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Final Report for the Rotary Ambassadorial Scholarship
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“We shall not cease from exploration; and at the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.” – T.S. Eliot

Having just completed my Rotary year and returned back home to Memphis, I am struck anew by Eliot’s powerful words. When I set out for Vancouver one year ago, I had no idea what type of experience was in store for me. And now that the sun has set on my time in Canada, I am just beginning to understand how this year has changed me. For it not only offered me an opportunity to see and enjoy a new culture and location, it also afforded the chance to see my own home with “foreign” eyes. Both have already proved monumental for my own life. I hope to share a few of the reasons why in this short report.

As outlined in my midyear account, I spent academic year 2010-2011 in Vancouver at the University of British Columbia. I have completed my work to receive an MA in Economics from the University. (I am still awaiting the grade for my final Master’s paper, entitled “The Dynamics of Hurricane Katrina’s Short-Run Labor Market Impacts”) This, alone, was an exceptional experience. UBC consistently ranks in the world’s top 25 for economic research. The opportunity to study in such a top-rate and stimulating environment was truly a blessing. Not only were the professors producing leading research, but working with my fellow classmates was also an unparalleled experience. These former colleagues have scattered back across the world to take on roles in central banks, investing firms, and PhD programs – ranging from Tokyo to Mexico City. I am confident that these friendships – though admittedly weakened by distance – will continue into my own professional career, offering interesting and meaningful camaraderie around the world.

The question, then, is how this academic opportunity changed me. Firstly, I attribute UBC as the place where I bloomed intellectually. The degree was challenging to the very end. Though Ole Miss is my undergraduate *alma mater*, UBC offered an education much more rigorous than in Mississippi. I read back through my journal recently and noted this passage from late 2010: “Each day, I feel like I’m being pushed to the outer limits of my learning frontier.” Indeed, UBC completely *shifted* my frontier outward; what an enrichment! Excluding my final paper’s grade, I currently have a 3.85 GPA, and anticipate my final grade to conclude even a bit higher.

I also learned the benefits of diversity and novelty in Vancouver. Studying with students from all over the world offered invaluable lessons in understanding and tolerance. Indeed, we all share human commonalities that supercede any ethnicity or creed. My year in Vancouver allowed me to learn these lessons experientially. It also shed light on Memphis culture, and its persistent struggles with racism. I have never been so struck by the de facto ethnic divisions in Memphis. Indeed, it is partly this newfound

awareness that prompted the Eliot quote above. I am proud of Rotary's stance concerning these issues, and look forward to teaming with Rotary as we continue bringing peace and justice to Memphis, and to the world.

I describe Rotary to my friends and family as a social organization with a purpose. It does not exist to promote itself, or to further its members' professional lives – though these are often byproducts. No, its overt mission – as fleshed out in most of Rotary's meetings and community initiatives – is to serve the less fortunate and promote peace in the world.

It is easy to explain the Ambassadorial Scholarship within this framework. The Scholarship is an excellent example and opportunity for students to engage directly in Rotary's mission. It provides a chance on the frontlines to promote understanding amongst different nations. I have numerous examples of this from my own experience, but one stands out among the rest. During my time in Canada, I gave eight presentations to clubs in Vancouver. On one such occasion, the club was quite diverse in makeup, ranging from members in their mid-20s to late 70s; from East Asian to Caribbean ethnicities. After my speech, nearly every member remarked on how little they knew about Memphis (and the South) prior to my presentation. They also commented on how glad they were to understand a little bit more about this area of the world, which is often so mysterious to outsiders. (Indeed, it always surprised me just *how* mysterious it is to those who have never been.) I believe that this particular club fully understood what it means to be part of Rotary on that evening. It means mutual respect and attempted understanding for those who are distinct from ourselves.

The orientation weekend that Rotary provided for my Scholarship was great preparation for my time away. It not only alerted me to what was expected *and* what not to worry about, it also provided an invaluable opportunity to speak with past scholars about their experiences. I can still remember (from my orientation two years ago) the girl with whom I spoke about her time in Great Britain. It was hugely helpful, and also quite exhilarating; it provided a burst of excitement as I entered into my own scholarship period.

I also enjoyed mingling with Rotarians from around the country, and hearing of their own Rotary stories. One Rotarian even helped me connect to some friends in my host country. That was great! In terms of critiques, I can honestly think of no immediate suggestions for the orientation process.

My one piece of advice to outgoing scholars is to plug into your community as much as possible. There is a world of opportunity wherever you go. Chances to get involved will not come knocking on your door; but they will abound if you actively seek them. Your time as a Rotary Scholar is an enviable time to study, meet new people, and understand foreign cultures. The best way to get the most out of this time is to stay active!

This brings me to my own intentions for my future Rotary activity. And it deserves a bit of history: When I first won the Ambassadorial Scholarship, I was uncertain how involved I would get in Rotary. I enjoyed the meetings, but was unsure if I was ready to commit my time and energy to weekly responsibilities. However, since my scholarship period, I am of a completely different mindset, and look very forward to joining as a Rotarian. I always enjoy my time with clubs, especially when I get to share with them my own experiences. And the chance to get involved in my community to a deeper extent is a real privilege. I would certainly get involved in scholarship committees, recommend students, and participate in orientation seminars.

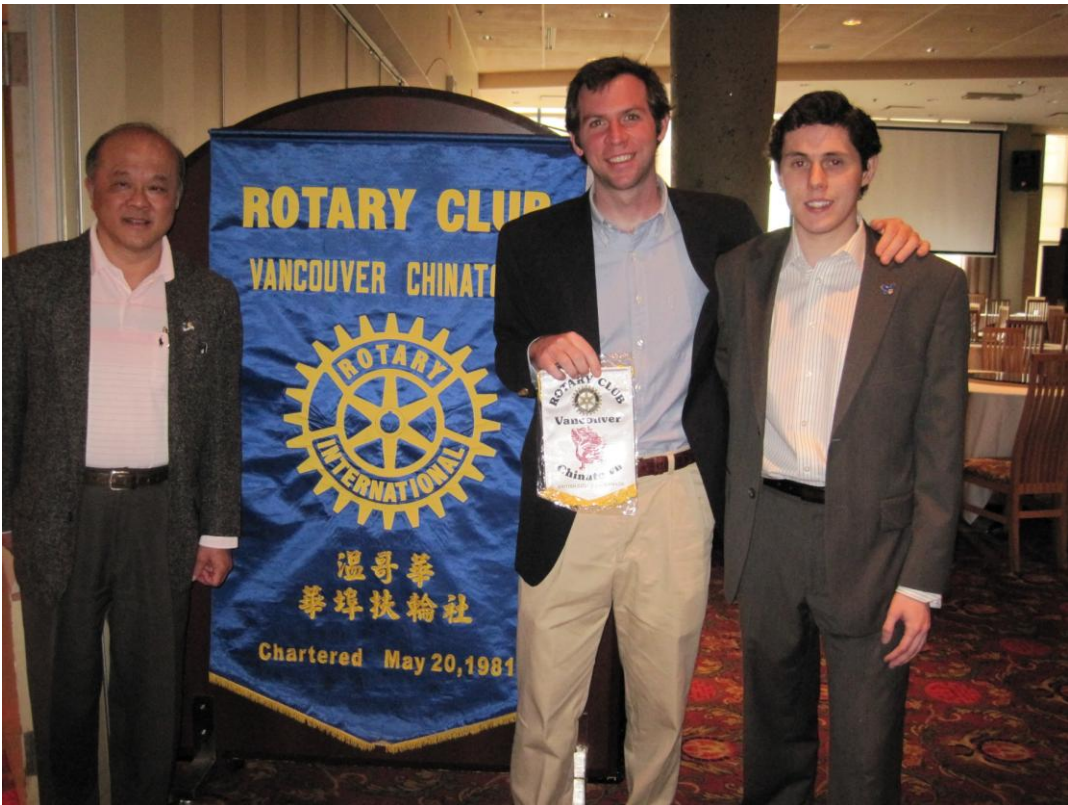
I am quite sad to wrap up my Rotary year. Even the end of this report signifies, in one way, the completion of my ambassadorial duties. The year passed quickly, as time is wont to do. However, I also attribute its quick passage to what a blessed year it was. I cannot thank Rotary enough for what an opportunity they gave me. My time in Vancouver as an Ambassadorial Scholar will forever stick with me.



At the top of a popular hike (The Chief), overlooking Howe Sound. I took the picture with this report in mind!



My best friends in Vancouver.



Rotary Club of Vancouver Chinatown meeting



UBC's campus overlooking mountains and ocean