

44. Rotary Clubs

I was first invited into the Rotary Club in Trail, B.C. by Dr. Robert H. Brisco in 1967.

Rotary is a service club that had been started in the USA and spread through the World. In every community, representatives in each profession, business or related occupation are recommended to the club in that area, as members. The process is usual that that a member is invited to:

1. Attend the six (6) areas of service, committee meetings. When attendance can be confirmed all these “obligatory” meetings, then the next step is to be inducted.
2. Usual Rotary work in an area involves raising money as well as offering volunteers service to:
 - a. Construct seniors’ projects
 - b. Construct any needy project that needs support in order to stimulate development. That usually involves raising money so that a substantial amount of local interest can be established before a government will consider funding the balance. Examples
 - i. The Jubilee Place in Trail
 - ii. Rotary housing in Castlegar
 - iii. Rotary Parks
 - iv. Many thousands of trees planted in Warfield and Trail to stimulate “greening” after the fertilizer plant was completed at Warfield and the Sulfur Dioxide was traded for fertilizer and “acid rain” ceased to decimate the vegetation.
 - c. The local Club will belong to a District and a district will be represented into an area so that eventually membership in Rotary International will take place. Examples here are:
 - i. Polio Plus was an international campaign that raised about 1/3 of the required funding matched by World Health to fund the eradication of Polio in the World
 1. Volunteers were also provided to administer vaccines
 - a. In Afghanistan, for instance, both sides were approached for a “cease fire” so that all people may be vaccinated. A 3-day total time was allocated, and an “army” came in to administrate the vaccine. As they left the country, the guns and rockets started firing again.
 2. Doctors volunteered to operate on people who had been handicapped by Polio. In one instance a doctor recounted the story of a “crawler” who had crawled some 100 miles on his hands and knees, in Rwanda to get treatment which usually involved three (3) sequential operations. About 15 year later, this same Doctor was back again operating on others when a young man introduced him to his young wife and a son and daughter. “I was the ‘Crawler’ that you first assisted and now I am a School Teacher, and this is my wife, a Nurse. We named our children after your wife and you as a tribute for what you did to help me at my time of real need.” There was 600 Rotarians in attendance at this convention in Seattle and there was not a dry eye in the Hall.
3. It was through Rotary that I was able to be on a first name basis with all the Executives at Cominco at that time, the Bank Managers and about 70 members in Trail. So, it was also good for business.

I was recommended by Cominco Engineering to complete all the deficiencies left by Dawson Homes in Elkford. That was the start of Verigin Industries Ltd in a new “theatre”.

Rotary is misunderstood by many as a “Rich Man’s Club”, and it is true that many of the World’s affluent belong to Rotary but that is also the ‘conduit’ for contribution in organizational and fund-raising skills.

It was necessary to speak at a meeting and in the late 1960s, I was very shy to speak but I can attribute Rotary to provide me with my ability to confidently address an audience and make substantial presentations. It also gave me the ability to be recognized as a president in the many organizations that I have listed in my ‘Journey through a Life of Opportunity’.

When a Rotarian travels, he is able to attend meetings wherever a Club may meet. For instance, I attended meetings in Fiji, Saskatoon, and many other cities.

The following is a list of various clubs where I held positions and attended meetings as I moved around with my business career:

A) President of Trail Rotary

I left the Trail Club in 1984 after 17 years, to administrate the Marbella Pacific Construction Ltd projects starting with Expo ’86. I returned to the Kootenays in 1993 and was immediately invited to ‘come back’ to Trail Rotary. By this time Rotary International had lost a court case that would permit females to enter the Rotary Clubs.

It matters little whether I agreed with this change, but Marilyn had difficulty with me attending a fishing weekend with my Rotary friends at Crawford Bay when she found out that some female members were also invited. So, Rotary changed as suddenly it was not good to ‘punch’ a fellow Rotarian in the chest, if you know what I mean. So, everything changed even if the females were great Rotarians. So it was that Trail Rotary needed stimulation. I went on the Board and eventually became VP followed by President.

I succumbed to a ‘Rotary acceptable’ radical approach by some of the Trail female members, in a number of disciplines and when I protested, and referenced the Rotary ways, I was accused of being discriminatory of the female member, so after a year as President I left the Trail Club, disappointed.



I was recognized in Trail for the years of service with a contribution by the Club to Rotary International of \$1,000 to the Paul Harris Fund. Paul Harris was the original Founder of Rotary in the 1920s. (see below)

There were always the early arrivals at the Trail noon meetings. They were long time older members and would organize 50 – 50 fund raisers, set out the USA and Canadian flags, bring out the podium, set up the microphone and many of the other essentials,

I nick-named them the Viagrans and so Joe Kobluk (original CJAT Broadcaster and Special Member of the KSCU Head Office). Joe created tribute to me and “allowed” me to become a member of the Trail Rotary Viagra and Coffee Club. The hallowed signatories included people such as:

- a. Joe Kobluk
- b. Dr Barss Dimock
- c. Jim Gray
- d. Dr Peter Morgenthaler
- e. Marc Marcolin
- f. Jim Cameron



Of course, I was deeply honored as the gesture would go down in infamy!

B) Paul Harris Award



C) Vancouver Club

The Vancouver Club has about 350 members strong and met at the Hotel Vancouver. It was closet to me when our offices were located on Mainland near the Expo '86 site. Although I served on many committees and did run several meetings, I never did rise to an executive position. Perhaps a disappointing event was that a Rotarian should never sit at the same table in succession but move around in a "Rotary Way". This one time I sat at one of the 80 tables and this Rotarian came and stood by my side. I got up and shook his hand and introduced myself and sat down. The man still stood there, and I realized that I was "sitting in his chair".

What an awakening! So, I stood up, excused myself and moved on. A very unusual occurrence in Rotary.



D) New Westminster Club

I was searching for a club nearest the Scott Road location and was advised to try the New Westminister Club. This proved much further than the North Delta Club and so after a few meetings I moved to the North Delta Club.

E) North Delta Club

After completion of Expos '86 projects, Marbella Pacific Construction West Ltd moved their offices to the second floor at about 2500 Scott Road in North Delta. It was easier for me to attend meetings of the North Delta Club that met in a hotel in a Shopping Center about 65th Avenue, North Delta.

The Club decided to fund and erect all the playground equipment at a new park created just East of the access highway to the newly constructed Alex Fraser Bridge. The idea was good, but implementation became a challenge when the Municipal workers in Delta challenged this gift in that it was "their work" and that the project in the end would be declared "hot" in union standards.

Honestly, I had nothing to do with generating the idea, but the determined Rotarians undertook to create all this in one day on a Saturday, so that suddenly, the next day all would be completed and so “who did it?”, sort of thing.

So, I was selected Committee Chair and away we went:

- a. We purchased the equipment
- b. We prefabricated and preassembled all the playground equipment off site
- c. We got a flat deck semi truck donated
- d. We got a crane donated
- e. We got a backhoe donated to excavate the foundations for the assembled equipment
- f. We got a “unconvinced and dubious” group of Rotary volunteers together who were totally convinced this would not work no matter what Elmer Verigin may have constructed before
- g. On the selected Saturday, the scheduled sequence of events took place:
 - i. Flat deck truck met the carne to load the playground equipment
 - ii. Meanwhile a backhoe excavated the foundations
 - iii. The load flat deck and associated crane (Rempel’s) arrived on site
 - iv. Final assembly and setting the equipment (8 units) took place
 - v. Concrete Truck (Rempel’s) arrived, and concrete was chuted into the foundations of the playground units
 - vi. Sand was raked in over the concrete
 - vii. The rest of the sand was raked over and all temporary support structures removed so that no one could tell how it all took place
 - viii. The 15 Rotarian Volunteers were drinking beer at 2:00 P.M. that Saturday.
 - ix. Only 14 of the Rotarians kept shaking their heads in disbelief but one enjoyed the beer
 - x. The next meeting, I was honorably presented with a medal “Order of the Broken Hammer” for my efforts, which I much appreciated.



We had fun!

F) Castlegar Club

After the re-entry to the Trail Club and subsequent resignation, I was invited to join the Castlegar Club and enjoyed Rotary until my hearing interfered with appreciating all discussions at the table. It was not conducive to my appreciation of Rotary. It was at this time that work at Whatshan became a taxing issue on my available time. Since Whatshan was as “Rotary” as it can be following the Four Way Test:

- **IS IT THE TRUTH?**
- **IS IT FAIR TO ALL CONCERNED?**
- **WILL IT BUILD GOODWILL AND BETTER FREINDSHIP?**
- **WILL IT BE BENFICIAL TO ALL CONCERNED?**

I also applied the basic tenet in Rotary:

“... We are sent to this Earth and rented space. Check often to see if your rent has been paid!.....”

And so, I left the Castlegar Club and devoted all my available time to Project Managing the Whatshan Projects in 2003.

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