

Why Am I A Rotarian, Part 2

So why am I a Rotarian?

Last year I stood here and told you why I was a Rotarian. I told you I was here because Lynn Jensen approached me one year at the Mane Event, while I was assisting my wife Betsy with the Chamber of Commerce booth... and asked me why I was not in Rotary. I still don't remember my answer but I do remember that I had no idea what Rotary was. Lynn invited me to lunch and I eventually became a member on February 15, 2007.

But a more important question is, why did I stay? As I told you last year, there is a big difference between joining and staying. Between July 1, 2003 and June 30, 2010, which is when I joined Rotary, 1.1 million other people joined Rotary. During that same period the increase in the number of Rotarians was only 226.

So, why did I stay,

I stayed because Ron Crawford asked me to be a member,

I stayed because shortly after I joined, maybe a week or 2, Lynn Jensen said “Congratulations, you are on the photo team as well as the greeter team.”

I stayed because a couple of months later Terry Ennes asked me to be the Community Director on the Board,

I stayed because Ron Crawford and Ron Popp asked me, since I was the Director of Community, to head up a fundraiser which we anticipated would have thousands of people running through downtown Arlington Hts.

I stayed because there were a couple of members (again, no names) who were going to shoot me if, after spending \$20,000 on Santa suits, we didn't get thousands of people running through downtown Arlington Hts.

But I also stayed for the people that we help, the recipients of the Thanksgiving baskets, the Christmas gifts, the inoculation's we helped with, the kids in Guatemala whom we are able to provide an education for and many other activities that make me proud to say I'm a Rotarian.

I stayed because of all the friends I made in Rotary.

This year however, I learned another reason why I am a Rotarian. I am a Rotarian because the people in this room are more than friends, they are really family.

I'm sure you recall that on May 4, 2013, a few weeks before I would be installed as President, my daughter Emily was diagnosed with Acute Lymphatic Leukemia. She spent the whole month of May in the hospital and then spent the next 8 months going back and forth for treatments, as well as many more weeks as an inpatient for a pancreas/gall bladder problem related to the treatments. I talked to Betsy, as well as giving thought and prayer, about whether I wanted to go through with my commitment to be President. Betsy said go for it and I did.

As it turned out, it was the right thing for me to do, personally. If I had not become President, I probably would not have been around much. My life would have consisted on clients and the hospital. But coming to Rotary every week gave me some relief. As well as the relief, it gave me it also gave me comfort. Comfort because of the amount of people and their genuine concern, prayers and comforting thoughts shared with me on a regular basis. Even though I put on my happy face, or tried,

there were many days when I just wanted to skip, but I didn't and was glad I didn't. The cards, the concerns, the hugs... always sent me away feeling better than I had when I walked in the door. I will never ever forget the support of my Rotary family in my family's hardest hours. Thank you.

But the main point of my talk last year was about chickens and pigs. You may recall that I said,

[The difference between involvement and commitment is like ham and eggs. The chicken is involved; the pig is committed.](#)

I told you that as a member of our club, you have a choice. You can be involved, just like the chicken. But then you will just be a member of the club. Or you can be committed, just like the Pig. Then you will be a Rotarian.

I then told you about my goals, which I am not going to talk about again. Water under the damn.

I do want to talk to you about something else, though. But really, I want to talk to the pigs in the room. Remember, the pigs are the ones that are committed, not just involved. I want to talk to the

pigs and the next Board. And I would like to talk about leadership.

I am not going to stand up here and pretend to be an expert on leadership, because I am not. However, I do do some reading on leadership as well as attend conferences and webinars occasionally because I find that stuff helpful, even if I don't apply it well when I try.

Within the past year I was at a leadership conference where the speaker compared organizations (of which Rotary is one) to a canoe. He said that all organizations and canoes have 3 kinds of people. The first kind is the people who are leading, or rowing very diligently. They are trying to get the organization or boat from one place to another, safely. They are important people. Without them we would spend our time going in circles.

The second kind of people is those who are row occasionally. They like being there and they want to participate, and they want to get someplace, safely, but they don't want to lead. These are important people also. The canoe or organization probably wouldn't move with them.

The third kind of people is those that want to turn the canoe over. They might be rowing and they might not. One thing they are not doing is leading. You don't lead by complaining about the leaders or talking about the leaders and what they should or shouldn't be doing to the other rowers. There is an old American saying that I think Lee Iacocca said, but I don't think he originated it, "Lead, follow or get out of the way." Believe it or not, we have some people like that in our club. If you haven't heard these people yet, you will. They like to say things like, "We have never done that before", or "Why are we doing that?" or "Whose idea is that?"

I am not telling you this to scare anyone away or be critical. It is a fact of life. I did not make up the story about the canoe. I see the canoe in many of the organizations of which I have been part. Working with people is a challenge. I think we are up to it though.

Over the last few years we have accomplished a great deal as a club.

We have a signature fund raiser.

We are growing membership. In fact, we won a district award this year for doing so. Kudos to Mr

Mahoney and Dr Jensen and the rest of the membership committee for their hard work. That award belongs to them.

We have taken giant steps toward getting our members engaged through events such as the Fast Eddie challenge and the challenge of a few years ago. Those types of events are not just social events. They are well thought out, big-time efforts to help Rotary grow by more than 226 members when we add 1.2 Million members over the same period. We are trying to get people engaged and involved.

Our financial situation is strong and it is organized. The stewardship of the dollars that this club raises is beyond reproach. The finance committee and its members give me an extreme amount of peace of mind and I can tell you that, coming from a fiscal conservative such as myself, that means a lot.

About a week ago Linda kiddingly said to me she was thinking about not being President, in which case I would need to serve another year! She was kidding of course, but if she wasn't I would be standing here saying the same thing I said last year when I paraphrased George Patton: "Well now, you Rotarians, you know how I feel. I will be proud to lead you wonderful people over the next year."

I was very proud to do it this year.

Thank you for the opportunity.

That's all.

[Induction Meeting Speech by 2013-2014 (Outgoing)
President, Rotary Club of Arlington Heights.]