

# THE ORACLE



Elias Thomas III, District Governor, 2000-2001



January and February, 2001



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THE ORACLE is a monthly publication of Rotary International District 7780 for the Rotary year 2000-2001. Its purpose is to reinspire Rotarians to the spirit of philosophical idealism and inquiry into service as the key to success and happiness in life.

Articles are welcome and need to be received by the 15th of each month prior to the month of publication.

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## Final National Immunization Day for Polio Plus

by Elias Thomas III

On the days preceding this final National Immunization Day (N.I.D.) against Polio in India, we traveled extensively throughout the various sections of both Old Delhi and New Delhi and saw banners hanging from wires spanning the roads and streets and alleys and also saw numerous signs pasted onto building walls or shop windows. We were very gratified to see that the prior publicity had succeeded in causing parents to send or to bring their children to the clinics. One poster was written Arabic and I had someone translate it to me. It was a most important turning point in this worldwide effort toward polio eradication. For years the Muslim leaders, at least those in India, had outwardly opposed this program. However, this past year, the high Imam in India had proclaimed that all families were responsible for bringing their children to the clinics for vaccination. We saw posters and banners written in Arabic, Hindi, English and a few other alphabets. Some of the banners were sponsored by the Indian government, others by corporations like Coca-Cola of India, but the largest number of banners showed the Rotary International emblem prominently displayed.

With nearly no sleep through the night, we arose at about 5:45 a.m. to get ready for an early breakfast and to meet our colleagues from the local Rotary Clubs. These folks were paired with teams from our group and would be with us throughout the day, taking us first to central dispensary units for meeting first with the local physicians. We also met with locals who had spent the entire previous night sorting through the boxes of vials of vaccine and allocating appropriate supplies of vaccine to the various centers in sectors and neighborhoods. We then picked up the "cold packs" containing the chilled vaccine and the census information for each of the vaccination centers and drove or walked to their locations, dropping off the day's



supplies. Each kit contained dozens of vials of vaccine, ice, a small coated paper dish, a screwdriver, a ballpoint pen, a cotton swab, a bottle of gentian and the census data folder. At each location, there were from three to ten people waiting for us to arrive so they could begin setting up for the expected onslaught of children to be immunized. As soon as we arrived at each site, almost magically, children emerged from the shadows.

We had arrived in this sector of New Delhi just as the sun began to pierce through the night's smoke-laden air, casting shafts of yellow-gray light through the winding streets and alleys. The dogs still slept. We had to wind our way through common courtyards, where clothes and blankets slung over lines crisscrossing the lanes were still dripping with the morning dew. Hearing noises, I looked up to see people rising from slumber on balconies which served as bedrooms by night and sitting or dining areas by day.

As was bound to occur, my face was slapped by a soaking wet towel hanging from a lower than usual line. This wake-up call served to return me to reality and to focus my attention on the task at hand - to assist in the immunization of the thousands of children just from this one sector. We returned to the central distribution center to receive our final instructions for the remainder of the day. At that point, I was assigned to serve at a school, along with three other American Rotarians. In addition, three local Rotarians joined us to introduce us to the local officials and the assistants who were in charge of each station. When the tables were arranged with all of the components for the clinic, women carrying babies and children carrying even smaller children - brothers and sisters - began to arrive, getting arranged in queues awaiting their turns. The young girls who acted as assistants with our group were probably thirteen to fifteen years of age and they were very serious about their tasks and duties. When a child moved to the front of the queue, one girl would ask, "Nam? Namkay?" and the child or guardian would answer with the child's name. The next girl would record the name of the child in a record book. The child, if old enough to understand the instructions would tip back his/her head, opening their mouths to accept these "two drops of life." Once the drops were administered, the next young girl dabbed a drop of gentian onto the finger and nail of the child as a means of identification for the door-to-door survey scheduled to be conducted the following day, as well as to prevent the child from going to another site or back to the same one for a second or third dose. The old adage "One is good, so two must be better" does not apply in the case for polio vaccinations, at least not given on the same day.

My first job was to place stickers on the shirts or dresses of the children who had received the vaccine. I had brought

along these dots for the children as a kind of badge for them to show other children and possibly encourage the other children to come to the clinics for getting the drops. Being one of four "white" people at the clinic, it was obvious to me that I was on display. I was certainly a curiosity to most people, even when walking through the streets and alleys with my Indian counterparts. I was an oddity and one which needed to be studied by many, particularly the parents.

After about a half hour of observation and sticker affixing, I indicated to the supervisor of the clinic that I was ready to provide the drops to the children and immediately was shuffled into that position. It is difficult to describe the feeling in print that I experienced when I reached out to a hesitant mother, inviting her to pass her infant to me. She looked deeply into my eyes and once satisfied, then entrusted her precious child to my care. I cradled the first little boy in my left arm and tried to be confident and reassuring to both the mother and child. Opening my own mouth, just as so many parents do to urge a child to do the same, I achieved no success. The "gentian girl" observed my predicament and reached over and squeezed the

baby's cheeks together ever so gently causing the baby's lips to pucker into the shape of a fish's mouth. Success! I was able to squeeze two tiny drops of vaccine into the waiting mouth. Noticing a different taste in his mouth, his lower lip quivered a bit and tears welled up in his eyes. He began to cry.

I attempted to comfort him, but the baby had a new taste in his mouth and was looking up into the face of a big white stranger.

I knew instinctively it was time to return to the mother, her perfect charge, and to focus my attention on the next waiting child.

It was necessary to maintain some kind of constant temperature for the vaccine and so following the administration of each dose of vaccine, I returned the vial to its icy cradle and waited until the next child appeared. I remained at this post for a solid half hour and just as I thought I would catch my breath for a moment, another wave of colorfully clad children arrived, some with siblings and some with a mother or father. One young, darker-skinned Indian woman arrived, wrapped in a bright marigold-colored sari, carrying her infant child. As I reached out to her and took her baby into my arms, I looked down at one of the most striking, yet unusual, infant faces I had ever encountered. This little girl, who could have been no more than two or three months old, had hauntingly beautiful eyes. Her mother had either tattooed or permanently stained what appeared to be black eye liner on the baby's lower eyelid. Imagine a dollop of chocolate sauce, swimming in a pool of white coconut milk, all framed by a jet-black line. This is what I saw.

***...women carrying babies and children carrying even smaller children....began to arrive, getting arranged in queues awaiting their turn.***



Most Indians do not practice this custom, but a few religious sects still perform this marking. Throughout the day, I saw at least another dozen girl children with the same markings.

About two hours into the clinic, I noticed a young boy of about four years of age erectly marching to the entrance to the clinic. He was stately in his bearing and very deliberate in his mission. He continued up the stairs and properly presented himself to the group. He placed both hands, palms down, onto the table for an inspection by the "gentian girl." He proudly announced his name and girl number two wrote it into the census data book. He then stood at attention, threw back his head and snapped open his jaws to reveal a pink tongue, which he stuck forward to catch the vaccine drops. No sooner had I administered the dose, but he turned on his heel and marched away through the gate opening in the wall.

The clinics continued until the latter part of the afternoon and I know I vaccinated from between two and three hundred children up to the age of five. A few times, I caught myself thinking about the others in the group and wondering if they were feeling the same as I. Before I left home some ten days before, a friend of mine asked that at some time during the N.I.D., when I dropped some vaccine onto the tongue of a small child, that I pause for a moment and think of her. Not only did I do this, but I also thought of those people I have known or whom I have met over the past twelve months who were afflicted with Polio or who had a relative who had been. I found myself thinking about my own religious beliefs, asking whether perhaps there was a reason why I was in India doing what I was doing. My thoughts then turned to the several religious denominations whose temples and mosques we had visited earlier in the week. All so many cultures and so many beliefs, but in a "something larger than we", whether it be temple gods or spirits or the Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer, one God, it all began to come together....that little by little over the past sixteen years, Rotary International, in cooperation with the World Health Organization, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, UNICEF and others, has been responsible for immunizing over two billion children against this ravaging disease. We are well on our way to our goal of the year 2005, but there are still millions left to immunize.

As I walked from the clinic site to the dispensary center, I marveled at what I saw. The atmosphere in the streets had radically changed while I was inside. The sky enveloping this sector of the city had changed from a yellow-gray hue to a dusty tannish-blue. The city had come alive almost symbolically as these children were each given a reprieve with this vaccine. In the streets where sleeping dogs had been lying, booths had been set up with their owners offering myriad of products –

*All so many cultures and beliefs, but something larger than we.....*

from lock sets to scrap iron, from auto parts to shoes, from bags of rice to freshly dyed "true blue" strips of fabric neatly hung over the fence in the median of the road for sun drying. The produce offered for sale was of all nature and color and texture – apples, oranges, figs, dates, white radishes, carrots, something that looked very much like rhubarb stocks and so much more. I walked past local butcher shops and at one, a gentleman was sitting on the front stoop of his shop holding a filleting knife between his two bare feet while he skillfully worked to strip the fat away from the meat. Then against a white-washed wall, someone had placed a mirror with a chair in front of it. This was the location of one of hundreds of local barbers who were cutting the hair or shaving the faces of their customers for all to see. Men and women tended their spices and herbs, all with various hues and scents. Just then a mother dog with six suckling pups scooted around a puddle and disappeared down a side alley. Two boys of about ten or twelve were working hard to cut a log with a two-man crosscut saw and doing it superbly. Around another corner, older boys played their version of cricket while the neighborhood ox settled down

for a rest in the afternoon sun. Up the street four young boys shrieked in delight at the success of one who had shot his marble closest to the mark and then collected the marbles of the others in the game. Did I mention that each and every shop was

garnished with a fresh necklace of gold and orange marigolds?

In an effort to put some perspective on this entire project, I must relate my visit to three places – the **Jaipur Foot Clinic** (supported by local Rotary clubs); **AKSHAY PRATISHTHAN**, a school catering to children who are physically challenged; and finally, **Saint Stephen's Hospital** in New Delhi.

At the **Jaipur Foot Clinic**, I watched in amazement as a man in his late twenties was fitted for a prosthesis for his right leg and foot. In 1987, he had been the victim of a horrible auto accident and his leg had been severed above the knee. It was not until a few weeks ago that he heard about the **Jaipur Foot Clinic** and had come to learn about this wonderful facility. Not having walked for nearly fourteen years, the young man was fitted with the part that would cover his upper leg. Then the lower leg was molded and the Jaipur Foot attached. Then came the calipers, which would serve to hinge the new leg for ease in sitting, standing or walking. Within a matter of hours, this young man was able to stand, tentatively assisted by the use of his cane, for the first time in over thirteen years.

At the school, **AKSHAY PRATISHTHAN**, the founder and still principal explained her philosophy for teaching children who are physically challenged. She first refuses to use the term "handicap"; next, she makes sure that all of her classes are totally integrated with the expected students who might have some difficulty and fifty percent are what we might refer to as normal. We visited one room of kindergartners and I had taken tiny bottles of bubbles with me in hopes of bringing



some joy and some smiles to the faces of these children. At first, they were very skeptical, but after a few goes at it, I produced a long stream of iridescent spheres that floated across the room and landed "Oops, right on her shoulder." Once I had totally disrupted the class, I knew it was my time to leave and to move to another room full of unsuspecting students. We observed as pairs of young boys worked in a woodworking shop, cutting, assembling and sanding down some frames for tables. We were then presented with a nice lunch put on by the students on their parade ground. This presentation was a fabulous one, showing tips of traffic and pedestrian safety. A great group of youngsters who had marched straight into the hearts of the Rotarians who were there to observe. One girl of about thirteen years was walking, marching, and running with her classmates, but she only had one leg. Attached to her "other" leg, was the Jaipur Foot with calipers serving as the hinging mechanism.

Finally, we visited **Saint Stephen's Hospital**. While there, we were met and educated about post-polio corrective and reconstructive surgery. We visited a ward where all ten beds were occupied by patients from six to twenty years. We watched as one specialist gently held the withered leg of a fifteen-year old girl. He then moved across the ward to another victim. Later we saw a video about the hospital in which we followed the progress of one young girl. She had contracted polio at a young age and then came to Saint Stephen's to reshape her left leg. She was left with a hip frozen at ninety degrees and the knee of that leg frozen at one hundred ten degrees. At the end of the film, we observed as this young girl, with a now straightened leg, was working on strength-building exercises and would soon be able to run, skip and jump.

The perspective about all of this came to me when I learned that my wife had fallen after I left on my journey and had slipped on some ice, fallen and bruised her coccyx and fractured the tibia in her left leg in four places. She had not wished me to know of her accident, so as not to cause any stress in my life. Did I mention that I am married to a saint???

What is more important is the notion that unlike the children of Saint Stephen's, my wife's leg will mend and with some physical therapy, she will be right again and will not be scarred...physically or emotionally. On the other side of the world and on the other side of the coin, these youngsters may have suffered irreparable damage to their physical being, but also their self-assurance and self-esteem. I cannot imagine being relegated to hop or crawl or to use a wheeled platform to get from place to place. With the help of institutions like the Jaipur Foot Clinic and the school and Saint Stephen's Hospital, maybe at least the lucky ones will suffer a little less for a shorter period of time. How very fortunate my wife is to have the chance to

completely recover, where so many children and adults who have been victims of polio or accidents causing amputation will never see the day when they can stand or walk or run or drive again.

We ask the question, "Do we have the right to travel around the globe, participating in such clinics as National Immunization Days? Do we have the right to support programs such as Rotaplast, where children who have been born with cleft lip or cleft palate have their faces restored saving or positively altering their lives? Should we become involved with programs like FRIENDS FOREVER, where we bring young people from Northern Ireland to our states for two weeks and try to help them understand that living in peace is desirable? Do we have the right to send teams to all corners of the earth on Group Study Exchanges, to learn about the cultures of those

countries? We not only have the right, but we also have the responsibility to make that positive difference. We seek no rewards or special recognition. We realize **OUR** satisfaction when dropping two drops of vaccine onto the tongues

of tiny tots or helping to bring happiness to the faces of more children or older men and women who might never walk or run or even smile without our intervention.

The city of Delhi – both Old and New – awakened my senses. It made me aware and as each of us experienced the wonders of this country and its "always to be pleasing" population, we maintained our awareness of Polio and of Rotary International. We took action to assure those who follow that Rotary, in conjunction with the World Health Organization and UNICEF, working together, will eradicate Polio from the face of the earth by the year 2005.

In the words from the Bhagavad Gita, "*My business being with deeds alone, not with the fruits the deeds may yield, let me do what my duty is and to inaction not submit.*"

En route to India, I visited in London for a few days and had an opportunity to see the newest Andrew Lloyd Webber show. Ben Elton wrote the lyrics. The name of the show is **THE BEAUTIFUL GAME** and it tells the continuing conflict in Northern Ireland, using European football (soccer) as the vehicle.

In closing, I would like to share the lyrics from the *finale*, noting that these words succinctly speak to the mission of The Rotary Foundation – that promoting World Understanding and Peace.

"People need love, that's what we live for.  
Now is the time, it's not too late.  
We have to love, try to forgive more.  
No child was ever born to hate.  
No child was ever born to hate.  
I will strive for peace with all my might.  
That's what's right."

***Rotary will eradicate Polio  
from the face of the earth by  
the year 2005.***







## Windham Rotary Ice Fishing Tournament

Excerpts taken from "the Maine Sportsman" by Gerald E. Wolfe

The Windham Rotary Club is all set to sponsor its first annual Sebago Lake Togue Derby on February 24 and 25. Cash prizes from the two-day event will total a whopping \$10,000, and Tom Noonan, Rotary Club president and chairman of the fishing tournament, expects a large turnout.

Tom said that the net proceeds from the derby will go into a trust for charitable contributions to Camp Sunshine at Point Sebago and the Maine Children's Cancer Fund. Maine's Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (DIF&W) will also get a small portion of the proceeds to purchase additional equipment for their hydro acoustics boat for further smelt studies on Sebago and her watershed lakes.

Tom worked closely with John Boland, Region A fisheries biologist for the DIF&W in Gray, to work out a category of prizes that would be fair to all entrants, including the many youngsters that are expected to participate. They also want to keep the interest and excitement going to the last hour and insure that all fish caught will be brought to the weigh-in.

### Prize Breakdown

Sebago is off-limits to ice-fishing for salmon and trout. Togue (lake trout) will be the only fish eligible for consideration in the derby. Fish will be judged by weight with the angler catching the largest togue of the tournament winning \$5,000. Second place will receive \$1,000 and 3rd place will get \$500.

Here is where it gets interesting. The angler catching the 25th heaviest fish of the tournament will be awarded \$500, 50th heaviest \$500 and 75th heaviest \$500, while the 100th heaviest togue will receive \$2,000. This system also insures a level playing field for the experienced ice-fisher and the novice alike, and should keep everyone running to the weigh-in stations all day long. In addition to the cash prizes, one lucky entrant may be eligible to win a new pickup truck from Sebago Lake Chevrolet.

### Registration Weigh-In

Entry fee for individuals is \$30. For a family, it is \$50 and includes all children under 18. There will be four stations around Sebago for registering and weighing in fish (see locations at right). All ice-fishing laws presently in effect apply. There is a two-line limit on Sebago.

Participants should make plans accordingly. Day-long parking will be at a premium at the weigh-in sites, so if you have friends on the lake, or can find places to park in the areas of the lake you intend to fish, it will be to your advantage.

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## DISTRICT SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

### FEBRUARY

- 18-20 International Institute - Anaheim, CA
- 18-25 International Assembly - Anaheim, CA
- 23 96th Anniversary of Rotary
- 23 World Understanding and Peace Day

### MARCH

- 12-18 World Rotaract Week
- 15-17 Northeast Multi-District P.E.T.S.
- 24 Interact District Conference
- Somersworth, NH Club Host

### APRIL 2001

- 5 Outbound GSE Team leaves for Turkey
- 15 Presidential Citation forms due at RI
- 19 Paul Harris' 133rd birthday, 1868
- 21 Outbound GSE Team leaves for Africa
- 24 Rotary Awareness Day
- 25 District Assembly - Eastland Park Hotel

### MAY 2001

- 6 Outbound GSE Team returns from Turkey
- 17-20 District Conference - Spruce Point Inn, Boothbay Harbor, ME
- 18 Inbound GSE Team arrives from Turkey
- 18 Inbound GSE Team arrives from Africa
- 28 Outbound GSE Team returns from Africa

### JUNE 2001

- 18 Inbound GSE Team returns to Africa
- 19 Inbound GSE Team returns to Turkey
- 24-27 Rotary International Convention - San Antonio, TX
- 30 Rotary Year ends

## Windham Rotary Club Ice-Fishing Togue Tournament February 24 & 25, 2001 Time: 7 am to 4 pm

### Weigh-In Stations:

Raymond Beach in Raymond, off Rte 302 by new boat launch  
Camp Sunshine at Point Sebago off Rte 302 in Casco  
Nason's Beach Campground off Rte 114 in North Sebago  
Sebago Lake Station, Intersection Rte 35 & 114 in Standish



## District 7780 Attendance and Membership

Club	Members at Start of year	Members This report	Gain/Loss Year-to-date	Percent Attendance
Bath	61	57	-4	78%
Bath Sunrise	20	19	-1	91%
Bethel	39	35	-4	77%
Biddeford-Saco	64	N/R		
Boothbay Harbor	56	N/R		
Bridgton-Lake Reg	21	N/R		
Brunswick	121	122	1	78%
Brunswick Coastal	16	N/R		
Casco Bay Sunrise	30	32	2	69%
Damar-New Castle	48	N/R		
Dover	78	N/R		
Durham-Great Bay	57	57	0	75%
Exeter	42	N/R		
Freeport	36	41	5	63%
Fryeburg Area	26	23	-3	75%
Hampton	61	N/R		
Kennebunk	86	85	-1	82%
Kennebunk Portside	39	36	-3	91%
Kittery	24	26	2	76%
Newburyport	74	78	4	55%
Ogunquit	36	N/R		
Oxford Hills	63	60	-3	83%
Portland	189	189	0	74%
Portsmouth	246	253	7	76%
Portsmouth Sunrise	30	30	0	76%
Rochester	77	74	-3	71%
Rumford	38	37	-1	71%
Saco Bay	66	71	5	80%
Sanford-Springvale	60	54	-6	74%
Scarborough	27	24	-3	82%
Seabrook-Hampton Falls	20	16	-4	60%
Somersworth	24	N/R		
South Berwick	43	46	3	78%
So. Portland-Cape Eliz.	52	56	4	74%
Wells	53	48	-5	74%
Westbrook-Gorham	42	39	-3	63%
Windham	39	40	1	90%
Yarmouth	38	N/R		
York	63	N/R		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2205</b>			

\*N/R indicates no report was submitted

## World Understanding and Peace Dinner

by Sarah Luck



District Governor Elias Thomas III

The District's annual World Understanding and Peace Dinner for 2001 was held on February 10, at the Portland Club in Portland.

Organized by the Chair of the World Community

Service Committee, Sarah Luck, the evening began with wine and cheese at the Center for Cultural Exchange in Portland's Longfellow Square. A recently renovated building houses what has become a multi-cultural focal point for the many refugee and immigrant communities in the area. Educational and entertainment programs involving music, dance, story telling and cuisine take place regularly at the Center. The almost 100 in attendance, including Rotarians and friends from around the District, members of the Group Study Exchange teams for Africa and Brazil, as well as an exchange student, were treated to song and dance performances provided by the Sudanese community.

Afterwards, a buffet dinner at the Portland Club, home of the Portland Rotary Club, was served, followed by a moving presentation by District Governor Elias Thomas. He spoke about his recent trip to India for our participation in the last National Immunization Day in support of Polio Plus. All were mesmerized by the recounting of his experiences and inspired by his dedication to the world community through Rotary and its opportunities for service. Colorful flags from around the world adorned the dining room and tables and provided for a festive atmosphere.

Please feel free to join with the World Community Service Committee at its next meeting on Thursday, April 12, 2001 at 6:00 p.m. at the Panda Garden in Portland. You can learn more about WCS projects around the District, and get helpful information (or inspiration) for your club's projects.

Please contact Sarah Luck for further info (207) 761-2440.

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The tournament committee has established a toll-free number to provide up-to-date information about the tournament at 1-866-375-FISH.

Venturing too far onto Sebago lake is never a good idea, nor is it really necessary. The best ice-fishing is generally found where forage abounds in a 400-500 yard border running around the shoreline of the lake. Early in the morning and late afternoon usually provide the best action. Generally to go move deeper when the sun is high, but a deep snow cover or a heavy overcast can provide steady action all day long.

Sebago grows her fish big, and to go in the 20-pound class are taken here each year, so rig your tackle accordingly.





# CONFERENCE 2001

"First District Conference of the New Millennium"



May 17 through May 20, 2001

District 7780 Conference 2001

to be held at the

**SPRUCE POINT INN**

Boothbay Harbor, Maine.

*This conference will be the greatest opportunity to mix and mingle,  
share ideas and forge friendships!*

*There will be many activities to cause laughter and create memories.*

***We encourage you to start making your plans and register today!  
Your registration fee is ONLY \$45.00 per person.***

***Contact your club President for complete information and registration forms.***

There will be limited seating at the special events we are planning – and they will be available on a first-come, first-served basis.

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