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PRIP Ray Klingsmith: An Exclusive Conversation

Past Rotary International President

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EDITOR'S NOTES:

How is it that the month of February, which has the least amount of days, so much occurred? Rotarians from throughout the District literally went viral on Facebook, and guess what, they have not ceased! Presidents-elect, our new leaders, attended an informative and festive PETS.

And who could predict Mother Nature would awaken Volcán de Fuego in Antigua, Guatemala, after years of sleep and cause it to erupt. At a time when 120 Rotarians and friends are based only miles away in Casa Santo Domingo, which is situated on the grounds of one of the most grand convents and monasteries in the Americas.

After trudging for a distance through the dense Mayan jungle on a narrow trail, an open expanse comes into view. And suddenly out of nowhere pyramids appear and seem to be reaching upward to the sky. Tikal, a land of howling monkeys, jaguars, and abandoned stone structures, to this day remains a mystery.

The Taj Majal, the Kingdom of Dreams, a ceremonial Indian wedding, these are some of the sights and sounds experienced by our Friendship Exchange Group to India. Back home in LA two varying Japanese cultures are being brought together by the new Little Tokyo Provisional Club.

And finally for District 5280 members, we report on the first of a two-part exclusive conversation with PRIP Ray Klinginsmith. February was a mere instant on the Mayan Long Count calendar but you wouldn't have thought so by seeing District 5280 Rotarians engaged in project and fellowship activities near and far.

Make yourself comfortable and enjoy these and other stories in the March issue of the District Newsletter. Let's begin with Governor Elsa's message

Cover Photo
On left Sue Kanchana, a member of the Thai Town Club, revealing a beautiful and clear day. On right and only a few hours later, Volcán de Fuego erupts.

Photographer unknown

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From Governor Elsa...

1998, while having dinner with friends in a local restaurant, a 6 year old boy runs up to me with his mother in tow and says loudly, "I know you!". Startled, I asked "You do?" and he replies, again loudly, "You read to me". I was speechless with goose bumps as I gave him a hug. His mother told me her son asked her to read to him like the people who visit his school. That was my very first Rotary Moment. My heart was full of joy and proud of my Rotary club for this weekly project. I made an impression in someone's life – a little boy now loves to read because I read to him.

February, 2015, on the way to our hotel in Antigua, Guatemala, our guide stopped where people with bags full of coffee beans were queued up to get paid. They have to harvest at least 100 lbs. of coffee beans and this required every member of the family to pick the beans for 12 hours. The children are with them picking beans instead of going to school. The pay for this day's work is the equivalent of \$5 per 100 lbs. of coffee beans. The cycle of poverty continues. This is not acceptable. Rotarians are stepping forward to make a difference. A Global Grant project delivered during our District Humanitarian Trip was an \$80,000 Guatemala Literacy Project providing books, computers and supplies to schools in rural areas. 120 Rotarians distributed backpacks full of school supplies in Joya Verde and Casa del Nino Community Center. A Rotary Club's project in Guatemala pays the parents if their child goes to school and maintains good grades. Rotarians are at work breaking the cycle of illiteracy and poverty one child at a time.

March is Literacy month. This is when Rotarians focus on the importance of literacy and education in our humanitarian service. There are so many simple and creative ways to break the cycle of illiteracy and poverty. Whether it is by volunteering in schools, by bringing education and training to adults, or



Governor Elsa and young family near shores of Lake Atitlan, Guatemala. Photo shows energy efficient stove assembled and presented by Governor Elsa to family. Stove is one of 1000 such stoves included in Guatemala service project.

simply by ensuring that all children have the books and supplies they need, Rotarians can do this and are doing it.

The District Humanitarian Trip did "Light Up Rotary" with the volcano erupting while we were in Guatemala. Thank you to the District Humanitarian Trip committee, led by Richard Ham of Manhattan Beach, for a very successful and exciting trip (or adventure). We thank the committee for the countless hours and dedication to details which made the projects and trip seem to go flawlessly.

Thank you to Ginny and Alex Brideau of Los Angeles Downtown for launching the first ever Rotary Viral Day February 21. Many stories and pictures were circulating on Facebook making others aware of what Rotary does.

Through the efforts and dedication of Makiko Nakasone of Glendale Noon, the District Friendship Exchange team is building goodwill and better understanding with their new friends in New Delhi India. Makiko is also working very hard in club extension and as a result we have a provisional Rotary Club in Little Tokyo. Thank you Makiko.

March has something for each of you to participate and get involved in. President Gary Huang directs us to have a Rotary Day where we can showcase Rotary to non-Rotarians. Our Rotary Day will be on March 21. Invite your friends and family to join you in a

walk/run race followed by a picnic/carnival at Griffith Park Crystal Springs picnic area.

Planning on stepping up and leading your club? Why not attend the Leadership Training seminar on March 7th. If you want to hear great music, see dance performances and art, or hearing great speakers, attend the

District High School Music, Arts, Dance and Speech contest on March 28 at LMU. Winners from the various clubs will vie for scholarship awards. A big audience to showcase their talent to would be a great encouragement for them. Our Youth Led District Breakfast at the City Club will be on March 31. They have a great motivating speaker and it will be another fun and energetic District Breakfast.

Join me at Gillham's Island May 14-17 as we celebrate your accomplishments at the District Conference in Coronado. Registration is now open. Don't miss the boat!

*Light Up Rotary
and Be Vibrant!
Elsa Gillham*

END POLIO NOW

5 REASONS TO ERADICATE POLIO

(1)

IT SAVES LIVES

Experts say if we choose to control polio rather than eradicate it, more than 10 million children under the age of five could be paralyzed by the disease in the next 40 years.

(2)

IT'S ACHIEVABLE

We have the tools to end the disease and the means to reach all children. The new bivalent vaccine successfully targets the two remaining strains of polio in one dose.

(3)

IT'S A GOOD INVESTMENT

An independent study published in the medical journal *Vaccine* estimates that the US\$9 billion global investment in a polio-free world will net an economic benefit of \$40 billion to \$50 billion over the next 20 years.

(4)

IT STRENGTHENS THE SYSTEM

Our polio eradication efforts have established an active disease surveillance network in all countries that is supporting other health interventions, including measles vaccinations and the distribution of de-worming tablets and bed nets.

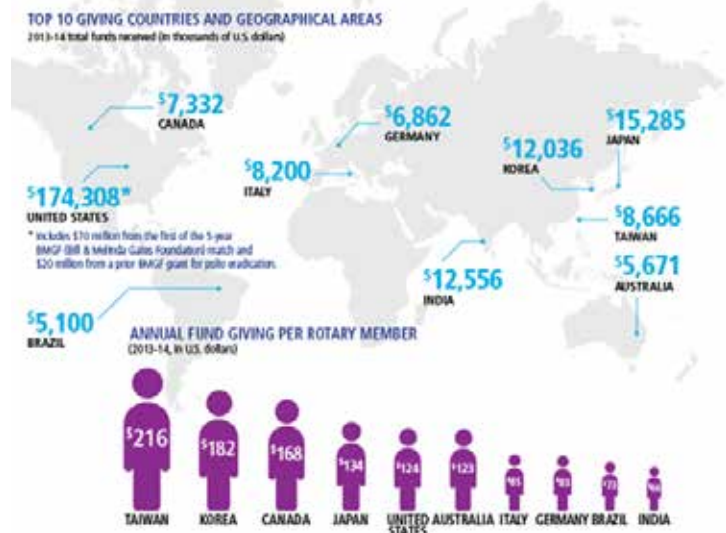
(5)

IT SETS THE STAGE

The ability to reach all children with the polio vaccine is proof that we can succeed on our next major global health initiative.



OUR SUPPORT IS WORLDWIDE



FROM TRAMP STEAMER TO ROTARY

By Valeria Velasco, a member of the
Westchester Club

Part 1 of 2

Where did you grow up?:

I grew up in a little rural town on the north edge of Missouri. I was born in Iowa but have a Missouri birth certificate because our doctor was a Missourian and a close family friend.

Was your family farmers?:

I grew up on a farm, but after WWII we moved to town and my father became a merchant. My father became a Rotarian in 1947 so I grew up in a Rotarian family. People have accused me of "cheating" because growing up in a Rotary family gave me a head start, especially when it came to becoming a Rotary Scholar. In those early days, Rotary Scholars could be children of Rotarians. That rule was changed in the mid-60's to avoid any appearance of conflict of interest.

Your vocation is attorney?:

That's right. I have been a member of the bar for fifty years. I did 10 years of general practice in Lincoln, Missouri in my town of 5,000 people. We were general practitioners then so we did just about everything that came in the door except bankruptcy and patents because the courthouse was nine miles away. My Rotarian friend described our practice then as "hog, dog and divorce." After 10 years, I became in-house counsel at Truman University for 22 years. Then retired, hung-out my private practice shingle and did some estate planning until I became Rotary International President Nominee and then had to close my practice. When I started out practicing law in 1965, the largest law firm in the state of Missouri was 30 lawyers. Today 30 lawyers is a small to moderate size firm.

When you were a little kid did you have aspirations or dreams of what your life might look like?

Not really. That came later in about middle school or high school when I started reading good books. My father was an avid reader; after I exhausted the Zane Grey books at the local library, I developed an interest in international travel through books.

When you say you became interested in international travel through books and the fact that your family was a Rotary family, it seems to have been a natural to lead in Rotary?

Well, not really. One day at the county fair a Rotarian who lived in a house that I could see from mine, came up to me and said Rotary has some nice scholarships would you be

My first introduction to PRIP Ray Klinginsmith was with 300 other soon to be District Governors for the 2010-2011 year, all anxiously waiting our marching orders from our President. Nervous chatter gave way to hushed silence as he took the stage, shortly followed by a sigh of relief, wild enthusiasm, and a burning desire to get it all started!

His charge to us was simple, yet eloquent, "It's all about the Clubs." Apply simple logic to complex problems. Don't just teach Rotary but get others to feel it. There's a huge difference between these two!

I've had several opportunities for one on one time with President Ray over the years since. I have enjoyed each moment. We share a common bond of musical taste (yes, he's a fan of "Asleep at the Wheel") and Rotary education. Imagine my surprise to see his comment about me below!

It's a wonderful interview. Please enjoy!
----- PDG Doug Baker

(Ray began his Rotary journey on a steamer from the Port of New Orleans to South Africa in 1961.)



**PRIP
Ray Klinginsmith**

interested? A year went by and my club sponsored me to become a Rotary Scholar and I won. When

it was announced that I had won to become a scholar, my Rotary club invited me to go to meetings and participate in our club. I served on committees and participated in our club for a year and a half. It was great; I learned what being a Rotarian was all about. I was about 23 years old then.

Did you study abroad as a scholar?

Yes, I studied in South Africa. It was a different world then in 1961. Nelson Mandela had not been charged with any crimes yet; he was an activist back then. South Africa was pretty much a police state although I did not recognize it at the time because I was young; you could almost say Georgia and Alabama were police states too at the time because of the racism. In South Africa, everyone but the whites, had to carry identification all the time so 95% of the population had to carry ID cards. A different world.

When you left the scholarship program what did you do?

I started working for my father. Within two weeks of me coming home, the president of our local Rotary Club asked me to join Rotary. I had written monthly letters to my club while a scholar. It was a small town so I already knew every Rotary member as they were all local business people. My sponsor was also our family dentist. You don't want your dentist to be upset with you so you join Rotary. His son is still a member of the club.

Is your wife a Rotarian:?

No, she is not a Rotarian. Back in those days, Rotary was left up to the men. In those days, the biggest opponent to allowing women in Rotary, were the wives of Rotarians. Most of the women back then were stay at home moms.

The numbers show that about 18% of Rotarians world-wide are women and about 28% in the US:

Those numbers are based on a guess; we don't ask gender on the application.

What do you think we can do to increase the numbers of women in Rotary?

This is a natural evolution as more women have professions out of the home. More and more women are recruiting their friends to join Rotary. More and more top jobs in the community are held by women; the postmaster, the local accountant, attorneys, business owners, and our school superintendent is a woman.

Before I became an attorney, I was an elementary school teacher in Duarte. I worked for one of the women, the principal of our school, who became part of the class that sued Rotary to allow women into Rotary:

Sylvia Whitlock was part of that group and is one of the first women in Rotary. When the city of Duarte sued Rotary International, Duarte lost the case at the trial level. The California Supreme Court, led by Rose Byrd, overturned the trial court holding that Rotary International could not exclude women from becoming Rotarians. In 1987, the US Supreme Court upheld the California Supreme Court stating that RI could not prevent women from becoming Rotarians. Although it was good social policy, Rotary needed a kick in the pants to open its doors to women. Trying to make that change through the council on Rotary could have taken a long time to change especially with other countries involved. The Courts held that Rotary was a public entity, thus could not exclude women. I am very happy to have women in Rotary. It was hard to believe that in 1987 we still had policies that discriminated; Rotary would be two-thirds its size now if it weren't for women in Rotary. I recruited the first woman Rotarian into our club: she was my neighbor, impeccable credentials, the manager

of our local TV station, former president of the Chamber of Commerce. She was reluctant to join. When she found out many of her female friends in the National Association of Broadcasters were Rotarians and had been going to meetings, she joined.

Rotary has been 1.2 million members for some 10 years now; what can we do to increase our membership with good quality members who live by the 4 way test?

Rotary grew during WWII at a steady rate of 3% until 1997 when it plateaued and we haven't been able to get off that plateau since. Some people say it was when we started asking for money for the Polio Plus program. People said they didn't like being constantly asked for money to fight polio, even though it has been such an effective program. It may be true that we plateaued, our losses in membership have been less than Kiwanis, the Knights of Columbus, Optimist and the Lions. Fraternal organization membership is down; at least Rotary has maintained its number of members. I don't know the answer; I think each club has to decide what they want to do to increase members and retain the ones they have. Our town is a town of 17,000 and we have three Rotary Clubs with a morning club, a lunch club and a cocktail club.

How important is retention of current members?

You don't want to alienate your older members, but you can start new model clubs, young professional clubs. The young professionals are our future. We have young professional clubs that have never posted a newsletter; all notices and communications are via social media.

Look for Part 2 next month to learn about Past RI President Ray's biggest fear. It is none other than PDG Doug Baker!

To be continued.



**Valeria Velasco,
a member of the
Westchester Club**

WHAT YOUNG PROFESSIONALS ARE LOOKING FOR IN ROTARY

By Chris Davidson, Rotary Club of Newport News, Virginia



Rotary members who attended the Young Professionals Summit 26-27 September 2014.

The Young Professionals Summit took place in an unconventional meeting space in downtown Chicago, furnished with coffeehouse-style seating and optimized for creative thought. For two days, they engaged in a variety of brainstorming exercises, interactive games, and small group activities, concluding each with a facilitated discussion. Ideas were documented live on large white boards by a professional sketch artist.

Common themes that emerged included:

- Young professionals are not opposed to joining a club with older members, but they are seeking clubs with a broader range of members that reflect many different categories of diversity.
- Millennials and members of Generation Y want to do significant acts of service that make a real difference in the lives of others.
- Young professionals are appreciative of the business and mentorship opportunities they experience through Rotary. However, they do not feel these benefits, and others, are being marketed effectively to their generation.
- The younger crowd is looking for a fun, flexible experience with Rotary and prefers to avoid stuffy traditions, rituals, and internal politics.

LITTLE TOKYO ROTARY CLUB PROVISIONAL



By Makiko Nakasone, a member of the Glendale Noon Club

Governor Elsa Gillham announced recently that she has granted yet-to-be-chartered Little Tokyo Rotary Club (LTRC) provisional status. With this, all Rotarians are welcome to the LTRC's meetings for make-ups, LTRC can start publicizing the club in the community, and start the club structure and plan projects.

LTRC's missions include:

- 1) To support the re-vitalization efforts in the LT community
- 2) To bridge the Nikkei Japanese-American community and Shin-Issei new Japanese immigrant community
- 3) To be the specialist in U.S.-Japan relations and in promoting Japanese culture

We meet at Denny's on 530 Ramirez St., Los Angeles, 90012 on the first and third Tuesdays of each month from 7:30-8:45 am. Other Tuesdays we meet at the historical Far Bar on 347 E 1st St, Los Angeles, CA 90012 from 11:45-1 pm. Please come support the Little Tokyo Rotary Club. You may now make up at our club meeting!

If you know a qualified member candidate or have any questions, please contact the New Club Formation Rep, Makiko Nakasone at (818)523-2866 or via e-mail at monakasone@hotmail.com.



PDG Doug Baker meets with members at Little Tokyo Club

FUTURE LEADERS TRAINING SEMINAR

Are you looking to expand your Rotary knowledge? Or how you can explore opportunities of working with the District Leadership team? Go even further in the Rotary world? If so, then this Future Leaders Training Seminar is geared towards assisting you, our District Rotarians, in taking your leadership to the next level.

Saturday, March 7, 2015

Registration 7:30am | Program 8:00am-12:00pm

Complimentary continental breakfast included!

St. Paul's Lutheran Church Hall

958 Lincoln Blvd., Santa Monica, CA 90403

RSVP: office@rotary5280.org or 310-670-9792

Sign up today- space is limited!

Questions? Contact District Trainer Bette Hall at betterhrsolutions@gmail.com





WE NEED YOUR HELP!

As you are aware District 5280 is taking on a new challenge. We have created a new fund raising event called 321 GO TO END POLIO which is a 5k/10k run/walk with a 1 mile fun walk and the SECOND DISTRICT PICNIC for the 2014/2015 Rotary Year.

While this is a huge challenge it can reap huge awards with your dedicated support. The original concept was to bring in outside money and VISABILITY to our District and to put Rotary in the eyes of the public. So we want all of your membership to show up and support End Polio Now but we also want to bring Rotary visibility and exposure to the outside world.

As you are aware most all of the "major cause" fund raising groups, i.e. American Cancer Society, the Diabetes Foundation, American Heart Association, etc., use 5k/10k run/walks to raise major fundin and to raise MAJOR PUBLIC AWARENESS FOR WHAT THEY ARE DOING AND WHY THEY EXIST. These groups are household words and everyone knows what they do and why they do it. This is what 321 GO TO END POLIO is all about, to raise public awareness and funding for End Polio Now.

This event is threefold. It encompasses two important factors for Rotary while benefitting End Polio Now.

- 1) This event gets the word out on what Rotary is and what Rotary does. "BRANDING"
- 2) This event is a fantastic opportunity for non-Rotarians, and hopefully, potential new Rotarians to see what Rotarians do in action. "MEMBERSHIP"
- 3) Plus, ALL proceeds of this event goes to End Polio Now.

So, we want every Rotarian in the district to participate in this event and bring at least one non-Rotarian with you. But remember, even if your members/friends/family can't physically make the event they can participate by donating to your CLUB TEAM.

Finally, Governor Elsa will present special Governor's Awards to the club with the most attendees (percent basis) and the club with most funds raised.

SO GET THE WORD OUT, go to 321gotoendpolio.com for more information. REMEMBER visibility is our GOAL.

Co-Chair Wendy Clifford | clifford.wendy@ca.rr.com

Co-Chair Jim Beardsley | jim.beardsley1@verizon.net



Co-Chairs Jim Beardsley and Wendy Clifford, members of the South Bay Sunrise and Wilshire Clubs respectively

ART, DANCE, MUSIC, and SPEECH CONTESTS

By Ken Chong, SAG for Vocational Service



Ken Chong, a member of LA5 Club, and wife Heidi

Once again we are planning for another wonderful Vocational Service event for high

school youth. The Art, Dance, Music, and Speech Contests will be held on Saturday, March 28, 2015, at Loyola Marymount University (LMU). LMU has graciously offered to host this event again. Thank you to Judy Delavigne of the Westchester Club for making this happen! All of the documents are posted on the district website. PLEASE CONTACT ME IF YOU WANT TO FIND OUT HOW TO USE THIS EVENT AS A MEMBERSHIP EVENT. The club contests are a great way to invite the community into your club by having guest VIP judges. Think of asking local professors, entertainment executives, and politicians, to be judges. Proud parents love to see their children perform. Bring new blood and energy into your club. Below are the names of the contest chairs and their contact information.

ART

Bob Smith, Chair

resmith@earthlink.net or ph: 310-493-3835

DANCE

Cozette Vergari, DGND, Chair

cozette@laxlawyers.com or ph: 310-410-4014

MUSIC

Debbie Wehbe, Chair

debbie.wehbe@gmail.com or ph: 323-573-1950

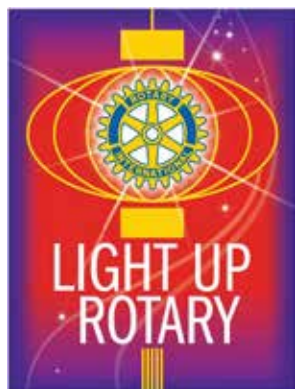
SPEECH

Lance Miller, Chair

lance@lancemillerspeaker.com or ph: 818-400-8999

SAG Ken Chong

ken.chong@live.com or phone: 310-678-5383



Join us for the Rotary District 5280 Youth Service District Breakfast

on
Tuesday, March 31, 2015
at the City Club 51st Floor

51st Floor, 555 S. Flower St., Los Angeles, CA 90071

Program Speaker:

Scott Greenberg

The *Third Factor* for
High Performance Leadership
Why is it that in similar circumstances, using
similar strategies, some leaders thrive while
others flounder? The real difference is mindset –
your ability to manage all of the thoughts and
emotions that influence everything you do.

During this inspiring discussion,
Scott Greenberg will give you tools to elevate
personal and professional performance,
and to lead others to do the same.

For more information about Scott:
www.scottgreenberg.com



Treat your youth clubs to this
amazing program.

Early Registration: \$35.00 After March 24 \$40.00

RSVP: Office@Rotary5280.org

CALL to pay by Credit Card: 310-670-9792

CLUB: _____ Attendees: _____

We will be bringing _____ Students to the Breakfast

We will sponsor _____ Students to attend the Breakfast

TOTAL _____ X \$ _____ = Amount Enclosed _____

A reservation made is a reservation paid!

Checks Payable to "District 5280" Mail to Rotary District Office:
8939 S. Sepulveda Blvd. Suite 210 Los Angeles 90045

PARKING: Valet parking is included.



Registration begins at 7:00 am
Program begins at 7:30 am

This Breakfast will be
dedicated to the work our
Youth Clubs do all year.
Support your youth clubs by
treating them to this great
breakfast.



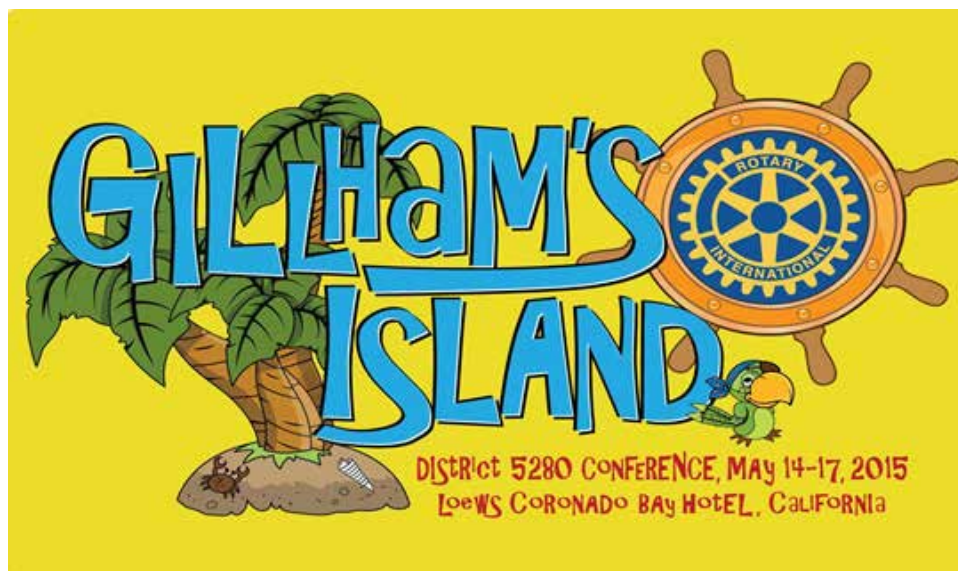


**Cuba:
Experience
the Culture and
Discover Its People**

Join this unique and exciting trip. You will see the diversity of the Cuban people, from Old Havana to the countryside of the Viñales valley. Experience Cuban culture the most authentic way possible— through its people. See Cuba in the old, before fast-changing developments bring the masses and modern-day resorts.

April 15-21, 2015

For information contact Val
Velasco at
vvelasco@aol.com.



**WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?
Reservations are now open for the
District Conference and Loews
Coronado Bay Hotel. Go to the
district web site and complete
the forms. It will only take a
few minutes. It's that quick and
simple!**



Chair Arturo Velasquez, a member of the Woodland Hills Club, and wife Sandra

ROTARY WENT VIRAL

By Ginny and Alex Brideau, Co-Chairs for Social Media and members of LA Downtown Club

For the first ever Rotary Goes Viral event - everyone did a great job! It exceeded expectations. More Rotarians have joined both the Rotary International 5280 Page and Group. Added bonus: We have more non-Rotarians visiting the page than ever! Post those pictures showing your club doing good things, new member inductions, and the silly Rotarian business. Great job!

You are seeing the post that had the greatest "reach" over the last week. Share the picture if you know someone in the picture!



Ginny and Alex Brideau, Co-Chairs for Social Media and members of the LA Downtown Club

PETS 2015



DGE DJ Sun, Executive Aide Cozette Vergari (DGND), and Presidents Elect at recent PETS.

Photo by PDG Rick Mendoza

Diane Davis, a member of the Downey Club, leading Interactors and Advisors in the closing musical piece at PETS.

Photo by Gidas Peteris





FRIENDSHIP EXCHANGE TO INDIA

By Makiko Nakasone, a member of the Glendale Noon Club



Group members include Shirley and Denise Giltzow, Peggy York, and Michele Zebich-Knos, left to right, and hosts.

to UNESCO's World Heritage site, the Taj Mahal and Kingdom of

Dreams. They also visited a blood bank and elementary school for special needs children sponsored by the local Rotarians.

The team from District 3010 is expected to arrive in our District in mid-May. We would like to reciprocate the warm and well organized hospitality that our team received.

We welcome your enthusiastic participation and support in this effort.

We are planning another Friendship Exchange with District 2620 in Japan. Armen Khalafyan, Glendale Club President-elect, and his wife, Annabel, will visit District 2620 near Mt. Fuji in late April.

Four Rotarian couples from our District recently visited District 3010 in New Delhi, India, as our first District-to-District Friendship Exchange Group. They received a royal welcome.

The seven day visit was hosted by the Indian Rotarians in their homes, and our Rotarians were invited to District 3010's District Conference as a grand finale of the exchange.

The Friendship Exchange Program Group includes team leader, Shirley Giltzow of the Lawndale Club and her daughter, Denise Giltzow, Lance Ito and his wife, Peggy York, both from the LA5 Club, Rich Strayer of the Downey Club and his wife, Gloria, Tore Knos of the Playa Venice Sunrise Club, and his wife, Michel Zebich-Knos. They visited District 3010 February 15 through February 21.

The once-in-a-life time experience began with an invitation to a grand Indian wedding ceremony and reception attended by more than 500 guests. The celebration lasted until the early hours of the morning. The following days were equally memorable with a four-hour drive



Makiko Nakasone

WE CAME TO SERVE

By Matt Schaff, a member
of the Woodland Hills Club

Our destination was the ancient capital of Antigua where we stayed in the ruins of a 400 year old convent that has been rebuilt into an amazing hotel by a local Rotarian. Upon our Thursday arrival the 120 participating Rotarians ate lunch and had a tour of the city. That evening a welcome dinner for all was hosted by local Rotarians at a hilltop restaurant.

Early Friday morning we took a 2½ hour bus trip into the countryside to visit a school. We were entertained by the school children and we presented books to the students. Rotary and the Guatemala

Literacy Project have teamed to help reduce the illiteracy rate in a country where 25% of the people cannot read. The villagers were very grateful to see us and many of the parents and younger children were in attendance. We broke into groups to have a snack in the classrooms with the children and observed how the teachers instruct the students.

Then it was off to a facility where we had a catered lunch with the wheelchair bound employees of the Rotary partner non-profit Hope Haven. We had a tour of the factory to see how they manufacture wheelchairs that are shipped inexpensively all over the world.

A gala dinner was held that evening hosted by a wealthy local Rotarian at her impeccably decorated 16th century colonial estate. We were entertained by

magicians and participated in a tasting of fine Guatemalan rum.

Saturday morning most of the group boarded planes to see the ancient Mayan ruins at Tikal. Many of the 30 or so Rotarians who stayed behind hiked to the top of the Agua (or Water) Volcano which towers over the city. Another active volcano which looms over Antigua is called the Fuego (or Fire) Volcano.

Apparently the Rotarians forgot to make an offering to the gods and the

Fuego Volcano rumbled to life dusting the city with volcanic ash and forcing the closure of the airport. As a result those us who were in Tikal were left stranded but fortunately rescued by the local Rotarians who scrambled to find rooms for 90 people. They also assisted us in obtaining necessary meals, medications, clothing,

toiletries, etc.

On Sunday most of the Rotarians still in Antigua were fortunate to leave town to visit a Rotary project located on the shore of a large lake north of Antigua. The remaining few left at the hotel hunkered down indoors to wait out the rain of ash. The trip required a three hour bus ride followed by an hour on a boat to reach a village inaccessible by road where Rotarians helped to install new stoves into homes. The villagers cook on wood burning stoves and many have respiratory problems as a result. Over 1,000 stoves are being installed and the recipients must perform 70 hours of local community service to receive a stove. The new stoves vent the smoke outside and are three times more efficient. An added benefit is that since less wood is cut, soil erosion is reduced, improving the quality of water in the lake freeing villagers to engage in more productive activities.

Meanwhile the main airport in Guatemala City was still closed as military personnel struggled to sweep the ash from

runways as the Fuego volcano decided to go back to sleep. Those of us still in Tikal were again saved by local Rotarians. Five small planes were provided to fly us around the ash plume to a military base on the Pacific coast where we boarded buses for the 1½ hour ride back to Antigua. On the way back the highway actually goes right between the two volcanoes which are located just a few miles from each other.

An impressive farewell dinner was held at the hotel that evening and recognition was made to the visiting and local Rotarians who put this amazing project together. Among the honorees were our the members of our organizing committee.

Monday morning the entire group boarded buses to visit the Joya Verde School and an adjacent sanitation project. We were entertained and had lunch with the students while presenting them with backpacks filled with school supplies. Then it was on to another school named Republic of Panama where Rotarians helped to repaint the play areas including the hopscotch and basketball courts.

After that it was off to the newly reopened airport for the flight home. About half the Rotarians stayed behind to go on an optional side trip to a resort in Roatan, Honduras for well deserved rest and relaxation. I encourage all our District club members to attend next year's Humanitarian Trip which will be to Panama



Matt Schaff and Guatemala performers

BIENVENIDOS AMIGOS

By Cheryl Moxley, a member of the Lake Arrowhead Rotary Club

Bienvenidos Amigos" was not only what we were greeted with but also the feeling exuded by the wonderful people of Guatemala. I am Cheryl Moxley, a member of the Lake Arrowhead Rotary Club. I have had the buena fortuna of accompanying my brother, Tom Johnstone, a member of the Hawthorn-LAX-Lennox Club on the last three District 5280 Humanitarian trips.

It is my pleasure to share my impressions of the service projects and the grants partnered with District 4250 that have begun and are up and running. Our first visit on our trip was to Colonia Noruega and the Guatemala Literacy Project which is a partnership between Rotary Clubs and CoEd to promote literacy in Guatemala. The prescriptive method for reading was highly effective, utilizing early literacy with the teachers, who were/are indigenas who are taught the process and share it with the children. It was



Cheryl Moxley and parents of children at a rural school.

charming and delightful to watch.

Later the same day we toured a wheelchair factory run by Hope Haven. It is a wonderful project that manufactures wheelchairs and employs wheelchair bound workers.

One of the most inspired projects we visited was in a village on Lake Atitlan where we helped assemble the most efficient, simple stoves. We went into a series of 3 "hovels",

homes constructed of degrading corrugated tin that was supported by sticks that were coated and dripping with a creosote-like goo that was the remainder of greases and smoke from the cooking fires. The people were renting this 8 X 10 space with 18 people in 3 of these units. The stove was installed within minutes and will save 70% of the fuel that would have been used. The smoke and toxic fumes that the people were breathing is now vented through a simple chimney. The cost of \$45 is funded by Rotary except for \$20.00 which is an investment that the family must commit to in order to insure that they will use it and not go back to the old ways.

I simply must comment on the wonderful hospitality we were treated to. The Casa Santo Domingo was exquisite and so evocative of the five hundred year old convent that echoes the past with artifacts and almost haunting music. Every venue we experienced was elegant, thoughtfully designed and a gift to our senses. Muchas Gracias, Antigua, Guatemala and my heartfelt thank you for the wonderful experience provided by the hardworking Rotarios of the Districts 5280 and 4250.

GUATEMALA BEAUTIFUL

Gilgardo (Gil) Ramirez, founding members of Hawthorne-LAX-Lennox Rotaract Club

Our visit to the beautiful country of Guatemala gave us some amazing adventures and moments of joy and awe. As many of the locals agreed, Guatemala City is much like any other city—although, it was refreshing to see there was an interest in promoting healthy life styles. Every Sunday morning the main avenue stretching down the middle of the city, Avenida Reforma, is closed off to give locals a chance to bike, skate, run, walk, or just enjoy time outside in the fresh air with family, friends, and their dogs! Although the city was interesting, everything was anything but ordinary in the picturesque city of Antigua, or as most locals referred to it as, “La Antigua.” The artisanship of the locals was full of vibrant colors and readily available throughout Parque Central and Arco de Santa Catalina. For the extent of our stay at Casa Santo Domingo, we were impressed by how great the hotel had renovated the ruined monastery while maintaining the historic character. The site seeing in the confines of the hotel alone was breathtaking, especially the scenery we had while skydiving with Rotarians! We also climbed up the volcano Pacaya—I (Yoseline) rode a horse for the very first time and it was scary going back down! Apart from the scenic surroundings in Antigua, we have to say that the food was very tasty and one of our favorite plates was the Pepian de Pollo at La Fonda Restaurant. Not to mention, the great atmosphere and beautiful typical Guatemalan décor.

Tikal was an adventure within an adventure. To start off, the flight in a small private plane provided us with amazing views across the country. The pyramids and the views atop them were breath taking. By far, the most impressive part of the trip was the comradery that united us all after finding out we were stranded due to a volcano eruption back in Antigua. As Rotaractors and as first-born in our families, our instinct was to help Rotarians in any way possible, have it be with medication, translation, transportation, hotel registration, piña coladas, etc.... We knew that our parents would have scolded us if we had laid back and watched everything unfold! However, the Guatemalan Rotarians that generously provided us with a great location to stay

at an incredible price, following that up with saving us half a day of road travel by allowing us to fly into a private military base, while there were eight other flights stranded that night—deserves a standing ovation! They pulled a Houdini act for complete strangers from a foreign country in a moment's notice.

Wheel chair give away was humbling, especially seeing the way the members of Hope Haven expressed themselves once they received a new wheelchair. There was so much faith, humility, and sincere gratitude, that knowing what it meant to them to receive these life-altering tools put our everyday “struggles” into perspective. The workers refused to concede to their “limitations” and that was moving. They worked hard and played basketball with the mindset that they were not handicapped for life! To be able to play basketball with them was an incredible experience and one that I (Gil) will never forget. It takes a lot of discipline and skill to play basketball in a wheelchair!

Going to the schools and being greeted with huge smiles and performances from the children was heartwarming. Our hard work in getting family, friends, colleagues, and strangers to donate to our school supply drive was completely worth it! We were blessed to be able to take 125 pounds of school supplies and distribute it to more than one school. There were many conversations that will stay in our hearts and we would like to share a couple.

“What sport do you play the most? Futbol, basketball...?” I (Gil) asked a young boy.

“None.”

“Why?!”

“We don't have any balls to play with.”

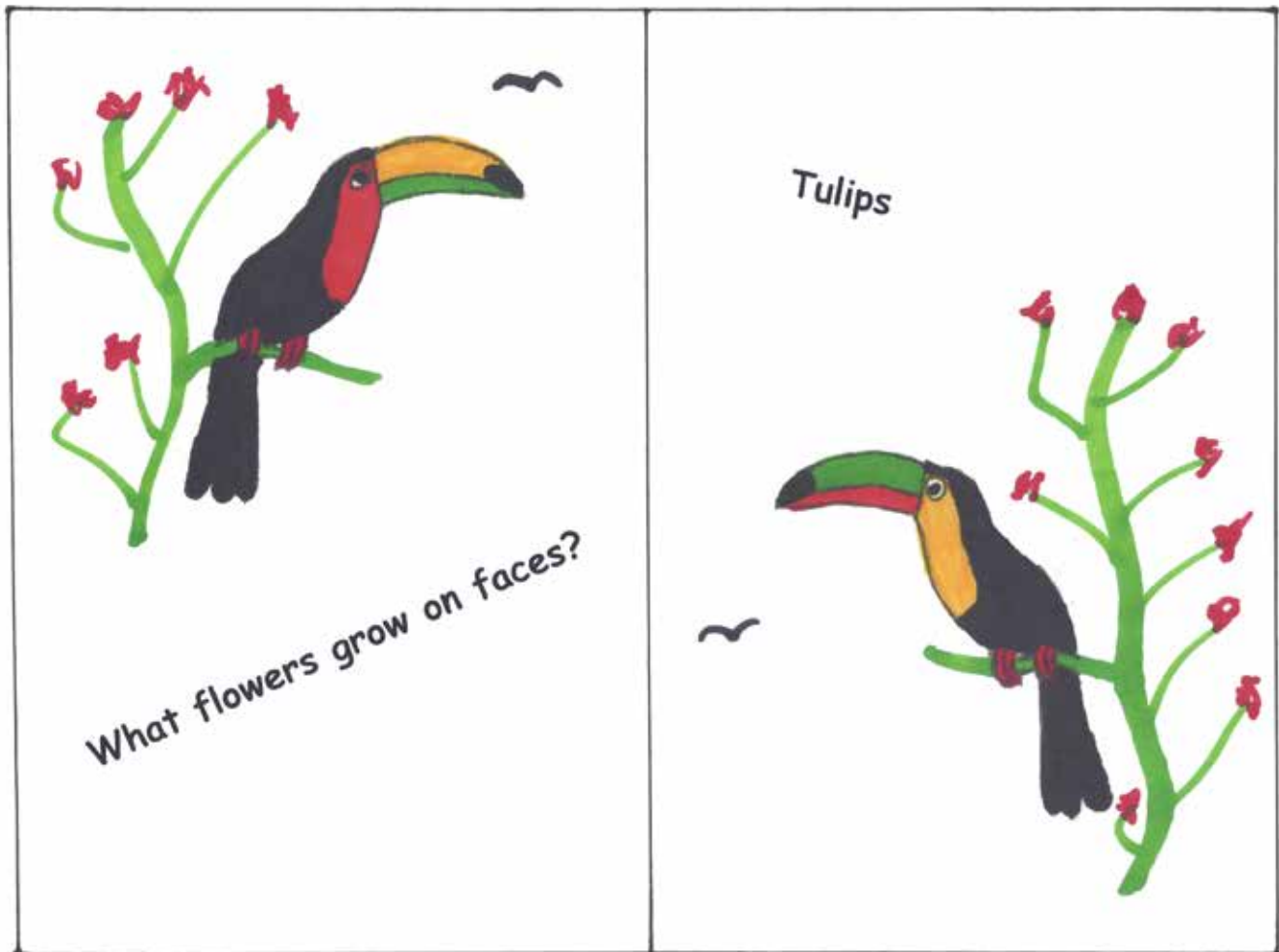
Interacting with them and seeing their lack of exposure to things that we take for granted such as a simple soccer ball was an eye-opening experience.

A second grade girl obtained her backpack and in it, she found a soap bar. She asked me (Yoseline) what it was. I explained to her that whenever she bathed at home, the soap bar would help her be fresh and clean. The little girl hugged the soap bar as if it were a fluffy teddy bear. Her classmate chimed in and stated that she wished she had gotten a soap bar, so I asked her to show me what was in her backpack. In it, she had a small bottle of hand sanitizer. Again, I was asked what that was. I proceeded to tell her that it was used whenever a person did not have soap or water in order to have clean hands. The second little girl also hugged it tightly. I held my tears back as I soaked in their moment of joy.

These and many other countless stories such as--children taking pictures with my camera and astonished of how their image appeared on the screen, or, children saving the meal that we provided to them in order to give it to their families--demonstrated the magic of Rotary. This humanitarian trip exceeded our expectations in every single way, from adventurous experiences to heartfelt service projects. We had the honor of attending the meeting of the Rotary Club of Antigua and got to meet Canadian Rotarians, more American Rotarians, and Interactors from the new club Interact Antigua! It was a pleasure learning about all of their humanitarian trips because it motivated us to do more. We came back home knowing that we have created special bonds with many Rotarians and Guatemalans, and for that, we thank you all from the bottom of our hearts. A special thank you to our advisor, Mr. Larry Bender, for expanding our horizons and to our “Guatemalan parents,” Richard and Judy Ham, for hosting us in their lovely home in Antigua.



Yoseline and Gil with local children



District Calendar

March | Literacy Month

- 21 Rotary Day—3-2-1 End Polio Race & Picnic
- 28 District Art, Dance, Music and Speech Contests at LMU
- 31 District Breakfast

April | Magazine Month

- 11 Rotary Day of Service
- 11 Rotaract Ethics Forum at LMU

April | Cont.

- 16-19 Fellowship Trip Cuba
- 24-26 RYLA
- 30 Presidents' Fellowship

May | Promote Int. Convention

- 14-17 District Conference at Lowes Coronado

June | Rotary Fellowships

- 6-9 Rotary Intl Convention-Sao Paulo
- 20 District Assembly