

CHAPTER XXVI

I have left one of the most interesting and important parts of my activities for this separate chapter, because it did not seem to work well into the rest of the story. This has to do with the many years of Rotary membership and activity which has been so much a part of my life and so entwined in the weeks and years, that I wanted to set it apart from the other parts of this story.

Early in 1922, a Lion's Club organizer came into Littleton and wanted to get a group started here. One of the men he contacted was J. Ernest Mitchell. Ernest, however, had had a great many contacts with men in Denver who were members of the Rotary Club of Denver. Somehow through his contacts and knowledge, he seemed to feel and to know that whatever group was gotten together out here, they would probably prefer to become Rotarians rather than Lion's or any other service club. He talked to Edgar Jenkins, who likewise felt that it would be better to see if we could get a Rotary charter.

I think I need not go into a lot of detail in that connection because I have already written a separate history of the Rotary Club of Littleton for the club's records and it covers these details.

Anyway, the contact resulted in the calling together of a group of 16 men, of which I was one, and that met on the 16th day of May, 1922. The meeting was held in the former home of Katherine's parents on North Nevada Avenue. The group met every week, discussed the possibilities of getting a Rotary charter, and also a lot of local issues which were confronting the community at the time.

It was June 14, 1922 that the official application for a charter was made. The club started calling itself the Rotary Club of Littleton, but it was actually five months later before Rotary International granted the charter. In those days, Rotary International did not believe a group could be successful in a town of less than five thousand population, but the Rotary International directorate finally decided to try the experiment of chartering clubs in smaller towns, and Littleton was the first one. To get a charter now only takes two or three weeks.

The application for the charter included the following names: Flor Ashbaugh, Edwin A. Donis, Casper Broemmel, James D. Canary, William C. Guthbert, Walter H. Picklin, Ivy W. Hunt, Edgar Jenkins, Terry Miller, Paul H. McMaster, J. Ernest Mitchell, Harry H. Nutting, Rupert E. Nutting, Orville W. Roto, J. Frank Smith, and Allyn H. Tedmon. I am today the only charter member left in the club with continuous membership since the first meeting in 1922. William C. Guthbert, also a charter member, is still a member of the club, but he resigned at one time and then came back in again later.

Nothing of particular note happened in the club which would be of interest to recount here until about 1930, when I was elected a member of the Board of Directors. In 1931, I was made vice president. In 1932 came an incident which I am not at all proud of, but I am going to relate it anyway. I was scheduled to be elected president of the club, having served as vice president. Apparently the majority of the club members wanted me as the president and expected me to be elected, but there was another

member who had indicated that he wanted to be president and was making some effort to overthrow tradition and get the designation for that office. The system was that the club elected five members to the Board of Directors and the Board elected the officers.

After the five members of the Board were elected that year, and before the president was elected, one of the members of the club came to me and said, "Ed, when your Board of Directors meets for the election of the president of the club, we want you to be sure to vote for yourself." I told him very emphatically that under no circumstances would I vote for myself, that I didn't consider that to be ethical and that if I couldn't be elected without doing it, then I would just not be the next president. Different members kept coming to me and requesting that I do vote for myself, because they were fearful that my opponent would do that and that one other member of the Board would vote for him because he was a close friend. If his friend voted for him, and my opponent voted for himself, and then I voted for him, that would elect him, giving him three of the five votes. I still refused to agree to vote for myself, but the pressure was constant and insistent and they made it on the basis that I was serving the club better as a Rotarian if I would do it, because they simply didn't want this other man for president. Finally I weakened and when the meeting took place for the election, there were five votes for Ed Bemis and none for my opponent. I have always been ashamed of that situation and I wish I had stood my ground and voted for my opponent and I think it is of enough interest to include.

I have always been active in the Rotary Club, fulfilling all of the assignments given me and endeavoring to be a really good Rotarian. I visited many Rotary clubs throughout the United States and through my newspaper association activities have developed a good many friendships, especially throughout Colorado. This Rotary acquaintanceship helped me, too, in the legislature, because since it is the plan to call Rotarians by their nicknames, I was able to be on that basis with a number of state senators and representatives.

On the tenth of February, 1943, in the early morning on my way to the office, I had to stop at the filling station near the depot in order to get a tire fixed. It was a nice warm sunny morning and I was nonchalantly standing in the doorway of the repair garage when I was suddenly confronted by R. L. Stevens, currently President of the Rotary Club and manager of the J. C. Ponney store. After our usual greetings, Steve straightened up in front of me, looked my straight in the eye and said, "Ed, the club wants to run you for District Governor of Rotary. Will you give us your permission to announce you as our candidate?"

In the first place, I had always looked up to a Rotary District Governor as being a man of superior knowledge and education and one of unlimited financial means, and a man who had been in what might be called the "upper bracket", and prominent in the citizenry of Colorado. Just what sort of a revolution took place in my mind and my stomach I can't describe. All of a sudden, everything seemed to take on a different significance. Was this something I had worked toward for several years and did not know it? Were my club members overly ambitious, or just how did it happen that I was picked out of more than 3500

Rotarians in the district to become a candidate for that office?

I didn't know exactly whether I wanted to fall through the concrete floor or fly up to the roof of the filling station, but after stumbling and groping around for a little, the only thing I could do was to express my surprise at being confronted with a project of that nature. Being Governor of Rotary was the last thing in the world I had ever thought would be offered to me. In fact, I had never even thought of it for one moment. Steve said that one other member of the club had been mentioned casually earlier, but that it was obvious he was not physically capable of doing the job and was too old to be projected into any campaign to get it. In those days, the District Governor was elected at the District Conference and there were on occasion more than one candidate. It seems that the then District Governor, Ralph McWhinnie, of the University of Wyoming at Laramie, had heard that our club would have a candidate and he had wired to get the name so he could announce it in his monthly letter. Steve told me that they had to send him a wire that day and would I give them my decision some time after lunch. I told him that I would want to talk it over with Katherine and also with Hous and I would let him know. But it seems that Hous had been approached about it before they talked to me and he told them that he thought I might be persuaded, and that, of course, it met with his approval. Anyway, I did talk to Katherine and Hous, and that afternoon I told Steve that I would give the club my permission to announce my name if they wished. For some reason, I had a very strange feeling that day. I didn't know who my opponent would be, but I knew beyond any reasonable doubt that I would be the next District Governor.

I can't tell why I had that feeling and that I was so sure, but nevertheless I had it. There were two candidates and a man who was attempting to become a candidate as a dark horse by using some underhanded methods to discredit us two candidates.

My club got out promotional material and sent ^{it} to all of the clubs in the District. In those days, the District was numbered 113 and included all of Colorado, Wyoming, two clubs in western Nebraska, and two in Northern New Mexico. Also in those days the election of the District Governor took place at the District Conference, which was held at the Broadmoor Hotel in Colorado Springs. Governor McWhinnie had me on the program for a talk and he also had Pop Gallagher of Durango, who was the other candidate. This was their way of making it possible for the delegates to size us up. A man who later became a District Governor and whom I previously mentioned as using the underhanded methods, had spread the rumor that both Pop and I were newcomers to Colorado and to Rotary and that neither of us knew much about Rotary, that we were hard drinkers, even drunkards, and that possibly they should elect a dark horse. He happened to be a member of the Rotary Club of Denver, but he didn't have the Denver club endorsement, and the then President of the Denver club, who was one of my main supporters, rushed to the platform when nominations were called for for District Governor and announced to the conference that the Denver Rotary Club did not have a candidate for the office of District Governor. That scotched the dark horse plan, because no candidate could be considered unless he was sponsored by his own club.

The votes were counted, and during the Monday noon luncheon

a conference officer came to where I was seated, whispered to me that I had been elected and that I would be presented to the conference at the end of the luncheon. I was about to embark on one of the greatest experiences that any man could have. I shall try to give enough of the details so that some idea of it can be obtained, but words could never adequately convey what one experiences in holding the position of District Governor.

When a man is elected District Governor, he becomes an officer of Rotary International. The first official action is where he is called to the International Assembly, which this particular year was held in St. Louis. There he undergoes four days of intensive training for the job. Katherine went with me to this Assembly, which was followed immediately by the International Convention. It must be remembered that in 1943, we were in the middle of a war. The government had discouraged conventions or big gatherings of any kind in the interest of war economy, but it seems that the great work that Rotary was doing internationally so impressed the government that there were no restrictions placed on the attendance at the convention. However, there was very little publicity given to this gathering, nothing like what is done during present times.

We came home and I began to assemble the necessary equipment for the conduct of this office. I had to get a separate headquarters office, which I located in the Moore Building at 204 West Main Street. I maintained this office for almost two years, and then moved my equipment over to the Independent office.

My first official act was to call a District Assembly, which

is composed of the incoming presidents and secretaries of the clubs in the district so that I could impart to them the instructions and policies from Rotary International which I had received in St. Louis. This was held in June in Denver.

On July 1, 1943 I took over officially as Governor of District 113, Rotary International. The main job in this connection is to meet with every club in the District, to speak at the regular club meeting and then at a different time to conduct a club Assembly. These Assemblies were usually held in the evening if the club met in the noon luncheon, and at noon if the club met in the evening. We had sixty clubs in the District at that time, and Katherine went with me to practically all of them. The wives of the Rotarians always had special social activities for the Governor's wife upon the occasion of the visitation. Our first club meeting was at Rawlins, Wyoming. During the next six weeks a new club at Powell, Wyoming, was added, which made sixty-one clubs.

I presented the charter to this club. The last club I visited was Denver, and I finished the 61 club visitations on the tenth of December. I drove approximately fifteen thousand miles on Rotary work during my year.

The rest of the Rotary year, or through to the following June 30, was taken up with speaking on special occasions at Rotary Clubs and in preparing for and conducting the District Conference.

Again remembering that this was during the war and gasoline coupons were necessary and scarce, at first I was not sure what this would do to my club visitations, because there was no way

to use other transportation and to reach the clubs on the scheduled time. It was a coincidence, however, that the members of the Colorado Press Association covered exactly the same area as that of District 113, R. I., and since they had already approved of enough gasoline for me to do my newspaper Association work, I could do both that and the Rotary work at the same time, so that actually, while the Rotary end of it was the more intense, I still did my Association job as I went along.

There were a few amusing incidents in connection with these visits. I remember so well the Lander, Wyoming club meeting, which was held in the evening. In order to celebrate my visit, they decided to have it a Ladies' Night and to hold the meeting out on a beautiful large ranch near the mountains, where there was a lovely rushing stream right by the house, a lot of trees and a beautiful lawn running to the edge of this stream. The time came for me to make my regular club speech. I stood up under the trees on the grass with the people sitting around me, some on chairs, some on tables, and some on the ground. It was not enough that the stream made such a roar going by that I could hardly be heard 20^{feet} away, but the mosquitoes decided that this was about the juiciest aggregation of morsels they could find and they went to work. Everybody, including myself, began slapping mosquitoes until it seemed to me that that was about all anybody could hear. Now and then someone would get up and go into the house, because they couldn't take it. I cut my speech short and I did probably one of the poorest jobs in my whole year. It has always been an amusing memory to think that about the only recollection I have of that meeting is the sight and sound of people slapping mosquitoes off their heads and necks.

Prior to the time I was to make my official visit, the local newspapers always carried a story about it and a picture. So it seemed that at least the Rotarians knew who I was and what my name was when I visited the club. But this wasn't always true. Usually the Governor's coming was heralded as quite an occasion and they made preparation for it. One of my clubs was at Silverton. We met over a saloon and the members had made quite a preparation with dinner and the Ladies of Rotary as guests. The president of the club at that time was an elderly lawyer. When it came time for him to introduce me, he got up and said, "We have with us a very distinguished visitor today, our district president." (This was the usual starting of the speech used on these occasions/; ^{except that he should have said Governor}. Then the club president hesitated and finally leaned over to me and said in a not too low voice, "What is your name?" I have always enjoyed the recollection of that incident.

When I visited the Colorado Springs group, I spoke to the usual noon luncheon meeting, and then we had an evening Assembly at the Antlers Hotel. We started with a dinner and then I took up my usual job of going through the analysis of Rotary and inquiring as to what the club was doing, giving them ideas which I had picked up from other clubs, and in general endeavoring to analyze how good the club was so that I could report to R.I. At 11 o'clock, I was still not through and I asked the men to get up and stretch for a moment, but not to leave. Some of the wives of the members were meeting in another room nearby where they had provided entertainment for Katherine, and when two or three of them looked into the room where we were meeting and saw some of the men standing up, one of them said, "I guess they are

through." Katherine was there and she replied, "Don't be sure. You don't know my husband."

We went back to work and I finished that Assembly a little before midnight. Just before adjourning, Past District Governor Roy Davis, of Colorado Springs, got up and made a statement that "In all of my years in Rotary, I have never heard Rotary get such a thorough going-over as Ed has given it tonight. He is to be congratulated on an outstanding job." His comment pleased me very much, of course, because Roy is looked upon as one of the best Governors who ever served the district.

I could go on and tell of other incidents, but I think probably I should go on with the Rotary story. I conducted the District Conference in the spring and carried on the usual Governor's activities until the end of my governorship, which was June 30, 1944.

In 1945, Rotary International requested that I go into northwest Kansas and talk to a number of the clubs there. This was in early May. I remember it so well because of one incident that happened. I had met with a group in Oberlin. The next morning before I left Oberlin, I received a long distance call from the president of the Rotary Club in Colby, which was to be my next stop, and he said that he felt it advisable to call off the Rotary Club meeting that night at which I was to speak because the Germans had just surrendered, and all of the hotel help had walked out to celebrate the occasion. I told him I thought it was perfectly proper that he cancel my appearance. I did go to Colby and I stayed overnight, but there was no meeting and no hotel service of any kind. I had difficulty getting anything to eat.

One of the effective mechanisms I used in the Colorado Press Association from the time I took it over was the issuance of bulletins to the publishers. I accomplished a great deal with these bulletins, and it was perfectly natural that I should attempt to do something outstanding with the Governor's Monthly Letter which goes to all of the clubs and which is required by R.I. This letter is to acquaint the clubs with the latest Rotary information and directives from R.I. and to give some stories about what is happening among the clubs in the district. Previous Governors had gotten out one-color bulletins composed of one or two pages. I started out by getting out a bulletin composed of three different colors of paper, one color containing general information for the club as a whole, another color for the special information for the club president, and the third color for special information for the secretary. This proved to be very effective and I had a great response from it from the club officers in the district.

As Governor, I received the Rotary Club Bulletins from the clubs in the district, and I began to make a study of them. I soon learned several things. The first was that the bulletins didn't contain sufficient information, nor were they containing necessary information. The second thing was that I realized that these bulletin editors, most of them, were totally untrained, not knowing how to get out a good bulletin nor what they could accomplish with it. The third thing was that even though the bulletin editors' efforts were considerable, they were given little credit or recognition for that work. With these problems in mind, I decided to try to do something about it.

In my final bulletin to the clubs in June, 1944, I offered a prize for the best bulletin in the district, these prizes to be awarded at the next district conference. However, there was no district conference held the next spring, due to the war situation, but I awarded the prizes just the same and took them to the clubs who had won them. The next conference was in the spring of 1946, and by agreement with the Governor, I hold a bulletin editors' clinic. Both the awarding of the annual prizes for the best bulletin and the clinic at the District Conference have continued to this day. Great interest is shown in the bulletin editors' meeting at the conference and the attendance is far above what one might expect at such a meeting.

As I carried on these contests and clinics, I could see a great deal of good coming from them. But I began to feel that the weakness in the whole system of editing club bulletins was that there was no contact nor encouragement nor help of any kind from anyone being given the bulletin editor throughout the year. It was several years before I finally launched a publication which I had been thinking of in this connection.

In June, 1952, I issued the first number of THE EDITARIAN. It was, and still is, a sort of a training service for bulletin editors. In my first issue, I announced that I was sending this out monthly at my own expense to all of the clubs in my district. I didn't realize that it would become known outside of the district, and that there would be demands for it; but soon I began to get requests from the other clubs in the United States and even from some overseas countries for THE EDITARIAN. Of course, this posed a problem because I didn't think I could ser vice

all of the clubs in Rotary at my expense. I finally had to put a control price of one dollar per year on THE EDITARIAN, which pays only part of the cost of sending it. At the time of this writing, the list is still growing, but I feel very definitely that this is a type of thing which Rotary International itself should be doing. I may offer this to R.I., but I do not know what their reaction may be.

Some of the bulletin editors in the country picked up the name "Editarian", which I coined, and began to call themselves "Club Editarians". At the club bulletin department meeting of the international convention of R.I. in Chicago, in June, 1955, the bulletin editors adopted the name "Editarian" officially as designating the name of the club bulletin editors.

I sensed another weakness in connection with the Rotary Club bulletin system, in that these Editarians receive less than adequate recognition of the efforts which they put forth in the interest of their clubs and R.I., and I decided to try to do something about the problem. I wanted to set up a sort of honorary organization to which these Editarians could belong and through which they could have some memento of their work. I finally hit on the name "Editarians United". Then I proceeded to have placards printed, about 6" x 7" in size, in two colors, upon which is printed the following "Member Editarians United. This honorary membership has been awarded to (name of Editarian) for his faithful and effective efforts beyond the call of duty in editing a superior weekly bulletin for his Rotary Club, for his voluntary and unselfish contribution to the progress of his club and to Rotary, for his generous service above self."

Then it is dated and signed by me. I have had a lot of wonderful letters from men who have received this recognition and many comments in club bulletins throughout the country. To say the least, it certainly has been most worthwhile, but it, like other things which I have developed, must be turned over to someone else to carry on.

I might say, and this again sounds very egotistical (I would say it differently if I knew how), I have apparently without intending to do it, established myself as the best authority on club bulletins in the United States. I say it, not as my idea, but because Rotary International itself has so written.

Rotary International has a code. Most businesses have a code. In my opinion, there is no more professional job than that of editing a Rotary bulletin. For that reason, I thought the Editorians should have a code and I wrote one. I think it is worth incorporating in this autobiography. It is headed:

"We Believe"

and is as follows:

WE BELIEVE that our club bulletins are valuable and effective instruments in the development and maintenance of good Rotary clubs:

THEREFORE, as bulletin editors, we shall gladly contribute our time and energy to the production of the best bulletins we can offer to our members.

WE BELIEVE that club bulletins should be informative,

interesting, dignified, constructive, and entertaining:
THEREFORE, we shall lend every effort toward making
these attributes the controlling influence in gathering
material for our bulletins.

WE BELIEVE that one of the purposes in having Rotary club
bulletin editors is so that the week after week history
of our clubs will be written:

THEREFORE, we shall endeavor to give as complete cover-
age as is possible of the activities of the club and
its officers, committees and members.

WE BELIEVE that directed and humiliating jests, derogatory
statements, or any similar items which might make a mem-
ber the object of ridicule, are not in good taste and
do not belong in a club bulletin:

THEREFORE, we shall be ever alert to see that all ma-
terial in our bulletins is acceptable to all members.

WE BELIEVE that questionable jokes are foreign to the ideals
of, and thinking by, members of Rotary clubs:

THEREFORE, we shall be circumspect in the choice of
what is to be included in our bulletins.

WE BELIEVE that an interchange of information between clubs,
within and outside of our respective districts, is most
desirable and profitable:

THEREFORE, we shall endeavor to exchange bulletins with
as many clubs as our ability permits.

WE BELIEVE there are unlimited opportunities for club bul-
letin editors to spread and to help perpetuate Rotary
throughout the world:

THEREFORE, we will dedicate ourselves, our abilities,
and our energies to the furtherance of Rotary, and shall

so discharge our responsibilities that our activities will be a stimulus to our fellow members and a credit to the communities in which we live.

WE BELIEVE that in being selected to edit our club bulletins we have been deeply honored, and that inherent in this honor is a recognition of leadership as well as a great challenge:

THEREFORE, we will exercise that leadership as effectively, acceptably, and unassumingly as is compatible with our relationship to our club members. We will dedicate our utmost ability and loyalty to that challenge, knowing that in it lies the real meaning of that great pronouncement of Rotary: "He profits most who serves best."