an opponent and drew a penalty. The Brazilian players started to celebrate as if they had won the game, which I thought was arrogant and quite presumptuous. And I was right: Zico, a god in his country, took the penalty shot — and Joël stopped it.

We had a fantastic opportunity in the second overtime when our striker, Bruno Bellone, faced the Brazilian goalie in a one-on-one duel. Bruno was fouled and couldn't score; worse, the referee didn't

WHAT IT'S LIKE TO...

Play in a legendary World Cup game

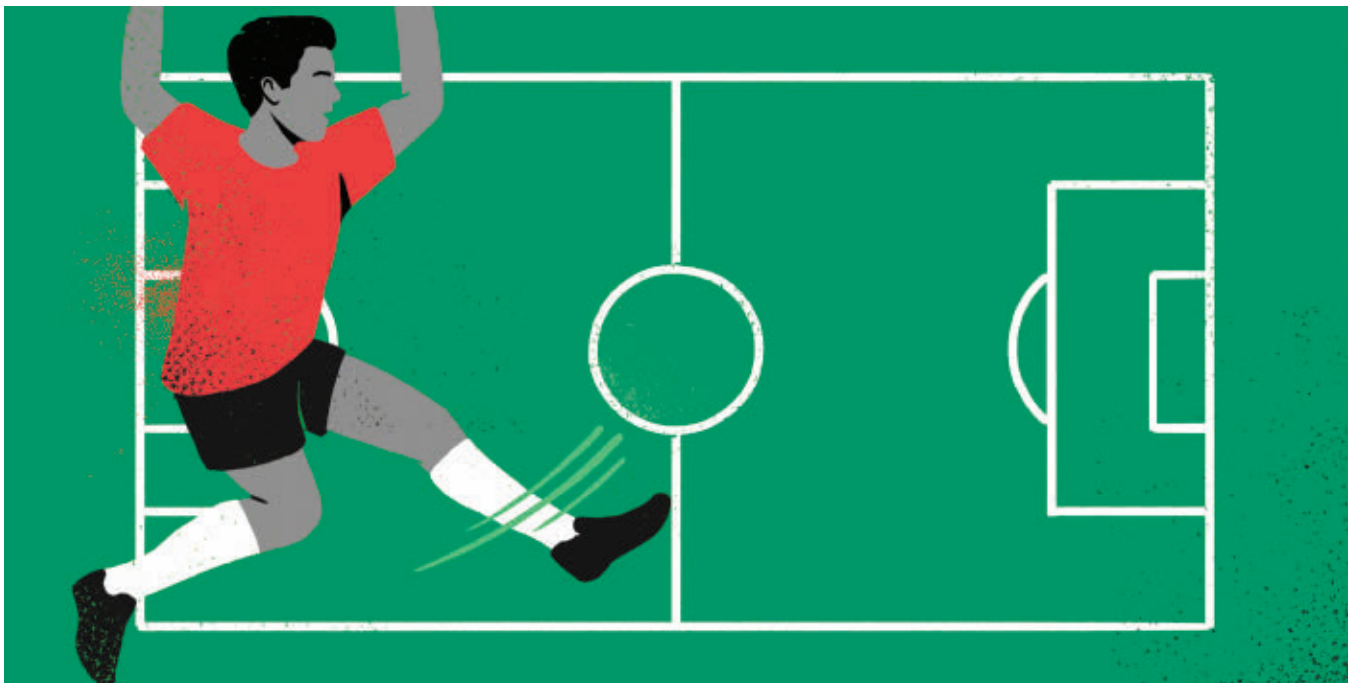
MANUEL AMOROS

Rotary Club of Arles-sur-Rhône, France

call a foul and award us a penalty kick.

And so, after 120 grueling minutes, the contest was decided on penalty kicks, a lottery you cannot depend on. We alternated, with each team taking a total of five shots. Four years earlier, in the semifinal against Germany, I had shot second and scored. Out of superstition, I asked to be second again, and I didn't miss. There were three missed shots — one by France and two by Brazil — but finally, my teammate Luis Fernández took the winning kick. What an incredible moment! We had defeated Brazil. I would never experience such an amazing feeling again.

As told to Alain Drouot



Ski into the heart of Rotary

GUIDO FRANCESCHETTI
Rotary Club of Rome International



THE ONLY WAY TO SURVIVE was to relax every single muscle and then forget about the body. The pain remained, but I learned to contemplate it objectively, almost like a spectator. After my surgeries, I had to lie completely still, my shattered pelvis held together with plates and screws. I could only use one hand; the other shoulder was broken. Fractured vertebrae and ribs added to the pain.

I was skiing with friends in Val d'Isère, France, when the accident happened. The first two days were glorious: good snow, ideal conditions. On the third day, a dense fog rolled in, so we decided to take an easier route down and stop for the day. The runs were smooth and deserted. I was ahead, so I cut right and looked behind me to see if I could catch

a glimpse of anyone. I cut left and looked back again. Where were they?

When I faced forward again, a signpost was directly in front of me. I tried an emergency maneuver to avoid it, but it didn't work. With the little control I had left, I tried dodging it from the side. But it was too late — I hit the post hard.

My friend Bernard found me first. I was in so much pain and very cold. He put his windbreaker over me and called for help. It was too foggy for a helicopter to airlift me off the mountain, so the emergency response team hoisted me onto a toboggan to sled down to a cable car that took me the rest of the way to a waiting ambulance. My injuries were too complicated for the two closest hospitals to treat, so I was transferred to a univer-

sity hospital in Grenoble for surgery.

My wife, Daniela, was in Rome at the time. She rushed to France, but by the time she got to Grenoble, I had already been taken into surgery. The operation was expected to be very long, so the staff advised her to return to the hotel. I hate to think of how she must have felt, upset and alone in a foreign place with my situation uncertain.

Back at the hotel, Daniela noticed the Rotary logo; the doorman told her that the Rotary Club of Grenoble-Belledonne met there. In fact, their meeting was about to start. Daniela is also a Rotarian, and the timing felt like a blessing. She needed to spend a few hours among friendly faces, even if they were strangers. She decided to attend.



The club members welcomed her warmly, and when she told them about my accident, they showed us what it means to be a part of Rotary. The topic of the meeting shifted from club business to how to help Daniela. One member offered her daughter's apartment, which was temporarily unoccupied. Another gave Daniela a ride back to the hospital. When she told me everything later, I was very touched. I could tell that Daniela had gained strength to deal with her fears for my health knowing that she could count on friends, even ones she had just met, to help her.

In the following days, while I underwent more operations, the Grenoble Rotarians helped Daniela settle in. They solved the bureaucratic problems that

arose when she filled out the paperwork to authorize my stay in France. After two weeks in the hospital, I was transferred to a rehabilitation clinic in the mountains outside Grenoble. My doctors thought it best that I stay nearby, rather than return to Rome, during rehabilitation so they could monitor my progress and intervene if needed.

I spent four months recovering in France. For much of that time, I was completely immobilized. I was well cared for, and Daniela was able to travel back and forth from Rome to see me, but I was still in a foreign place without any family nearby. The rehabilitation clinic was beautiful, but the road to reach it was winding, long, and not very convenient from Grenoble. Yet the Rotarians never

left me wanting for company. Their visits brought me a little bit of the outside world, and for that, I was so grateful. After any of them visited, Daniela would, of course, receive an update.

When I finally started to move around in a wheelchair, I asked my doctor for permission to attend the Grenoble-Belledonne club meeting. Through tears, I thanked them for taking care of me and my family.

It's now been almost 12 years since my accident. I have healed, and our friendship with many members of the Grenoble club endures. I have always believed that the most extraordinary aspect of Rotary is the potential for friendship all over the world. I'm lucky to have lived a very touching example of that.

As told to Vanessa Glavinskas

Visit every national park in the United States

MIKAH MEYER

Ambassadorial Scholar

IT SEEMED ALL BUT CERTAIN that I had blown it. After logging tens of thousands of miles in a cramped van with a solar-powered fridge that chilled things only on occasion, I wouldn't achieve my goal. The pilot of the seaplane flying me into one of the most remote national parks in the United States, the Aniakchak National Monument & Preserve in Alaska, had just told me that, because of restricted visibility, he would have to scratch our planned landing on the crater lake below. Then he added, "Like we agreed, you'll have to pay me full price whether we can touch down or not."

Two years before, at age 30, I had set off on an odyssey to visit all of our 419 national park sites on one continuous journey that would ultimately take three years and cover more than 75,000 miles. No one had done it before. From the U.S. Virgin Islands to the Badlands of South Dakota to Florida's Dry Tortugas and beyond, I had traveled by sea, land, and air to visit every single park. I had survived on canned foods, endured blizzards and scorching heat, repaired flat tires and oil leaks, and been chased by security guards out of dozens of parking lots where I had hunkered down in my van for the night to save money. And now it looked like my name would go into the record books with an asterisk noting that, due to inclement weather, I had been shut out from visiting the Aniakchak crater — even though I had paid full price.

"All right, one last look," the pilot said, dropping into the thick soup to see if there

was the slimmest chance this dense cumulus formation did not extend all the way down to the surface of the Aleutian mountain lake. I saw nothing but an all-encompassing blanket of gray; that vista perfectly mirrored my despondency. But just as the pilot throttled up to turn toward home, a sliver of sunlight appeared far beneath us; glowing like a beacon, it illuminated a bright expanse of water under the cloud cover. Both of us let out a loud cheer. Five minutes later, the seaplane made a smooth landing on Surprise Lake in a crater bowl formed 3,500 years ago. I felt as if I had been blessed by divine intervention.

That sense of spiritual connection had been guiding me for a long time. I'm the son of a Lutheran pastor, so maybe it was to be expected. For sure it played a role in my current quest. My dad, who died at 58, loved road trips, and I undertook mine in large measure to honor his memory. In spirit he rode beside me on every leg of the journey. And his early passing confirmed to me that you can't hold off on your dreams.

If my father provided all the inspiration I needed, I still had to find the funds. As a student at the University of Memphis in Tennessee, I had received an Ambassadorial Scholarship, sponsored by the Rotary Club of Memphis Central, that enabled me to enroll in McGill University in Montreal to study voice training as a countertenor. I didn't know at the time that the scholarship would, indirectly, provide the means for me to

undertake my national parks venture.

I more or less sang for my supper. In addition to money I had saved over a decade, I paid my way by giving recitals in churches and talking from the pulpit about my travel experiences. I shared my adventures and put out a hat.

I talked about the time I was in Washington's Olympic Peninsula and drove through an entanglement of tall bushes that blocked my view, then felt a sudden drop. When I looked out the side window, I discovered that the front wheels of my van were hanging off a cliff. I threw open the driver's side door and my whole life flashed by. Fortunately, some people showed up and pulled me and the van to safety.

And I related how at Dinosaur National Monument in northwestern Colorado — my favorite park — a wild goose, soon to be named George, joined our rafting group. He slept with us, partied with us, and flapped his way up a steep canyon hike with us. When we finally drove away, George honked and chased after the van.

My visits to churches also provided me with a chance to speak candidly as a gay Christian. I was raised in conservative Nebraska, where I struggled as a teenager to own my sexual orientation. It was super hard to come out. You had to choose whether to be gay and not be a Christian, or be a Christian and stay in the closet. Now, two decades later, I had an opportunity to tell my story and to be received with genuine affection.

From an early age, I had a strong desire to see the world. Rotary made that possible by seeding my journey. I'm asked often if I would do it all again. In a heartbeat, I answer. I was given a chance to follow my vision, embrace my true nature, and share both with a welcoming audience.

As told to Stephen Yafa

The LGBT Rotarians and Friends Rotary Fellowship is dedicated to creating an inclusive and welcoming community for LGBT+ people. Learn more at facebook.com/LGBTARotaryFellowship.



Evade capture in World War II

SEIJI IMAIZUMI

Rotary Club of Kawagoe, Japan



MY SHOES WERE SO WORN that I had to tie rope around them to hold them together. Sometimes I had to eat small animals, even grass. But I kept walking, hoping to reach somewhere safe. I spent every day thinking I was probably going to die. Come tomorrow, I would say to myself, I won't be in this world.

Most of my unit died during the battle in Imphal, India, which took place near the border with Burma (now Myanmar) in 1944. British soldiers surrounded them and killed or captured nearly everyone. I was not among them because I had been ordered to investigate how we could cross a nearby river. If the circumstances had been different, I would have died too.

The British were searching for any remaining Japanese soldiers, so I retreated into the Burmese mountains to hide. This was near the end of World War II, and Japan was losing steam, so our food and ammunition hadn't been replenished in a long time. I had almost nothing left. I walked about

15 miles a day over very difficult terrain.

Finally, I found a house. It was one room. If you opened the door, you could see the entire house. But the family took me in. They gave me food. When British soldiers came, they told me to hide under the bed. Once the British moved on, they told me I could come out.

I stayed in hiding until the war ended. I kept moving, and everywhere I went, families took me in. I didn't worry that someone would tell the British. I later heard many stories of local people hiding other Japanese soldiers. No matter where I went, I heard this kind of story. They were very kind to us.

I returned to Japan in 1946 and had to start over. For years, I struggled to farm on land that no one wanted to cultivate. Everyone was poor. It was a difficult time. But I knew from experience that if I wanted to live, I would find a way. I had the strength and will to survive. I also started thinking about how I would repay the kindness of the Burmese people.

I began dairy farming and my life stabilized, so I started the Imaizumi Memorial Burmese Scholarship Foundation. The scholarship is for students from Myanmar who study in Japan. In 1989, we awarded our first scholarships. Today, about 200 young people have received the scholarship.

I've mentored many of the students who've studied here in Japan, and my goal is for them to have the skills they need to bring prosperity to their country. Investing in the next generation was the best way I could think of to repay the strangers who took me in. And for my comrades to rest in peace, I hope this generation brings peace and prosperity to Myanmar.

*As told to Vanessa Glavinskas
and Reiko Tokiyama*

Promoting peace is one of Rotary's six areas of focus. Learn about the different ways you can work for peace at rotary.org/our-causes.

Host two generations of Youth Exchange students

RANDY WILSON

Governor, District 7150

JANET WILSON

Rotary Club of Sauquoit, New York

IN 1988, a 15-year-old Rotary Youth Exchange student from India named Anant Agrawal arrived in District 7150 in central New York. His first host family had a construction project going on in their home when he arrived, so he stayed with our family for about six weeks.

We had just added two bedrooms to our house, and Anant helped us paint. He was thrilled to be able to help us finish those rooms. He did well in school, he worked on Rotary projects, and then he went home. There wasn't any social media or email then, and although we had become close, we lost contact after that. We were raising our family. He went home to go to college, and he eventually married and started his own family.

We've hosted students in our home from Australia, Denmark, Finland, Germany, and the Netherlands. We always love learning about the students' culture and seeing them mature while they are here. For many of these students, it's the first time they've been away from their family for an extended period. It's amazing to watch them grow as the year progresses. For the host family, it's a wonderful opportunity to expand your worldview and, in effect, to adopt a child into your home for three or four months.

Not every exchange is perfect. You have to understand that the kids will experience some homesickness and know how to work through it with them. The host family has to work at it; the student has to work at it. But in general, host families find that they make a connection if they see the student not as a guest, but as a member of their family.

From 1989 until 2006, we weren't in touch with Anant. Then District 3060, which includes part of the state of Gujarat, sent two students to District 7150. We asked the students if they knew Anant. One of them remembered that after speaking at a club, he talked to a man who told him: "I'm really excited for you. I was in central New York about 18 years ago. The winters are very cold, but the people are very warm. You're going to have a wonderful year."

Sure enough, that was our Anant. We reconnected, and in 2011 he, his wife, and their two children traveled to the United States and came to stay at our home for a week. They visited the high school he had gone to. It was wonderful. Then in 2014, we went to India for his cousin's wedding. We got to spend about nine days there.

Anant's son was a Rotary Youth Exchange student in Brazil, and his daughter, Aarohi, applied as well. In the fall of 2018, the Sauquoit Rotary Club, our home club, hosted her. She stayed with us in the same bedroom her father had helped us paint 30 years earlier. She was in a play at school, and she took Advanced Placement courses. She graduated with about

80 other seniors in her class. Then she went back to India. As hard as it was to watch her go, we knew we'd see her again.

When we talk to potential host families, we tell them the greatest thing about Rotary Youth Exchange: If you agree to host a student from a foreign country for several months in your home, you will host them in your heart for the rest of your lives.

As told to Frank Bures

Rotary Youth Exchange has been expanding horizons since 1975. Learn how you can get involved in the program at rotary.org/youthexchange.



Make it through a hurricane

MIKE STAFFORD

Rotary Club of Freeport, Bahamas

WE KNEW THAT A STORM was coming and that it was a bad one, so we were preparing. I run a small shipyard, and we stood down because the winds got to be too much for us to deal with pulling boats and ships out. We'd been through storms before, so we had all our supplies, our batteries. The only thing we had to buy was gasoline for the generators. My wife put up all the shutters.

I knew that we had to evacuate our main house the minute I heard gurgling in the toilets. I looked out a small hurricane window that we don't shutter and saw water was all the way up to our back deck, which is about 160 feet from the seawall of the canal we live on and 22 feet above sea level. I said to my wife, "Honey, we've got to bug out." That took a little while because we had to stuff our two cats in duffel bags, and cats don't like getting

stuffed in duffel bags with 180-mile-an-hour winds howling outside.

We went to a cottage on our property that's about 150 feet higher than the house. We were in bed listening to the wind howling. It was about 3 in the morning, and we were holding hands, not sleeping. I was freaking out because you could hear the tornadoes whizzing around. My wife said, "Honey, I know that after this is done, you're going to go to the water plant because you always do that and you always want to help people. Don't worry, I understand, because you're a Rotarian."

Dorian ran for more than 30 hours. It just parked right on top of us. I've been through quite a few hurricanes, and it was like nothing we'd ever seen. The next day, I got halfway to the water plant — which was built with the support of a Rotary Foundation grant — and was greeted by



the police who had come to escort me there. When we got to the plant, there were already about 200 people there with their jugs. The police had to clear a path through the crowd for me.

When I opened the door, I knew we had trouble. One-gallon jugs of water were scattered all around, which meant the electric motor for the pump had been underwater. I poured some water on it, sprayed some contact cleaner, and doused it with diesel fuel. Then I turned the switch and the machine fired up. We were making water.

The great thing about being a Rotarian is the response. We set up a system right after the storm. It just kind of fell together. The assistant governor for our area, Liz Knowles, took control. Across the street from the water plant, Christel Lightbourne, of the Rotary Club of Grand Bahama Sunrise, organized a warehouse as

a distribution point for food and clothing. Jaims Carey, president of the Rotary Club of Lucaya, was in charge of trucking goods all around to people who couldn't get out because they had lost their car or they didn't want to leave their stuff. Billy Jane Ferguson from the Lucaya club is in charge of the sort center for relief supplies. And James Sarles from the Sunrise club is producing videos that he's sending around, and that's raising us money. He's kind of our ways and means guy. We've also got individual Rotarians who've come to the island to do cleanup, and they've heard somehow about the water plant. Plus I've got clubs calling from Sweden, Germany, Winnipeg, Toronto, Chicago, and California, sending us supplies and money. It's just overwhelming. I'm trying to hold back tears as I'm talking about it.

My house pretty much went underwa-

ter with all our stuff. We had fruit trees laden with mangoes, avocados, breadfruit, starfruit. That all went under 6 feet of water. Every day is different. Some days are up, some days are down. You laugh, you cry, you get emotional. And then you see something good, like you find your first Paul Harris pin in the corner. Then later you find your second Paul Harris pin way off in another part of the house. Then, while you're mucking out something, you find your third Paul Harris pin. And now you're really happy, and you realize that we'll get through it.

As told to Frank Bures

Rotary International has established a fund to help out after future disasters. Learn more at rotary.org/disaster-response.



Donate a kidney to a friend

JULIE SPANN
Rotary Club of Fishkill, New York

I HAD KNOWN STERLING for years. He was the president of the board at the library where I'm the director. He retired from the library but was always part of Rotary, and I joined, at his urging, six years ago. I knew that he needed a kidney and that he had put himself on the donor list, and I knew that I wanted to be a donor myself. But at the time, I was caring for my ill mother and I knew it would be too much. Then my mother passed away.

I waited a few months, then approached Sterling's wife, Chris, and told her that I'd be interested in donating a kidney to him. I went to Chris because I didn't know if Sterling would be OK with my wanting to donate. I worried he might feel bad about it. But I knew Chris would say yes.

I knew the statistics were against us when we did the blood test, because only a tiny percentage of nonfamily donors match. And I usually don't have good luck; I'm kind of ruled by Murphy's law. I also knew that I could donate my kidney to somebody else and that this would move Sterling up on the list, so he would get another kidney quicker. I was going to donate one way or another because I wanted to help somebody. But when it's meant to be, it's meant to be. We wound up matched for five out of six points, and we just proceeded from there.

In terms of what my family thought, my mom would have been the only one to object. That's why I waited for her to pass on. My brother was a little bit nervous about the whole thing. But the more I explained the process to him, the more he could see why I was doing

it. I was so excited about being a donor, and that kept my friends excited. They didn't want to burst my bubble.

I'm not a big think-into-the-future person, so I wasn't worried about life with one kidney. That was never a fear of mine. But I do have an awful fear of needles and doctors. I thought the surgery would help me with those fears. It did not. But it was for such a great cause that I wasn't scared or nervous. I knew it was going to work out. When it came to them putting in the IVs, yeah, OK, I was a little nervous. But I actually walked myself into the surgery.

It took me three or four weeks to get back to normal, and a good year to get all my strength back. As for Sterling, he's doing great. He had high blood pressure before the surgery and afterward it went down, so we like to joke that I actually lowered his blood pressure, because mine is naturally low. He definitely has more pep. On the first anniversary of the surgery, Sterling and Chris gave me a Tiffany necklace with a kidney charm on it, believe it or not. That's the first and last time I'll get a Tiffany.

I talk to Chris a lot; she's kind of like a second mom to me. And I see Sterling every Wednesday at Rotary. I love being there. I do think I was influenced to become a donor because of the club: the whole idea of Service Above Self, of finding ways to help people.

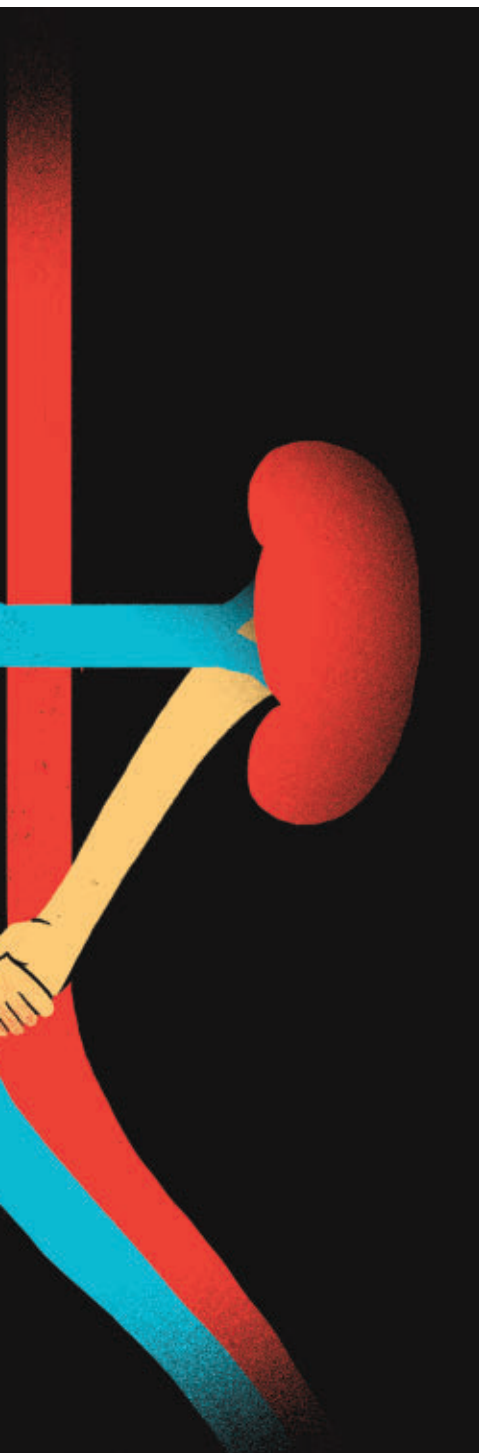
I never doubted this was the right thing to do. It was the best decision I ever made and one of the few I have made 100 percent confidently. I tell Sterling all the time, if I had more kidneys to give, I would.

As told to Steve Almond



STERLING GASTON
Rotary Club of Fishkill, New York

Receive a kidney from a friend



I HAVE POLYCYSTIC KIDNEY disease. My brother and I inherited it from our mother, who died from it. It can cause high blood pressure and aneurysms, both of which I've had. My nephrologist said, "If you pay attention to what I tell you and eat what I tell you and take the following prescriptions, you'll get 15 years out of those kidneys before you start having trouble." Well, I followed what she said and sure enough I did get 15 years. But then I started having trouble. I had a series of kidney stones, and then CAT scans found hundreds of little cysts on my kidneys. So seven years ago, I got myself on the donor list. I knew I had to nurse these puppies and hope I would get a donor before things got really bad.

Several years ago, Julie approached my wife, Chris, about being the donor. It was at the Christmas party for the Fishkill club. I could see them talking over on the other side of the room. But you know, it's a social thing. And we were all good friends, so it was no big deal. Chris asked her, "Why are you coming to me rather than Sterling?" Julie said, "Because I know him. If I go to him and say, 'I'm going to do this,' he's going to say, 'No, Julie, just cool it. I'm on the donor list.'" And she was probably right. So the two of them ganged up on me. That's how we wound up doing it.

It's been almost 20 years since I hired Julie as the director of the library where I was president of the board. We were in contact on a daily basis and struck up a wonderful friendship over the years. I eventually got Julie involved in Rotary. We've both been president of the club. She's a very community-minded person. But when she offered to donate me her kidney, I was absolutely blown away. And

honestly, she saved me. At that point, my kidneys were working so badly that they were down to less than 8 percent of capacity. If I hadn't had a transplant in the works, I would have had to go on dialysis.

At the time Julie came to me, I didn't know that the odds were so stacked against us being a match. But the way it works with the United Network of Organ Sharing is that if you donate a kidney, you can designate the recipient. And if you aren't a match with that person, they'll donate your kidney to a matching recipient, but they'll also move your designated recipient up to the top of the list in your blood type, sort of like a round robin. Julie was fine with that, which further astounded me. Her reaction was: If that's the way it goes, great. I'll be helping two people. She had a commitment to do this, and she wanted to do it for me.

We both went in for the surgery the same day. Normally, they would implant the donated kidney in addition to your other kidneys. But both of my kidneys were so severely damaged that they had to be removed. I was in the hospital for six days. I had kind of a bumpy road for the first month, because one of the immunosuppressant drugs caused gastric distress. I lost 21 pounds in 17 days. But now I just have to take two pills in the morning and two in the afternoon; most kidney recipients have to take four or five times that every day, so it was an amazing match.

Most donors and recipients don't keep track of each other. But my wife and I regularly get together with Julie for lunch or dinner. And I see her at Rotary every Wednesday morning. We had a wonderful relationship before. But it's deeper and more meaningful now.

As told to Steve Almond

Fly a chopper into history

JON STILLMAN

Rotary Club of Stillwater Sunrise,
Minnesota

THIS IS THE FIRST TIME since I came back in 1973 that I'm revisiting my experience in Vietnam. I recently found a diary I kept tucked away all this time. It brought back memories of my three tours I had forgotten.

When I went to the University of Wisconsin in Madison, I had no interest in becoming a member of the armed services. But because it was a land-grant university, male students traditionally enrolled in the Reserve Officers' Training Corps for two years. At the end of that time, I decided to stay in the program for another couple of years. Next I went to flight school, and that's how I ended up in the Army.

After a basic officer course at Fort Benning, Georgia, I landed at Fort Rucker, Alabama, for advanced helicopter training. While there, I received my orders to go to Vietnam. That was February 1963. At the time, Vietnam was on nobody's mind. Most people in the United States didn't even know where it was.

I was apprehensive, mostly because I was leaving my wife of two years, Jane. During this first tour, I wrote to her every day and called her four or five times. Later, after the MARS (Military Auxiliary Radio System) was implemented, you had to fol-

low radio protocol when you called home. That made it awkward to have a personal conversation: "I love you, Jane, over." "I love you too, over."

For an impressionable 25-year-old guy who had never left the country, diving into the unknown was another source of anxiety. And it was a cultural shock: a new language, a new religion, new vegetation, new food. Fortunately, friends of mine were already there when I arrived and helped me adapt to this foreign environment.

At Tan Son Nhut, the airbase near Saigon, I was assigned to the 57th Transportation Company, which operated H-21 helicopters, an older aircraft known as the "Flying Banana." They were challenging but fun to fly. They were designed for cooler weather than what we had in Vietnam and required a lot of concentration. That explains why we sometimes wouldn't even notice when we were hit by enemy fire.

The situation in Vietnam was confusing at multiple levels. The war had no linear battlefields like World War II. Saigon was pretty much secured, but you could be 10 minutes from the capital and get fired at. There were pockets of Viet Cong fighters that were hard to nail

down. I also had the impression that the people you were supposed to help didn't want your help.

In June our company was redesignated as the 120th Aviation Company, and we started carrying troops from the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) into combat. The South Vietnamese soldiers were usually friendly, albeit a little timid toward Americans. They seemed to be fighting for a cause, while some of their





commanders were clearly political appointees with no knowledge of the battlefield. This was quite frustrating, because it often led to the ARVN leaving a pathway for the Viet Cong to get away.

From 2 August to 4 October, I was stationed in the Central Highlands. This is when I first encountered the Montagnards, tribesmen living in the mountains. Our advisers were trying to bring them over to our side. During our meetings with the vil-

lage elders, we were invited to take part in celebrations. Men wearing loincloths sat in a house built on stilts and played tribal rhythms on gongs. They passed around a jar of rice wine topped with tree branches and river water. I declined to drink the stuff because I had to fly.

In late September I attended a briefing by Robert McNamara, the secretary of defense. He had come to Vietnam on a fact-finding tour with a few of his Whiz

Kids, the number crunchers and management experts who advised him. I was impressed by the specific questions he asked and his understanding of statistical data. However, I'm not certain that his corporate approach to running a defense system was beneficial.

Shortly after the briefing, I returned to Saigon on a classified mission that kept me on standby for three weeks. We practiced a drill to evacuate the U.S. Embassy and saw truckloads of troops appear at the airbase. I should have realized something was in the offing: On 1 November, helicopters were in the air over Saigon during the overthrow of President Ngo Dinh Diem.

My first tour opened up a world to me, though it led to as many questions as answers. We were striving to do the best job we could and represent our country in a positive way. We were trying to win hearts and minds so that more of our young people at home would not have to come and fight in Vietnam.

As told to Alain Drouot

Members of the International Fellowship of Rotarian Military Veterans are promoting peace. Find out how to join them at rotarianveterans.org.

Comfort first responders

TED MORRIS

Rotary Club of Clearwater, Florida

WE AWOKE THAT SUNDAY — 12 June 2016 — to news that there had been a shooting at a local nightclub. As we headed for church, we saw helicopters hovering over downtown Orlando. By the time we arrived, we learned there were 50 dead, including the shooter.

My wife, Pamala, and I were stationed in Orlando with the Salvation Army. We had an emergency canteen — a food truck — that could serve 1,000 meals a day. We offered to help the first responders, and

city and county officials accepted almost immediately.

The canteen was stocked and a crew assembled by noon. After a short prayer, we rolled out to the site of the shooting, where police had cordoned off several square blocks. We were waved through, and we parked about a block from the Pulse nightclub. We set up tables and began serving food.

As the temperature soared, I delivered bottles of ice-cold water to the police in

their squad cars. As I passed the front of the club, I saw tiny, numbered plastic tents, which I understood marked the locations of bullet casings. I had realized cognitively what had happened, but seeing those little tents helped me see the enormity of the situation. These were people having a good time, and suddenly all hell broke loose. I saw the result of blatant evil and realized, in a gut-wrenching way, the fragility and preciousness of life.

Our team remained on-site the remainder of the day; a small crew served coffee and doughnuts overnight. Someone asked how long we planned to stick around. I said, “As long as the first responders are here, we’ll be here to feed them.”

The next day, the city pitched two large air-conditioned tents. One of them was the quiet tent for the first responders; the rest of us respected the sacredness of that tent and never entered. We used the other tent to serve food donated by local restaurants. There wasn’t a lot of laughter, but the mood wasn’t morbid. We provided a chance for the police, the medical examiners in their scrubs, the officials in jackets emblazoned FBI and ATF, to step away from their terrible task and enjoy a meal. One of the volunteers brought in red-and-white checkered tablecloths and potted plants for each table. That made a big difference. There was a feeling of calmness, a sense of peace.

Three times a day, we walked over to the club. The walls were pocked with bullet holes, and there was a gaping hole where the SWAT team had stormed the building. Standing in a circle holding hands, we would each say a word of prayer for the families of the dead, for the wounded at the hospital, and for all the first responders.

During the nine days that the on-site investigation took place, we provided more than 6,300 meals and 26,000 drinks. It was a privilege to be there, to touch the lives of people going through such turmoil. To have played a small part in that was meaningful for all of us. Our lives will never be the same.



Experience the aftermath of Chernobyl

HERVÉ HACARD

Rotary Club of Dinan, France



ONE EVENING IN 2003, my wife, Annick, and I were having our usual chit-chat about our workday. “By the way,” I said, “I need to leave for at least a couple of weeks on a mission.”

“Where to?” she asked.

“Chernobyl,” I replied.

“I only hope you know what you’re doing,” she said.

The company I worked for had been contracted to manage the aftermath of the worst disaster in civil nuclear history. On 26 April 1986, in northern Ukraine, multiple explosions and fire had destroyed the No. 4 reactor at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, spewing radioactive material into the atmosphere. We had been hired

to safely store the used radioactive fuel at the site. However, after Ukrainians reported deficiencies in the process, the company assembled a team to evaluate the situation. I was the team leader.

The first of our four visits occurred in June 2003. We stayed in Slavutych, about 45 miles east of the power plant, a boomtown created to house evacuated personnel and workers employed in the cleanup, as well as some local residents displaced by the disaster. Seventeen years after the accident, the city already showed serious signs of dereliction. That summer, our hotel had hot water only on Thursdays.

Our work was complicated by the fact that, since the demise of the USSR,

Belarus and Ukraine were no longer part of one country. Now a sliver of Belarus stood between Slavutych and Chernobyl, meaning we had to cross the border twice to get to our destination, adding three hours to our daily commute.

Chernobyl had become a unique ground for studies on decontamination. It is still a true open-air laboratory where we can examine the effects of radioactivity on the soil, plants, and animals. During our visit, we saw that nature had taken over what is called the exclusion zone. The vegetation had become extremely luxuriant, and it was teeming with deer, boars, wolves, and other wildlife.

We were able to visit three of the reactors; the fourth — the one that had exploded — was off-limits. I realized right away we would have been unable to do what the Soviets had done to handle the crisis. Safety concerns would not have allowed it. That kind of reckless behavior was still going on: An employee eager to show me some damaged liquid fuel lifted a steel door without wearing protective gloves.

The most moving moment came when we saw a plaque with the name of Valery Khodemchuk, a worker at Chernobyl who died instantly when the No. 4 reactor exploded. His was the first death, but it wouldn’t be the last. The operators in the control room did what they were supposed to do to deal with the accident. They had no idea what awaited them.

As told to Alain Drouot

Canoe the Mississippi from source to sea

ERIK ELSEA

Rotary Club of Cape Coral, Florida

WHEN I WAS NINE YEARS OLD, my father and I were camping near Fort de Chartres in southern Illinois. We hiked a little ways and there at our feet was the Mississippi River rushing by. I said, “Wow, wouldn’t it be cool to canoe the entire Mississippi one day?” And my dad, instead of saying that was a crazy idea, said, “It’s possible. You could do it.” Ever since, it had been a dream of mine to canoe the Mississippi from source to sea.

On 7 July 2018, about seven weeks after my 40th birthday — and days after I’d completed my term as our Rotary club’s president — I began fulfilling my dream. I was at Lake Itasca, Minnesota, the source of the Mississippi, paddling a red 17-foot Prospector, a canoe made by Nova Craft that’s coated in this material called TuffStuff. There are pretty decent rapids coming out of Lake Itasca, and most people portage around them. I thought: They say this canoe is made out of tough stuff. Let’s find out.

I started paddling, got up a good head of steam, and hit the rapids. I started bouncing off the rocks — boom! boom! boom! — and got to thinking that maybe this was not the best of ideas. But I came out fine on the other side.

My image of the river had always been of the way it is near St. Louis where I grew up: the massive, mighty Missis-

sippi. The northern part of the river is nothing like that. It was so narrow the first day that wetlands touched both sides of my canoe at the same time. It was beautiful, scenic, and very pristine.

One reason I made the trip was to make money for and raise awareness of ShelterBox, Rotary’s partner in disaster relief. I’m an ambassador for ShelterBox, and so is Holly Anderson, a member of the Rotary Club of Fargo Moorhead PM in North Dakota. Holly was my crew chief, and she was absolutely amazing. I could do the paddling — all 2,350 miles — but Holly did all the logistics, helped secure sponsors, and set up speaking engagements about ShelterBox at Rotary clubs and other places.

My average day would begin before sunrise. I’d heat up some water, make some instant coffee, and eat breakfast. Then I’d break down camp, load up the canoe, and be on the river shortly after sunrise. I’d canoe until pretty close to sundown, when I’d set up camp and make dinner. I had a Vango tent, the same kind they use in ShelterBox but on a smaller scale. I had put up so many of those tents in demonstrations as a ShelterBox ambassador. It was a lot of fun to use one out in the wild.

Generally I got pretty lucky with the weather. But one day I tried to outrun a storm, and suddenly it was right on top of me. I raced to the riverbank, dragged

the canoe up on the beach, turned it over, and climbed under. The lightning and the thunder were cracking right over my head. When you’re by yourself, it’s amazing how much you talk to God — whatever your conception of God is. “All right, God,” I’d say, “get me through this.”

Every night for entertainment, I’d read Mark Twain’s *Life on the Mississippi*. Here was Twain discussing these river towns in the 1800s, and I was getting to see those same towns and cities in 2018. I reached Hannibal, Missouri — Mark Twain’s hometown — at the exact halfway point of my 90-day trip. That was a big milestone!

A few days later, I arrived in St. Louis. After visiting with my family, I set off from the Gateway Arch. That was my wildest day on the river. The port of St. Louis is a dangerous, dangerous place. The traffic on the river was insane. There were northbound barges and southbound barges, tugboats and cruise ships. There were so many waves and wakes, I was holding on for dear life.

On 4 October, I arrived in Port Eads, Louisiana, about 100 miles downstream from New Orleans. From there it’s about 2 miles to the Gulf of Mexico. The next day I was up super early. It was a gorgeous morning, and I wanted to meet the Gulf as the sun was rising over it. The Plaquemines Port Authority sent a rescue boat to tail me, and when I hit the Gulf, there were water cannons firing and lights flashing and sirens blaring. The next night there was a big party at the House of Blues in New Orleans. Holly was there, and lots of Rotarians and people from ShelterBox.

People ask me if I’d canoe the Mississippi again. No! I’ve done it once; why would I do it again? Now I want to canoe the Amazon or the Nile or the Yukon. That’s my dream now.

As told to Geoffrey Johnson

Learn more about Rotary’s partnership with ShelterBox at my.rotary.org/en/learning-reference/about-rotary/partners.



Meet a future monarch

GLENN ADAMS

Group Study Exchange

WHEN AKIHITO, THE 85-YEAR-OLD EMPEROR of Japan, stepped down from the Chrysanthemum Throne last spring, it brought back memories of my meeting with him more than 40 years ago at the Imperial Palace.

In April 1978, I was part of a six-person Group Study Exchange sponsored by Rotary; the Japanese would later send a delegation to our Philadelphia-area district. Because of Rotary's high standing in Japan, we received first-class treatment throughout our six-week visit: We stayed in four-star hotels, dined extravagantly, and rode around in black limousines with little flags on the front fenders. We toured agricultural and manufacturing sites, Tokyo's Tsukiji fish market — at the time, the world's largest — and the National Diet Building, the equivalent of the U.S. Capitol. While sailing the Edo River in an antique boat, we enjoyed a lunch of fish caught, gutted, scaled, and deep-fried during our voyage. At the Supreme Court, a justice insisted we try on his robe; at a sumo school, we sat down to a typical wrestler's lunch of beer, two cooked fish, seaweed, raw yellowtail fish, cool broth, soy and rice cakes, and noodles.

One of our most memorable excursions began with a train ride from Tokyo. We rode past villages and terraced rice fields. As the mountains drew closer, we

switched to three black taxis, which took us up a steep, winding road to a cable car that carried us over a sprawling cedar forest. We disembarked at a gleaming blue lake, Ashinoko, which we sailed



across on a replica of a 17th-century boat. The following dawn brought a breathtaking view of snowcapped Mount Fuji.

Our much-anticipated meeting with Akihito, who was then the crown prince — his father, Hirohito, would reign as emperor for another 11 years — took place inside a pine-paneled chamber at the palace. When he entered, our Rotary hosts bowed reverently, as did we, having received a crash course in royal etiquette.

Akihito wore a plain blue-gray business suit with a white shirt and dark tie. He spoke softly, and his English was good but deliberate. According to my diary, “he stared straight and unflinchingly as each of us was introduced — by order of age.”

We sat in red chairs near a pair of black lacquer-topped tables. They were set with four ashtrays, matchboxes printed with the royal symbol, and a cigarette case on a silver tray, but I don't recall anyone smoking during our meeting. As we spoke, servants brought in trays of sweets and green tea, bowing each time without facing the prince directly. Akihito asked about our impressions of Japan, and we mentioned the politeness of the people, the cleanliness of Tokyo, the historic sites we visited, and the foods we had come to enjoy. “The prince,” my diary notes, “remained virtually expressionless most of the time.”

Knowing that we were from Philadelphia, Akihito recalled his visit to that city in 1953, when he was 19. When I asked him what he considered to be the major concern of the Japanese people, he replied that it was preserving their traditions, history, and culture, while integrating them with modern trends and technology.

Our visit ended with good wishes and more bows. If there had been a theme to our conversation, it was maintaining ancient customs in modern times — that, and a word Akihito kept repeating: “harmony.”

Learn about other cultures through a Rotary Friendship Exchange. Find out more at rotary.org/friendship-exchange.

Plant a butterfly garden with the first lady

CHRIS PUTTOCK

Rotary Club of College Park, Maryland



IN APRIL 2010, I got a call from some office within the White House. The congressional spouses wanted to put in a garden with Michelle Obama at the Marie Reed Elementary School in Washington, D.C. With about 13 days' notice, they said, "Can we get this garden together and put it in?" I said, "Tall job, but we'll do it."

I'm a botanist by training. I did my degrees in Sydney, Australia, and I was the collections manager of botany at the Bishop Museum in Hawaii before I came to the Smithsonian Institution, where I am a research associate. I'm also the chair of the Environmental Sustainability Rotarian Action Group. Around 2009, I met a Rotarian named William Dent at the Rotary Club of Washington. He is the executive director of Natural Partners, which works with the Monarch Sister Schools Program. He was looking for somebody who could design gardens and put them into schools.

Thirteen days is a short time to get all the plants together, plan a garden, prepare the beds. But we were able to do it. I laid out the pattern of where the plants would go in the garden. Then the truck with 600 or 700 plants arrived, and we had them all

set out, along with the tools, gloves, and all the things that the kids would need.

It was afternoon when Michelle Obama arrived with the group of congressional spouses. They put on gloves; some of them would do planting. Some of them were doing watering. At one point, Michelle was working with me in a corner of the garden. Several children were helping us, so we talked about how to dig the hole where the plant was going to go, how to take a plant out of its pot, and how to water it.

She knew about gardening. She had been working with the gardeners at the White House and was growing vegetables there. In the garden I had designed, most of it was native plants, but there was a section that was, basically, plants for pizza: peppers, tomatoes, and basil. We spoke about vegetable gardens versus butterfly gardens, which provide food for the caterpillars and nectar for the butterflies.

The garden was about 750 square feet, and we planted about 30 species of plants native to Washington: plantain-leaved pussytoes, common milkweed, purple-head sneezeweed. If you want to attract

butterflies, you have to have plants that provide nectar. They like plants that will give them a little tube with a drop of sugar. Butterflies and moths have specific groups of species that they will lay their eggs on. The monarch will lay them only on milkweeds. But so much of their habitat has been lost that the monarch population is at less than 10 percent of what it was 50 years ago. Some years it could be as low as 1 percent of historic levels.

Michelle was a lovely lady to work with. She also helped paint a mural on the wall next to the garden that featured butterflies and plants, and then she signed her name. After about an hour and a half, she left with the group of spouses.

Butterfly gardens in inner-city schools can bring nature home to the kids. Butterflies are an easy way to teach kids about the needs of specific creatures. The charismatic monarch is a fantastic ambassador for the classroom. The Monarch Sister Schools Program is now more than 10 years old and has installed many gardens; when I was associated with it, we installed about 30 gardens in three years. Several Rotary clubs are still engaged in the school programs.

As told to Frank Bures

Interested in learning more about native plant gardens and similar projects? Visit esrag.org to find out about the Environmental Sustainability Rotarian Action Group.

Take a risk after a life-changing diagnosis

LINDA MULHERN

Rotary Club of St. Paul, Minnesota

I WAS DIAGNOSED with type 1 diabetes in 1975. At the time, my doctor told me that I had 20 years to live and that if I didn't take care of myself, I'd be six feet under. I was 12.

I remember the tears in my grandmother's eyes when she came to see me at the hospital. She grew up before insulin treatments were developed in the 1920s, so she remembered the days when kids who were diagnosed with diabetes died. Doctors couldn't do anything for them.

My mother was a nurse and was very matter-of-fact when it came to managing the disease. She made sure I knew it was my responsibility to take my insulin, watch my diet, and exercise. She was there if I needed her, but I was responsible for managing my health. She made that clear.

So I made a decision. I wouldn't let diabetes stop me. If I really did only have 20 years to live, I wanted to make them count. I played soccer and other sports, I was in the school play, I joined the speech team. But I wanted a bigger adventure, so I applied to spend my junior year of high school abroad with an international student exchange organization. But when they learned I had diabetes, they rejected me. It was too much of a risk to send a student with a chronic condition abroad.

Then my mother saw a small ad in the paper that said our local Rotary club was looking for students to apply for their Youth Exchange program. I submitted an application and was very upfront: I told them that I had type 1 diabetes but that I knew how to take care of myself. I didn't care where I went, I just hoped I'd be accepted. They forwarded my application first to Argentina, then to South Africa. But I was turned down. As summer approached, it looked like I wouldn't be spending the year abroad.

In June, a few members of the club went to the 1979 Rotary Convention. At

one session, they explained that they were trying to place a girl with diabetes with a host family but couldn't find a district that would accept the risk. To their surprise, a Rotarian from Sweden stood up and said, "I have the exact same problem. Would you be interested in switching?"

Everything happened quickly after that. I left on 9 August 1979. All I knew was that I was going to Mariestad, Sweden, and a girl named Karin Kjellberg was coming to Minnesota. We'd stay with one another's families for a year.

The day I left, I was very excited. My father's family had immigrated to the





United States from Sweden, and looking at the map, we realized I'd be going to the same area that my great-grandparents were from. I would even have some third cousins nearby. It felt surreal — a great-granddaughter was coming home.

I went to school in the town of Mariestad, but my host family lived on an estate in the countryside. One of my favorite things was going for long walks with my two host sisters, who were only a few years younger than me. We'd see elk and deer. I grew up in a suburb of St. Paul, so it was thrilling to go out and see wildlife. We'd wander around

the countryside, picking juniper berries and blueberries.

When my host family would sit down to dinner, they were never in a rush. We'd enjoy steaming pans of meatballs and potatoes, along with sauces made with mushrooms or berries we'd picked ourselves. I came from a family where it was hurry up, eat, we have to get to a soccer game. But Karin's family would sit there for an hour and just talk. I enjoyed the conversation, even though I couldn't understand much at first. But by Christmas, I was dreaming in Swedish.

Back home, Karin joined the soccer team. She went to prom. She tried a Twinkie for the first time. She was very shy when she arrived in the United States, but people's curiosity about her helped her grow more confident. My father was the mayor of our town, so she met a lot of people through him. He taught her how American government worked and answered her questions when she found something different or strange. My younger brother was a typical teenage boy — asking her if she knew what "supercalifragilisticexpialidocious" meant and teaching her all the inappropriate words she hadn't learned in English class. But they became very close. Karin didn't have a brother, and she really enjoyed being around him. When he got married, she even flew in for the wedding to surprise him.

By the time we returned home, neither of us was the same. We had matured about four years in the span of one. There were no complications related to our diabetes, and I'm thankful a disease didn't get in the way of having this experience, because that year profoundly influenced both our lives. I went on to join Rotary and have now hosted Youth Exchange students from 27 countries. Both of my children studied abroad. Karin lives in Brussels and works for the EU helping run an exchange program called Erasmus Plus. We still exchange Christmas cards, and Karin sends my mother flowers every year on her birthday. We share a bond that few people have. ■

As told to Vanessa Glavinskas



Share your story

This is the fifth annual appearance of *What It's Like*, a proven favorite with readers inside and outside Rotary. If you're a Rotarian with a great story — or you know someone connected with Rotary who's got a fantastic tale — we want to hear it. Look for the best stories in future issues of *The Rotarian*.

Share your story with us at
rotarian@rotary.org.

Include "What it's like"
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Rotary



our clubs



Mile-high spirit

Rotary Club of Five Points RiNo, Colorado

About a year after she and her husband moved to Denver from Atlanta, Therese Rasmussen was at the Five Points Jazz Festival when she started chatting with some members of the Rotary Club of Denver Cherry Creek. The Rotarians had set up a booth at the festival to generate inter-

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est in starting a club in the Five Points neighborhood. “They felt the community needed one,” Rasmussen says.

Rasmussen had no experience with Rotary, but, thinking it might be a good way to meet people, she became a charter member of the Rotary Club of Five Points RiNo in 2009. (RiNo refers to the neighborhood’s River North area.)

In the first half of the 20th century, Five Points was home to a thriving African American business district and a lively jazz scene, earning it the nickname “Harlem of the West.” Jack Kerouac wrote about it in his book *On the Road*. But in the 1960s and ’70s, the neighborhood began to struggle.

As the population of Denver soared starting in the 1990s, however, newcomers began moving into Five Points, and between 2000 and 2010, it was one of the fastest-gentrifying neighborhoods in the country. Many of

munity members are being priced out of their homes and businesses. And in 2017, Five Points erupted in protests when a local coffee shop put up a sign that read, “Happily gentrifying the neighborhood since 2014.”

Sensitive to the shifting dynamics of the neighborhood, club members approach community projects by seeking out partnerships with existing organizations. “We don’t come into the community thinking we know best,” says member Kyle Gunnels. “We find partners and build relationships to have the highest impact.”

The club is also intentional about recruiting longtime community members, says club treasurer Lindsey Benton. “We never want money to be a barrier, so we offer accessible memberships and events,” she says. “It’s important in a changing area not to price people out.”

The club designs its projects to be flexible in order to lend a hand wherever it might be needed — from filling seed packets at the neighborhood community garden to soliciting donations of business clothing for participants in a job training program. One of its main partnerships is with Denver Health, a public health organization that offers no-cost vaccines for children and teens. Five Points RiNo, Benton says, is “a small club with a big impact in a small part of Denver.”

Gunnels moved to Denver in 2012 after studying at the University of Queensland, Australia, as an Ambassadorial Scholar. “I joined because Rotary had invested in me,” he says. “I stayed because I liked the people.” (It didn’t hurt that at the time, the Five Points club was meeting in a coffee shop on the ground floor of his apartment building.)

As the only club in the city with an evening meeting, Five Points has attracted a number of younger members, and to keep things from getting monotonous, meetings take a different form every week. The first week of the month is a board meeting, the second features a speaker, the third is a service project, and the fourth is a happy hour.

Club dues are \$350 a year, kept low because there is no meeting meal. Out of each member’s dues, \$50 is automatically earmarked for The Rotary Foundation. “We didn’t have a lot of members giving to the Foundation, and it’s an important part of Rotary. So we made it mandatory, and it’s an easy rule for members to follow,” explains Rasmussen.

The club hosts an annual pub crawl where participants pay a small entry fee for the chance to win prizes as they spend an afternoon eating and drinking at five successive local establishments. The event serves multiple purposes: It helps local businesses by bringing in customers; it gives club members the chance to establish relationships with business owners; and, with 80 to 90 people typically in attendance, it acts as a recruiting event.

“No other club in the area does anything like it,” says David Willman, District 5450 Rotary Foundation chair and a member of the Rotary Club of Aurora Gateway. “They are what Rotary is striving to be in every way.”

“We are a young, small club and we don’t have a million-dollar foundation, so we are more active,” says Ryan Allaire, club president. “There is no shortage of ideas for service projects based on issues we have seen in the neighborhood. It seems like there are more opportunities to help people here and have a bigger impact.”

—SUSIEL MA

“It’s important in a changing area not to price people out.”

the Five Points club’s 25 members were, like Rasmussen, part of that wave of newcomers.

The recent influx of white residents into the historically black neighborhood has been the source of some tension. With the median price of houses now close to \$500,000, longtime com-

Previous page: Club members (from left) Therese Rasmussen, Kyle Gunnels, Lindsey Benton, and Ryan Allaire visit a neighborhood mural.

5 QUESTIONS ABOUT

Leading a vocational training team

with Ron Smith

Past governor of District 7430 (Pennsylvania)



1 What led you to form a vocational training team?

As an incoming district governor in 2006, I met Francis “Tusu” Tusubira of the Rotary Club of Kampala-North, Uganda, which led to us working together on many grants. A few years later, Rotary rolled out vocational training teams (VTTs) — groups of professionals who travel to another country to teach and learn from others within their field. Tusu put me in contact with some folks in the medical school at Makerere University in Kampala, and we realized there was a need to reduce mortality associated with childbirth.

At the time, my son was in medical school at Drexel University in Philadelphia, which is a leader in distance education. So we decided to form a team there to put together a training program for midwives in Uganda and to put the whole system online at local health centers.

2 How did you get started?

First I took a trip on my own to Uganda in 2013 and met with the head of the obstetrics department at Makerere. We visited some health centers and identified infrastructural needs. We then built a combined humanitarian/VTT global grant, with half going toward funding computers and infrastructure, and half toward sending a U.S. team to Uganda and bringing a Ugandan team to the United States.

We felt strongly that this two-way VTT would help us build a stronger partnership with the medical professionals in Uganda.

3 What are the responsibilities of a VTT leader?

As a Rotarian, your job is to put together a team that is supported by organizations that have the depth and the interest to provide training. Our first team from Drexel was made up of a computer engineer, a library scientist, three midwives, an obstetrician, and a pediatrician. My priority was to train them about Rotary and introduce them to issues in Uganda.

On the trip, I would hold morning meetings to make sure everyone on the team was on the same page, and I would get them to Rotary club meetings so that they were visible in the country. I was also the liaison to the host club, Kampala-North, which coordinated visits to the health centers and made additional arrangements.

4 How do VTTs compare with other grant-supported projects you’ve done?

VTTs take more time. But they give you a bigger reward in the end. We didn’t want to just drop off computers. The first team from Drexel provided training to Ugandan midwives and learned about

what future training would be required. I think we learned more than we taught. The team members then got certified in specific training methods used in limited-resource countries. Ultimately, we want to turn midwives into trainers so they can teach others. We’re also creating infrastructure that can support telemedicine.

With a VTT, you also develop professional relationships between skilled individuals on both sides. The level of interpersonal engagement can’t be duplicated in another type of activity; the team members are not just colleagues but friends. Through these relationships, Drexel and Makerere universities have now signed agreements that will sustain this effort well beyond our project.

5 What advice do you have for Rotarians interested in leading a vocational training team?

You need a great team and good partners. It’s taken a lot of work, but all through it, we’ve had consistent partners. Make sure your vision is your partner’s vision. That’s a key thing.

You also need to adapt. Every VTT has obstacles, but you’ll have a much better experience if you can adapt quickly to situations. Let things develop organically; don’t be married to your plan. You can be married to your vision, but not to your plan. — JOHN M. CUNNINGHAM



Fun is fundamental

Rotary Club of Jefferson City Evening, Missouri

Chartered: 2002
Original membership: 24
Membership: 26

PIONEERING GRIT:

The plan for Missouri's capital was laid out by Daniel Morgan Boone, a son of the American frontiersman. The Rotary Club of Jefferson City Evening takes that trailblazing temperament to heart, combining it with a strong sense of service. A small roster is no obstacle to a club that has mustered an outsize influence in District 6080, where four members serve in leadership positions.

In 2011, Nick Rackers, a horticulture instructor, was tapped by the president of the college where he teaches to apply for a Group Study Exchange trip to Australia. His Rotarian hosts proved that merriment and business can mix. "They like to poke fun," Rackers says, recalling a "fines" collection in which he and other visitors were hardly immune from the gentle hazing. "I won't call it bullying — it was never mean-spirited, and they all loved each other. They picked on me like I was just one of the group. You just wanted to hang out there. You wanted to have fun with those people."

The experience convinced him that he, too, might enjoy being a Rotarian. He visited Jefferson City's clubs and settled on the evening club. "He picked it because he felt that passion. I did, too," says Joan Kramer, a past club president who, since joining Rotary in 1997, has also served as president of the Rotary Club of Jefferson City Breakfast. Kramer had to leave that club because of her work schedule. In addition to the evening club's amenable schedule, her new club offered other positives.

The new flexibility of RI rules around meetings and attendance has helped the club. "You don't have to pressure people to be there every week. Once they realize that there's a variety of ways they can be involved, then you have a better chance of keeping them," notes Kramer. And the club places a high value on family, encouraging members to bring their children to meetings and events.

CLUB INNOVATION:

Generating generosity and enthusiasm, orientation sessions expose newcomers to the breadth of Rotary's work. Casual, lighthearted meetings, members believe, have resulted in heightened engagement. Low dues and no fixed meal costs mean more money can be directed toward projects and donations to The Rotary Foundation: The club consistently ranks among the Show Me State's top givers to the Foundation.

Looking beyond the club itself has been a boon, too. "Ever since I joined, we always had members who would be a district chair of something," Rackers says. "You can bring that back to your club, and your club is more connected to the Rotary world." He notes that two members have served as co-administrative directors of their three-district Rotary Youth Leadership Awards and that he has been a RYLA counselor for four years.

Club members have also proven to be great supporters of The Rotary Foundation. The club was a 100% Paul Harris Fellow Club in 2010-11, and four members belong to the Paul Harris Society.

The club has limited dues to \$160 a year. An Uno tournament with 48 contestants in March brought in about \$1,000, and weekly 50-50 raffles help raise revenue. The lower cost structure is a plus, says Joseph Meystrik, club president-elect, but the good times keep things rolling. Members venture offsite for occasional meetings to such locales as an aviation center to check out a flight simulator, and the local military history museum.

—BRAD WEBBER



From top: Club members participate in a Habitat for Humanity project and dig into a tree-planting event.

Are you looking for more ideas on how your club can reinvent itself? Go to rotary.org/flexibility.

To share your ideas with us, email club.innovations@rotary.org.



CONVENTION COUNTDOWN

Come sale away

When it comes to souvenirs of your visit to Honolulu for the Rotary International Convention, 6–10 June, Hawaii’s artisans and craftspeople have you covered.

The Ala Moana Center (above), two blocks from the Hawaii Convention Center, is an open-air shopping mall with a distinctly Hawaiian flair. Daily hula shows at 1 p.m. feature both traditional and modern forms of the dance. And alongside chain retailers such as Coach and Gucci, you’ll find beautiful locally made items such as coral jewelry at Maui Divers Jewelry and handmade textiles at ‘Auana Quilts.

If you’re in the mood for a funkier shopping experience, complete with haggling, set aside time for the Aloha Stadium Swap Meet & Marketplace, where more than 400 local merchants showcase their wares, including handmade items and works of art. The swap meet and marketplace are open Wednesday, Saturday, and Sunday. Don’t skip the local snacks on offer: You’ll find that shave ice is the perfect way to cool off in the tropical sun while you browse for bargains.

—HANK SARTIN



Don’t miss the 2020 Rotary Convention in Honolulu. Register at riconvention.org by 31 March to save.



A message from **Foundation Trustee Chair** **Gary C.K. Huang**

Ni hao, Rotarians!

Something amazing happened in Vienna in October. A runner from Kenya named Eliud Kipchoge was the first person in history to run a marathon distance — 26.2 miles — in less than two hours.

For many years, experts thought this would be impossible. They said the human body was not capable of achieving this feat. But Kipchoge succeeded because he had an incredible team working with him. He had pacers who ran with him every step of the way, and people who made sure that he had the proper fuel and hydration. Every few miles, fresh runners were sent in to keep up the pace and help him reach his goal.

Like Eliud Kipchoge, Rotary has a great support team as we approach the final mile in our marathon journey to rid the world of polio. So many amazing Rotarians have helped pace this effort along the way, donating their time and energies to bring us close to our goal.

The World Health Organization has certified type 3 of the wild poliovirus as eradicated. This is big news! We have also gone three years without any wild poliovirus on the continent of Africa. It may soon be certified polio-free.

The final mile of our journey is a difficult one. Pakistan and Afghanistan are great challenges for us — but we have met so many great challenges before. Every time a goal has seemed out of reach, Rotarians have stood together and answered the call.

This is no time to lose our focus or to think the race is already over. Can you imagine what would have happened to Eliud Kipchoge if all of the pacers had gone home for the final 2 miles? He might never have reached his goal.

It takes a special character to pursue a difficult task all the way to the end. These are the times that we need each other most. In the *Tao Te Ching*, Laozi wrote that the journey of 1,000 miles begins with one step. But it also ends with one step. And those final steps take just as much courage as the first.

Let’s make history, Rotary — the finish line is within reach!

Gary C.K. Huang
FOUNDATION TRUSTEE CHAIR



Rotary honors 6 humanitarians for work with refugees

Six members of the family of Rotary were honored in November as People of Action: Connectors Beyond Borders during Rotary Day at the United Nations in New York City. The annual event, which celebrates the vision for peace that Rotary and the UN share, focused in 2019 on the global refugee crisis.

Throughout Rotary's history, members have helped people affected by war, famine, and disaster. Today, the number of refugees worldwide is the highest it has been since World War II. The six honorees — five Rotarians and a Rotary Peace Fellow — have found community-based solutions to the refugee crisis.



Ace Robin

**Rotary Club of Mataram
Lombok, Indonesia**

➤ Ace has led efforts by her club and community to provide assistance to people displaced by a series of earthquakes that struck the Indonesian island of Lombok in 2018. As the contact person for ShelterBox, she aided in the delivery of 685 units of temporary housing near Lombok and later initiated a project to build 230 more. She and her fellow club members brought water, food, and other necessities to displaced people and provided supplies for students. Ace remains involved in the long-term recovery efforts.



Hasina Rahman

**Rotary Club of Dhaka
Mavericks, Bangladesh**

➤ Rahman, an assistant country director at Concern Worldwide, has mobilized Rotary clubs and partner agencies to raise funds for an outpatient center that provides lifesaving health care and nutrition services for Rohingya children and mothers who have fled to a refugee camp in Bangladesh to escape violence in Myanmar. The center has screened thousands of children and helped hundreds who were severely malnourished. Staff members and volunteers have been trained in feeding infants and young children, and refugee families have received information in their own language about breastfeeding and proper hygiene.



Ilge Karancak-Splane

Rotary Club of Monterey Cannery Row, California

➤ After visiting several tent camps in Turkey housing refugees from Syria, Karancak-Splane organized Rotary clubs to provide 1,000 pairs of children's shoes and socks in 2017. Recognizing that the children also lacked access to schools, Karancak-Splane and her Rotary club launched a global grant project to help educate refugee children.



Lucienne Heyworth

Rotary Peace Fellow (Uppsala University, 2015-17)

➤ Heyworth developed an "education in emergencies" curriculum to provide instructional materials that can be used in makeshift learning spaces to teach people displaced by conflict. Such spaces serve as critical safe places for entire communities, where families can address other basic needs such as food, hygiene, and health. Heyworth, who was a teacher before she developed her expertise in providing education in areas of conflict, has focused her work in the Middle East.



Vanderlei Lima Santana

Rotary Club of Boa Vista-Çaçari, Brazil

➤ Santana has led efforts to welcome and care for thousands of Venezuelan refugees arriving in northern Brazil because of desperate economic conditions in their country. Santana's club has been working with the Brazilian government and with nonprofit organizations to coordinate the distribution of meals and vaccines to more than 1,000 refugees who are living in streets or makeshift shelters in a plaza near the local bus station. They also provide professional development assistance and places to sleep, and help the refugees relocate to other parts of the country.



Bernd Fischer

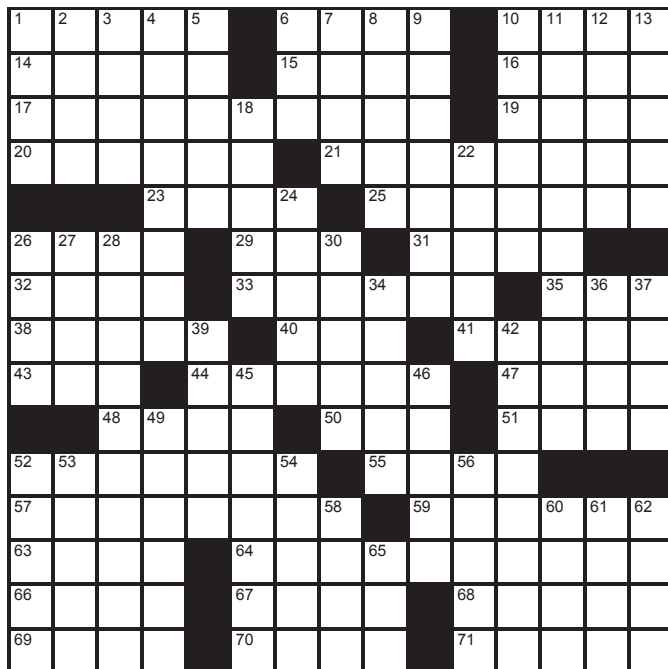
Rotary Club of Berlin, Germany

➤ Fischer, a retired diplomat, is coordinating Rotary clubs in Europe and the United States on a global grant project to integrate 240 refugee women into German society by helping them overcome cultural and language differences that hinder their participation in daily life. The project has already trained 100 women, providing them with mentoring in their own languages, job training and placement assistance, medical and psychological treatment, and child care.

SCRAMBLED VOCATIONAL SERVICE

by Victor Fleming

Rotary Club of Little Rock, Arkansas



Across

- 1 Classic detergent brand
- 6 Classic canned meat brand
- 10 Sitcom rating, often
- 14 Jet black
- 15 Guthrie of song
- 16 Colonial orator Nathan
- 17 Prolonged applause for President Coolidge?
- 19 Airline of Israel
- 20 Desk compartment
- 21 Gridder's objective
- 23 Computer capacity unit
- 25 Ape or chimp
- 26 Computer capacity units
- 29 ____-cone
- 31 Celtic family group
- 32 One of the Gulf States
- 33 Big name in bikes
- 35 "The SuperStation"
- 38 Eats like a bird
- 40 Apple variety, for short
- 41 Beverage with a marshmallow
- 43 Rocker Brian
- 44 Get ready to dance
- 47 Alcove
- 48 Ampule
- 50 66, for one (abbr.)

- 51 Blush libation

- 52 Argue
- 55 Basic French verb
- 57 Fowl homes
- 59 Canoeist's challenge
- 63 Morlocks' morsels?
- 64 Announcement from a magician who makes a tabby disappear?
- 66 Café au ____
- 67 Army vet
- 68 Omni or Forum
- 69 Nabors played him
- 70 Baseball's Sandberg
- 71 Animal in a roundup

Down

- 1 Bank stamp abbr.
- 2 Beam used for structural support
- 3 Another name for the Big Easy
- 4 Mound of wintry precipitation
- 5 Yiddish lament
- 6 Did the benchwarming thing
- 7 Arrogant one
- 8 Knock for ____
- 9 Absolute ruler
- 10 ____ & Louise (1991 movie)
- 11 Courageous pigeon's cry?
- 12 Botanist's interest
- 13 Bath shop product
- 18 Affected, in a way
- 22 Spring bloom
- 24 As a friend, in French
- 26 Airhead
- 27 Graceful conclusion?
- 28 Lubricant for a Mexican food delivery vehicle?
- 30 Syndicated horoscope writer Sydney
- 34 Angle type
- 36 Audiences' disapprovals
- 37 "For goodness' ____!"
- 39 Legendary Hollywood eatery until 2001
- 42 Subject to disciplinary action
- 45 "It's ____ and done with"
- 46 Ancient city in Jordan
- 49 Agitate, as to riot
- 52 Have a litter
- 53 4 x 100, e.g.
- 54 Hobbyist's glue
- 56 "She ____ an independent"
- 58 Aries or Scorpio
- 60 Frozen drink brand
- 61 "Great" dog
- 62 Macy's symbol
- 65 Tell a whopper

Solution on page 27

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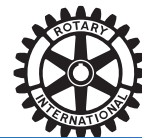
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last look



COURTESY OF ERIK ELSEA



COURTESY OF MIKAH MEYER



ALAIN DE MARTIGNAC



ELIA SAKHALY

WHAT IT'S LIKE TO ...

The family of Rotary is filled with members who have amazing stories. Since 2016, our January issue has functioned as a sort of family reunion, where fellow members from around the world regale us with first-person tales that range from the inspiring to the incredible, from the harrowing to the heartwarming.

Our fifth annual issue devoted to Rotarians' remarkable stories includes (clockwise from top left): Erik Elsea, who solo canoed the Mississippi River from its headwaters to the Gulf of Mexico to raise money and

awareness for ShelterBox, Rotary's partner in disaster relief; Mikah Meyer, the first person to visit all 419 U.S. national parks in one continuous journey, at Death Valley National Park; Joyce Azzam, the first Lebanese woman to climb the highest summit on each of the world's seven continents; and Manuel Amoros (left), who played in the legendary 1986 World Cup match between France and Brazil.

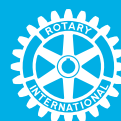
Do you have a great story or know a Rotarian who does? Tell us about it! Send it to rotarian@rotary.org with "What It's Like" in the subject line.

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