



A journal of the triumphs and despairs of the philosophies and failings of the future and the past of Rotary District 7780 in the years two thousand and two thousand and one



THE ORACLE

November, 2000

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THE ORACLE is a monthly publication of Rotary International District 7780 for the Rotary year 2000-2001. Its editorial purpose is to reinspire Rotarians to the spirit of philosophical idealism and inquiry into service as the key to success and happiness in life, that were strongly evident in the founding years of Rotary at the start of the last century. Articles contributing to these themes are welcome and need to be received by the 15th of the month prior to the month of publication. Call (603) 679-5443 or write The Oracle, 234 North Road, Fremont, NH 03044

HOW TO TAKE ACTION

Take Action. That is the business end of the Rotary International theme for this Rotary year. Sounds simple enough. Take action. Do something. But is it so simple? What does it mean to Take Action? And in particular, how do we take effective action? All of us have had experiences, in Rotary, in business, or in life, where we did something, took some action, and the result was a dud. Or perhaps even worse, a fiasco. Are we willing today to take action we would have considered when we were younger? Or have we become jaded and cynical? Perhaps so jaded we no longer see the possibility that an organization such as Rotary could have a significant impact on the problems of modern times. Oh sure, we could have an impact on this little problem or that, but as regards the really big issues, truly altering the human condition in some fundamental way, well not now and not us.

Or, some readers may have truly found something to be passionate about in Rotary, something that once again lights the fires of idealism. Assistant Governor Bridget Burns has, in the Rotoplast project. Ask her to talk about it and you will see. Whatever your passion, would it not be helpful to know a little more about what Take Action means? Does it mean to do random things, anything rather than nothing? Actually that is not a

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DISTRICT 7780 ATTENDANCE AND MEMBERSHIP

<i>Club</i>	<i>Members on 7/1/2000</i>	<i>Gain/Loss year to date</i>	<i>Members this report</i>	<i>Percent Attendance</i>
<i>Bath Sunrise</i>	20	-4	16	91%
<i>Windham</i>	39	-3	36	90%
<i>York</i>	63	-2	61	88%
<i>Oxford Hills</i>	63	-1	62	86%
<i>Somersworth</i>	24	4	28	86%
<i>South Berwick</i>	43	2	45	86%
<i>Kennebunk Portside</i>	39	-2	37	85%
<i>Bethel</i>	39	-1	38	84%
<i>Exeter</i>	42	2	44	84%
<i>Fryeburg Area</i>	26	-3	23	84%
<i>Scarborough</i>	27	-3	24	83%
<i>Bath</i>	61	-1	60	79%
<i>So. Portland-Cape Elizabeth</i>	52	1	53	79%
<i>Yarmouth</i>	38	3	41	76%
<i>Durham-Greatbay</i>	57		57	75%
<i>Portsmouth Sunrise</i>	30	-1	29	73%
<i>Westbrook-Gorham</i>	42	-2	40	72%
<i>Rochester</i>	77	-2	75	70%
<i>Ogunquit</i>	36	-2	34	69%
<i>Boothbay Harbor</i>	56	-5	51	67%
<i>Portland</i>	199	-8	191	64%
<i>Kennebunk</i>	86	3	89	63%
<i>Seabrook-Hampton Falls</i>	20	-4	16	60%
<i>Biddeford-Saco</i>	64			
<i>Bridgton-Lake Region</i>	21	-1	20	
<i>Brunswick</i>	121	1	122	
<i>Brunswick Coastal</i>	16	-3	13	
<i>Casco Bay Sunrise</i>	30	2	32	
<i>Damariscotta-Newcastle</i>	48	-3	45	
<i>Dover</i>	78	3	81	
<i>Freeport</i>	36			
<i>Hampton</i>	61	-4	57	
<i>Kittery</i>	25		25	
<i>Newburyport</i>	74	3	77	
<i>Portsmouth</i>	249	3	252	
<i>Rumford</i>	38	-2	36	
<i>Saco Bay</i>	66	3	69	
<i>Sanford-Springvale</i>	60	-7	53	
<i>Wells</i>	53	-3	50	
TOTALS	2219	-37		78%

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☛ *from Action, page I*

bad starting point, but more on that later.

In this article we take a novel look at the question of action – what it means for human beings to take action and to do so with effect and impact. The conclusion we will come to is unusual and quite contrary to common sense or to what we were taught in school. The basis for what we write here is rigorous, but little known outside certain unusual academic disciplines and outside of the circles of power that have discovered them. Indeed one could spend the equivalent of the cost of a college education to learn the insights shared on these pages. Top corporations do this for their best people, so do top intelligence agencies. But the general public does not, neither do the schools, partly because the powerful make a deliberate effort to conceal what is here being revealed, and partly due to people's natural prejudice against anything that does not immediately assimilate into their already always way of looking at the world.

This article contains enough to get anyone who gives the matter some serious thought and practice a good start at unmistakably and remarkably increasing the effectiveness of their actions in the world – be it in Rotary, in business, or in personal life. Of course, few readers will actually experience this benefit. Most of us will find it preposterous that a Rotary District newsletter could actually contain anything of life-changing value. They never have before, have they, so that proves it. Or some of us are so overwhelmed with keeping up with life that we haven't any time to seriously read and think and learn how we might keep up with life better, let alone get ahead of it. Or some of us may have the world and how it works already figured out so, naturally, we needn't learn any-

thing new. Besides, we might look foolish. Or whatever. But it is possible that one or two readers will see the value of what is here offered and, in time, their lives will become even more powerful, significant and influential than they are today.

So, now that most of the readers have stopped and put their Oracles in the recycling pile, the two or three of us that are left can get down to business. What is action, and how do we take it effectively? The answer (for human beings, not animals) is surprisingly simple. Action is language. This is so because language creates reality. The purpose of action is to alter, to impact reality. By learning to use language in a new way (actually an old but largely ignored or forgotten way) you can alter reality to suit your purpose.

The common, everyday understanding about language is that it communicates about reality. Reality exists out there and we use language to describe it or comment about it. Our new view rejects this notion and says instead that when we speak we are not commenting on or observing at all, instead we are bringing about, creating, the state of affairs contained in our utterance. Let us consider an example where this is clearly so. Most of us are or have been married, and if not we certainly know people who are. How do you get married? What is the action, the deed that results in a state of marriage? After a little reflection, we can see that it is the uttering of two words, said in an appropriate circumstance. The words are

I do

What sort of a thing is this to say? It is not a description, not a statement analogous to "The necktie is red". It is certainly not an

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A CHOICE OF ACTIONS

by Elias Thomas

About forty years ago, I asked my father to help me solve a particular mathematics problem. Over the years, he had helped my older sisters when they got stumped and so after dinner, we sat in the living room and worked on the solution together. When I arrived at the answer, and then did a couple of more problems using the methods he had taught me, I was pleased. The following day, I passed in my assignment and my teacher checked the work and then asked me to demonstrate how I had arrived at the solution. When I wrote out the solution on the blackboard in front of the class, he proceeded to explain that although I had arrived at the correct answer, I had done it all wrong and he refused to give me credit for my work. I had not followed the method taught in the textbook, but had still arrived at the correct answer.

During my visits to many of the Clubs in the District, I have been asked to elaborate upon my hopes for accomplishments for Rotary in our District. These have included membership growth and retention, involvement in community and international projects, sponsorship of Interact Clubs, and support of our Rotary Foundation. I realize that some of my hopes and goals may be considered ambitious, and in some minds, absolutely unattainable. However, I disagree with those who offer negative responses. As a matter of fact, I tell the nay sayers that they must not know the same Rotarians that I know in our District, because the Rotarians I know have never shied away from any challenge in the past.

How do you want us to raise \$100 per member? What project do you want our Club to

become involved with internationally? How do you want us to get new members? What is your plan? These are four questions, which I am frequently asked and my response is very simple. Every day, as Jane and I meet more and more Rotarians in District 7780, my admiration for each of you increases, and my respect grows exponentially. Most of all, however, my trust builds each day, and I can say with confidence, There IS no particular plan and there IS no right way. Rather, each one of us has ideas we are eager to share with our fellow Rotarians and which should be acknowledged, and perhaps adapted, but that certainly should be tried. I have faith and trust that we will markedly increase our membership in District 7780 during our year of service. I have faith and trust that many of our Clubs will be directly involved with sponsorship of an Interact Club. I have faith and trust that our goal of \$100 per member (translating into \$200,000 in Annual Giving to the Rotary Foundation) will be reached and surpassed. However, I would not presume to tell you the right way to achieve any of these goals.

In membership development and retention, you may choose to sponsor a Rotary Awareness Social at your Club with no strings attached or you may divide your Clubs into groups of four or five members with a goal of each group to bring in one new member every three months. You may choose to do a classification survey or consult the Yellow Pages in your telephone directory. You may choose to sponsor a Fireside Chat. Each of these methods works, but not for everyone.

Already, there are five Clubs in the District who are looking to sponsor an Interact Club in their areas. One Club is interested in sponsoring an Interact in the community,

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TAKING ACTION IN ROTARY

By Peter Johnson

This month I'd like to use this space to talk a little about the context of TAKING ACTION within Rotary, and I'd like to share three specific examples. I speak frequently about the need to maintain the vitality of each Club and not take its presence in the community for granted. It's also important to remember that Clubs need to be asked and sometimes challenged to attack specific needs.

I was reminded recently of a great success story. Remember the horrid flooding in Mozambique earlier this year, with the nightly news pictures of people hanging on for dear life to trees and outcroppings? A member of Brunswick Coastal was in South Africa at the time. When attending a local Club he learned that they had access to a helicopter and a pilot, but no money for fuel. He sends a e-mail to his Club President, who forwards it on to the District Governor, who forwards it on to 39 Club Presidents. Result of this specific request to meet a specific need? One week later that helicopter, believed to be the first out-of-country resource deployed into Mozambique, was literally picking people out of treetops. This is Rotary in Action at its finest. Think of the implications if the ONE man who started this chain was not in Rotary because his town had no Club, or had quit because his Club lacked vibrancy? Better yet, remember the results because one man TOOK ACTION.

Another TAKE ACTION story I like is Governor Elias' effort to Hit a Homerun for the Homeless with our District outing at the Seadogs Game. You know the story: Rotary banners flying everywhere, \$16,000 raised, and thousands of pounds of food delivered. But here's the rest of (a part) of

the story: Elias' goal was to raise money for homeless shelters around the District. One of those shelters operates 7 apartments for homeless families. In talking with the manager (also a Rotarian), he learned that one of the things they needed was new mattresses. Rather than just write a check for the \$1250 designated for that home, he started pounding the phones and found a mattress manufacturer willing to provide the items at a price probably only a Rotarian District Governor could have negotiated. Its all about setting a goal with specific targets in mind, and using the leverage of Rotary to maximize the results.

Rotary provides many things to many people. Most of our newer Rotarians do not realize the importance a perfect attendance record has to many of long-term members. Most of these people will talk about the ideas and enthusiasm they have brought to their own Club as a function of visiting others, but there's another important aspect. When a perfect attendance person is missing, I can practically guarantee that absence is noted, and all assume a make-up is happening. Miss a second week, however, and if the reason is not known, doesn't someone in the Club always TAKE ACTION to call that Rotarian's home to inquire, not about missing a meeting, but about the Rotarian's health? This is the local Club becoming an extended family to its member, and what a comforting thought this is in our modern society of scattered families and non-social neighborhoods. This is the type of action that builds, not from Presidential leadership, but from individual leadership looking to help each other. Wouldn't it be terrific if we each TOOK ACTION to call our non-perfect attendees just to let them know they are missed, not for attendance reporting percentages, but because we care?

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☛ from *Action*, page III

offhand comment. No, it is an example of what linguists call a declaration. The technical definition of a declaration is "a statement that alters reality, that is based on no evidence and that is true only by virtue of it being the speaker's word". This is certainly the case for the person saying *I do*. Because of it their and their partners lives are forever changed. New family and friendships will be formed that otherwise would not have been, houses will be bought or built that would not otherwise have been, career choices will be altered, and children may be born that otherwise would not have been and other children will never be born that otherwise might have been.

It is important to notice that, in standing in front of the alter, one has a moment of free choice, in which one holds one's entire future in one's hands, or more precisely, on one's lips. One could of course have said "I don't". Physically one could say this. There would be consequences; the in-laws would be upset, one probably wouldn't get to go to the reception. But one could say that. And if you did, you would not be married.

Or one could say "I do" but then turn to the guests and say "But it probably won't last. I already don't like my mother-in-law and figure my wife will gain weight like she has. I'll give my wife a chance, sure, but God help her if she nags or fools around." Naturally, most people don't say this at such a time. If they did, it would undermine the marriage right from the start. But how many people think it? Or more to the point, how many of us undermine our own or other people's declarations with negative speaking?

Or take another example of a declaration:

We hold these truths to be self evident, that all

men are created equal and are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these rights are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

History tells us that there was nothing self-evident at all about these truths at the time the Declaration of Independence was drafted. No one believed them. The framers created them! They altered reality, created a country, by their words. Such is the power of language.

Now here's the catch. Bold declarations shape new reality. But to have the new reality stick, you have to honor your word. Otherwise you have merely made idle chatter. In marriage, you have to live up to your vows. In starting a revolution we have to back up our words with our "lives, liberty and sacred honor".

Most of us are reluctant to give our word to a cause unless we have evidence beforehand that the outcome is certain. That is fine, but it means that most of us will have little positive impact on the world. The way to change the world is to give your word to a noble outcome that is far from certain, to throw your words ahead of yourself, as it were, and then live in a manner consistent with your word. People who do this live outside the usual comfortable circle of ordinary existence. Sometimes (usually much later) they are admired as movers and shakers and buildings and holidays are named in their honor. The rest of us live cautiously, in mutual collusion not to ridicule each other for failing to live up to the promise of our existence.

The way to take action is this:

Make bold declarations and then live as your word.

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THE PHANTOM ROTARIAN

If there were a perfect score, it would go to the Kennebunk Thursday noontime Club. Our visit there was a delight from beginning to end.

First is the setting, the Boathouse, which is a charming restaurant right on the water. The Club meets upstairs in a bright sunfilled room with wonderful water view. Second, members go out of their way to greet guests and make them feel welcome. The food was very good starting with an excellent salad featuring a variety of greens and home-made croutons. Our meal was a choice of turkey or grilled fish. There was also dessert which in this case was a bread pudding.

We attended a business meeting in which the Community Service Director summarized the Club's activities and accomplishments. The number and quality of activities in this Club is overwhelming. They have amassed an endowment of almost \$300,000. They do Christmas parties for underprivileged children and for elderly shut-ins. They have a Christmas tree recycling program, a chicken barbeque, and raffle off a jeep. Now they have started a road race. The chairman of the road race committee explained that he has created a web page where people can sign up and also pay online! He asked the Club which charity the race should support. And here was the extraordinary thing. After mentioning a few charities, members said – look, you're the chairman, we trust you, you decide! In the entire meeting, there was not one single naysaying or positional comment, just positive support for the Club's programs. Remarkable.

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rather than affiliating with one high school. One Club, where there is already an Interact Club is planning to sponsor an early Acti-Club, in a middle school, to act as a feeder system for Interact in a few years. One new Rotarian is working to sponsor an Interact Club for kids on the inside, where youth in our District, who are incarcerated in correctional facilities, will be encouraged to follow the ideals of Rotary and focus their leadership abilities toward more productive ends. Each of these ideas is a great one, but no one idea is better than another.

Finally, with respect to our commitment to the Rotary Foundation, some Clubs are already assessing each member \$100.00 per year for Annual Giving. Some Clubs are matching a member's contribution of \$50.00 with a like amount from the Club's treasury. One Club is asking each member to bring in pocket change each week for the year, in hopes that the amount totals at least \$100 per member. Another Club is asking each member to voluntarily contribute \$2.00 each week, when arriving at their meetings. One Club is using the cup-and-a-half of coffee idea, reminding us that to reach the goal of \$100.00 for the year, amounts to a cup-and-a-half of coffee each week for a year. Again, there IS no right way.

One of the wonderful aspects of Rotary International is that it provides the vehicle by which each of us can pursue an idea or a dream, while enjoying fellowship, and in the end MAKING A DIFFERENCE, a positive difference, in the lives of those who need our help. Think about the tremendous impact each of us can have, when we pool our thoughts, our time, our talents and our treasure for the betterment of others.

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NOMINATIONS SOUGHT FOR DISTRICT OFFICERS

Clubs are encouraged to submit nominations for District Governor for 2003-2004 and members of the District Budget Committee for 2001-2004 and 2002-2005.

Qualifications for District Governor can be found in the Manual of Procedure and include membership in a Rotary Club for at least seven years prior to taking office, serving a full term as Club President, and being willing and physically able to carry out the duties of District Governor.

The Budget Committee member must be a Past President of a Club in Oxford or York County for the 2001-2004 term and a Past President of a Club in Cumberland, Lincoln or Sagadahoc County for the term 2002-2005. Nominations must be forwarded to DG Elias prior to January 15, 2001. Interested Rotarians are encouraged to call DG Elias for more details.

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