

ROTAGEN

The Bulletin of the Rotary Club
of Letchworth Garden City

No. 172

March 2009

MORE SCATTERING

A full diary made Hitchin an ideal place to visit another club as it has four clubs with the opportunity to attend for breakfast, lunch or dinner. In the event I went for lunch with the Hitchin Club on Monday 16th February at the Sun Hotel. I tried to contact the Secretary beforehand with no success; apparently the telephone number was not correct and the club website was more reliable!

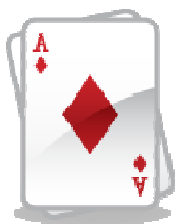


I was warmly greeted: the club has 46 members with 25 attending and I was pleased to see familiar faces from many years ago. No ladies in sight. Rather like our own club well over half of the membership are retired. The meal was particularly good value at £9 with soup, hot buffet and coffee.

The speaker was to be their District Governor but unfortunately he had been taken ill and could not attend. The President, Paul Brooker, apologised in case I had come especially to hear the DG! As sometimes happens a member stepped in and talked about PolioPlus and the £500 which each club has been asked to raise by RI.

A very enjoyable visit.

Richard Peach



HISTORY LESSON

A teacher says to her class, "We've been learning about how powerful kings and queens were in history. But most people back then believed there was a higher power. Can anyone tell me what it is?" One child shouts out, "Aces!"

DISTRICT GOVERNOR'S NEWSLETTER - MARCH 2009

Particularly at this time of year I am reminded of what I am missing because, three years out of four I miss a birthday. Yes – for my sins I was a Leap Year baby! It is not that much of a hardship really because when there isn't a 29th I tend to celebrate on the 28th and the 1st so I get the best of both worlds. Unfortunately this doesn't mean two lots of presents!

But what if I was missing something much more important – what if I was missing the ability to read and write? There would be so many things that would not be available to me. As you have probably gathered by now I am very fond of quotations and literature – indeed reading takes up a lot of what little leisure time I have these days and what a pleasure that is.

We take literacy for granted but there are many, many in this world of ours who don't have this luxury and this lack has a major effect on their ability to survive and fend for themselves. The importance of this aspect is one of the reasons that Literacy is one of the core emphases in the Rotary programme because, more often than not, the other problems of health, hunger and sanitation or the lack thereof are exacerbated by those affected being illiterate. Not only that – how often do we find that anti social behaviour and crime are perpetrated by those who do not have the benefit of being fully literate?.

RI President D K Lee's wish is that during his presidential year the incidence of Child Mortality in the world is greatly reduced and providing educational facilities for those without will help to "Make Dreams Real" for those children whose future is at best bleak. It is why we in RIBI are helping Leonard Cheshire Disability to provide disabled children in Uganda with the opportunity to join in mainstream education with their School 4 All project, changing their lives by giving them literacy. If you want to know more about our Literacy programmes why not have a word with Paul McIntee – our District expert – he's in the Directory.

We have all been saddened by the devastation caused by the fires in Australia and no doubt many of you have friends or relatives that have been affected. If Clubs want to help in any way they can send donations to RIBI Donations Trust at Alcester or if you want to be more direct "hands on" or want information e-mail bushfire-help@rotarydistrict9800.org.au

Don't forget that there is still the opportunity to sign up for the Birmingham Convention in June – a chance to experience what the "international" part of Rotary International is all about. Visit www.rotaryconvention2009.com to find out more about it. Or how about the RIBI Conference in Edinburgh – see the RIBI website for details.

It will soon be time for me to decide on the best Club Newsletter or Bulletin in the District. Remember to send me copies so that I can make a reasoned judgement when the time comes.

GARDEN CITY WALK

Arrangements are well under way for the 2009 walk. Club members are reminded that there is a “3-line whip” for this event, our major fund-raising event of the year. Anyone who is not able to participate on the day is invited to make a donation in lieu.



LEISURE DIRECT

This organisation is a charity affiliated to Royal Mencap. It provides sport and leisure activities for adults over the age of 18 with a learning disability in North Herts and Stevenage. They have over 100 members and each year they enter a group of their members for our charity walk. Leisure Direct is funded by Herts County Council Adult Care Services and is in partnership with NHDC. They are holding a fund-raising horse-racing evening on Saturday 9th May at the Jackmans Community Centre. Our club has been invited to “sponsor” one of the races for £50, and we are very pleased to do so.

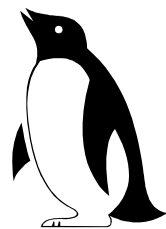
FOR THE BIRDS

A man is walking in New York City when he sees a penguin looking in a shop window. He picks the penguin up and takes it to the police station. He says to the policeman, “I found this penguin on Madison Avenue, what should I do with it?”

The policeman replies, “That’s obvious! Take it to Central Park Zoo.” The man agrees and leaves with the penguin under his arm.

The next day, the policeman sees the man and the penguin on the street. The policeman stops the man and says, “I told you to take the penguin to the zoo.”

The man replies, “I took it to the zoo yesterday. Today I’m taking it to the Metropolitan Opera.”



THE DOLLYWOOD FOUNDATION



Clockwise from bottom left: Rotary Foundation Trustee John Germ, District Governor Ted J. Propes, Dolly Parton, district literacy chair Shauna von Hanstein, District Governor Kenan J. Kern, and District Governor Gary C. Moore. Photo by Holly Sasnett

On 6 March, country music legend Dolly Parton and Rotary International announced a collaborative relationship to begin a new chapter in promoting early childhood reading.

Under the agreement, Rotary clubs in Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States are encouraged to support the Dollywood Foundation's Imagination Library, which provides a book each month to children from birth until age five.

Local Rotary club participation could include promoting the program within the community, helping to identify and register the children, and paying for the books and mailings.

In a public ceremony in Atlanta, Georgia, USA, Rotary Foundation Trustee John Germ joined Parton onstage to make the announcement in front of more than 500 people.

"Our partnership with Parton's foundation will bring tremendous improvement in children's literacy," says Germ, a member of the Rotary Club of Chattanooga, Tennessee. "Dolly is the perfect spokeswoman for promoting early childhood reading."

Parton's impoverished childhood and her father's illiteracy inspired the country singer to create a literacy program in 1996 for preschool children in her native Sevier County, Tennessee.

The Imagination Library spread quickly. Today, it serves 47 states, along with parts of Canada and the United Kingdom, and has provided children with more than 15 million books.

According to the Dollywood Foundation, research shows that preschoolers exposed to reading are more likely to look forward to starting school, do well in class, read at or above grade level, finish high school, and go on to college.

The program also helps strengthen families by encouraging positive interaction between parents and children through shared reading.

"Let's face it, when a little child gets a book with their name on it, they're going to run to the nearest family member and badger them until they sit down and read it," says Parton.

The Imagination Library is especially valuable for children in underprivileged families, who may find books to be an unaffordable luxury in today's economic slowdown.

For an annual cost of \$28 per child, the Dollywood Foundation sends children registered for the program one book a month, beginning with *The Little Engine That Could*. The books are age appropriate and range from life lessons to bedtime stories.

About 115 Rotary clubs already participate, and that number will triple with the addition of all 203 clubs in Georgia, the first to sign on under the new agreement. The clubs will work through the Georgia-based Ferst Foundation for Childhood Literacy, with the goal of extending the Imagination Library to all 159 counties in the state.



LESLIE BICHENER

It is with great sadness that we record the death of Leslie peacefully at home on 2nd March. Leslie was 96 and by far our longest serving member, having joined Rotary in 1951. His father was our Club President in 1945, and Leslie recounted how, when his father was too busy to attend a Rotary meeting, he would sometimes send Leslie in his place. He was a founder member of Letchworth Round Table and the Letchworth 25 Club. After a private, family cremation there will be a memorial and thanksgiving service at 12 noon on Friday 13th March at the Central Methodist Church, followed by a gathering for refreshments at the Broadway Hotel. Our condolences go to Rosemary and all the family.

RI PRESIDENT DONG KURN LEE

Although we are well through the current Rotary year, Rotagen has included little detail about the RI President. The following information is both interesting and instructive, giving an insight into the ethics and values of an eminent Korean Rotarian.



“Dong Kern Lee exemplifies the Korean spirit of hard work and service to others that has inspired Rotarians in this country and all over the world. I have no doubt that his year as RI president will be fruitful as he joins the growing ranks of Korean leaders who are making their mark on the international stage.” – South Korean President Myung-bak Lee, Rotarian and friend of DK Lee.



During Korea’s Joseon Dynasty, scholar Eon-juk Lee helped develop the Confucian ideals of loyalty, filial piety, benevolence, and trust. His contribution to Korean Neo-Confucianism earned him a reputation as one of the five great wise men of the East, and his work was honoured with a Confucian school that still stands today.

Five centuries later, those same Confucian values have helped his descendant, Dong Kurn Lee, raise a family, build a business, and become the first Korean president of Rotary International.

Dong Kurn, or DK, is known for his collaborative decision-making and vast social and business network, and relies on the wisdom of his mentors, lessons from his father, support from his wife, and the proud traditions of his Korean culture.

“Koreans are very tenacious,” DK explains. “They have a hungry spirit that comes from the country’s devastation after the Korean War. So when Koreans concentrate, we work with great passion and determination.”

Father knows best

DK spent part of grade school and many summers at his family home in the village of Yangdong, where his famous Confucian ancestor did his scholarly work in the 15th century. The village, a three-hour drive south of Seoul, is a tidy group of traditional tile-roofed and thatched strawroofed houses built on a small rise of land accessible by an unpaved road. The spirit of this hamlet made DK the man he is today. The motto engraved above the entrance to the 99-year-old Yangdong elementary school instructs students to “Be an asset of society with creativity and integrity.”

“Most people from the countryside are diligent and never give up. People around here are like that,” he says, sitting at the kitchen table of his cosy Yangdong home – a replica of the original home. DK and his wife, Young Ja Chung, recently rebuilt the main structure and several other small houses in the family compound, retaining some of the original hand-hewn Korean pine timbers but adding modern conveniences. In DK’s youth, his grandparents lived here as well, according to Korean custom.

In Yangdong, DK learned lessons of discipline, humility, and generosity from his father, Won Gap Lee, a past district governor from Busan. His father taught him to discount any compliment by 50 percent, never boast about money and, most important, honor family, friends, and guests.

All the goodies in the kitchen were saved for others. When DK was a boy, his parents hosted parties where the best food was served. DK remembers once whispering to an unsuspecting diner, *“Don’t eat it all!”* afraid there might not be anything left for him. Although he detested the strict rules at the time, he is now assiduous about carrying on the traditions of Confucian hospitality. It’s the reason he insists that colleagues share his lunch (literally cutting his sandwich in half) and why he and his wife rolled up their sleeves to help serve a meal to his district governors elect at a busy Korean restaurant after a GETS session.

His associates are impressed by this traditional Confucian upbringing. *“He was taught, If it is worth doing, it is worth doing right,”* says friend Bon Moo Koo, CEO and chair of LG Group.

DK left Yangdong for Seoul, to attend Seoul High School and Yonsei University, where he immersed himself in his studies and activities like the school newspaper. High school friend Yi-taek Shim says DK was a clever student and good at making friends. *“He always spent lots of time on things other than study because he was interested in the public good,”* says Yi-taek, former CEO of Korean Air. Although DK’s father was the owner of a successful textile company, DK was no spoiled rich kid. After college and a required stint in the Korean army, he moved to San Francisco for several years to take business classes. His father didn’t give him much money, so DK worked summers as a dishwasher and, later, a busboy. *“He purposely wanted me to have that kind of experience,”* he says.

DK admired his father’s work in Rotary and his father’s Rotarian friends because they were wise and respected men in the community. In 1971, he became a member of the Rotary Club of Seoul Hangang, and again followed in his father’s footsteps when he became a district governor in 1995-96. Over the years, DK has served Rotary in numerous leadership roles, including RI director and Rotary Foundation trustee.

The balancing act

DK's Rotary work particularly impresses friends and business associates because he has accomplished it at the same time he's expanded his father's company. DK is chairman of Bubang Co. Ltd. and Bubang Techron Co. Ltd, a group of companies that manufacture electronics and home appliances. He's nurtured the business from a modest textile manufacturer in southern Korea to a corporation with operations in Korea and China.

"He built up what he inherited from his father; he didn't throw it away," says college friend Woo Sik Kim. *"It's surprising because it's not easy to do everything, but he did – Rotary, business, and family."*

At Bubang's headquarters, in a busy part of Seoul south of the Han River, Rotary memorabilia – photos from international assemblies and conventions, Rotary flags and awards – are prominently displayed, and an RI directory sits close at hand on his desk.

DK's eldest son, Dae Hee, works on the first floor, as CEO of one of Bubang's offshoot companies, Lihom, which makes rice cookers and other home appliances. Dae Hee is learning the family business, much as DK did from his father.

DK and Young have three other children – daughters Hee Won and Hee Jung and son Joong Hee. They're scattered between Seoul, Singapore, and New York, and three of the four are married with kids of their own. The youngest grandchild, Tae Kyung (TK), was born on DK's birthday last October. DK and Young spent all night choosing just the right name for the baby, an important Korean custom, especially since TK is the oldest son of their oldest son.

The kids are proud of their father and his Rotary accomplishments. *"All his energy comes from his passion for Rotary,"* says Dae Hee. *"He also has a lot of support from my mother."* Young plays a quiet but vital role in her husband's work. She sees her primary job as keeping DK organized, prepared, and healthy. She tends to be in the background when on Rotary business with DK, but on her own she is bold and charming, deftly navigating the congested streets of Seoul in her car, chatting freely with Rotarians about their life in Evanston, and making friends with children during a visit to a Rotary project.

Accompanying DK on his visits to such projects, Young says, has given her a greater appreciation of the impact Rotarians have on their communities. She was particularly moved by a visit to India where she saw doctors operating on patients in a mobile medical unit. *"India is a big country with a lot of people in need, similar to our country after the Korean war. I think their*

situation is improving with the help of Rotarians,” she says hopefully.

Friends in and out of Rotary

Rotary, business, and family are the pillars of DK’s life, but friends also rank high on his list. He considers socializing his hobby, especially as he no longer has time for golf.

DK’s list of friends reads like a Who’s Who in Korea – the South Korean president and prime minister, the UN secretary-general, the heads of universities and conglomerates. These leaders consider DK’s involvement in Rotary a higher calling, and they are proud to see him take the helm of an international organization. Prime Minister Han said: *“DK Lee is one of our best representatives. So many Koreans are looking forward to his service in the cause of Rotary International.”*

DK’s goals for Rotary include ambitious plans to increase membership by 10 percent to 1.3 million. *“The more Rotarians there are, the more work can be done,”* DK reasons.

DK is also focussing on Rotary’s polio eradication initiative, striving to meet the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation’s US\$100 million challenge grant and reduce the number of polio-endemic countries. He will also carry on previous presidents’ emphases on water, health and hunger, and literacy, but with a new twist: reducing child mortality.

The seed of this idea was a visit to Africa where he saw women who were too malnourished to nurse their babies. Much of the work Rotarians are already doing, such as providing clean water, better health services, and hunger relief, go hand in hand with reducing child mortality, DK says. *“It’s a problem we cannot solve in one year,”* DK acknowledges, *“but there is a Korean proverb that says ‘Starting is half the work’ so I am motivated to start the job.”* He also promises to dedicate himself to decreasing child mortality long after his term ends.

By the time DK became district governor, in 1995, his father had passed away. *“He would have told me to become the best DG is in the world – this was my destiny,”* he says. DK had a phenomenal year as governor of District 3650 in Korea. He created 32 new clubs and signed up almost 1,800 new Rotarians in his district. Now, as he takes on a job his father never imagined for him, DK



DOG BRAIN

A small Chihuahua says to an Irish Setter, “So, big fellow, tell me: what’s your name?” The setter looks confused and replies, “I’m not at all sure, but I think it may be ‘Down boy!’”

TITBITS

One of the "titbits" that John Stoddard revealed in his recent talk to us was a plant which was unrecognisable as such—just a dry, brown mass. It was a "Rose of Jericho". Being amazed by this, your editor investigated further and found the following on the "Fisheaters" website:

"Rose of Jericho" is a name given to two plants:

- *Anastatica hierochuntica*, which grows naturally in northern Africa and southwest Asia
- *Selaginella lepidophylla*, which is native to Southwest United States and Central America

These plants have the remarkable ability to survive in a curled up, dormant, brown, desiccated state for years, and then open up and turn green with a bit of water. After returning to a lovely green, they go dormant again when their water source is removed, and can be revived again after dormancy. This cycle can be repeated for years.

In any case, the plant is often kept dormant in the home -- sometimes handed down through the generations -- and brought out at Christmas time, along with the Christmas decorations, to blossom for a while and adorn the Christmas table, and then close, all symbolizing the opening and closing of Mary's womb.

The plant in its dry state:



When in nature in this state, it blows about the desert like tumbleweed until it lands at a site with water. Then it drinks in the moisture and opens up to look like this:



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DISTRICT CONFERENCE 2009



**A date for your diaries!
Saturday 26th September**

Venue : Lynford Hall, Mundford, near Thetford

Cost : £20 registration fee, before 14th August : after that £25.

(this includes tea and coffee during breaks and luncheon)

Theme : “Youth—their future, our responsibility”.

CONCERT

**The Inner Wheel Club of Baldock
are promoting a concert by the
Herts Police Choir
at the United Reform Church in
Baldock
on Monday 30th March at 8pm.**

Admission will be £7,
to include refreshments during the interval.

It promises to be an enjoyable evening with a varied programme. Proceeds will go to Action for ME, their President's charity this year. Tickets can be obtained from Mrs Kathryn Cassels, secretary of Baldock IW (Tel: 01763 281465).



WEDNESDAY MEETINGS

Duty Rotarian Speaker Finder Speaker

March (Literacy month)

11 Mar	Richard Peach	Bob Mills	Cate Ortman <i>“Ambassadorial Scholar”</i>
18 Mar	Bryan Sonnen	BUSINESS MEETING	
25 Mar	John Stoddard	Peter Jackson	T.B.A.

April (Magazine month)

1 Apr		CLUB AGM	
8 Apr	Sam Thakur	Bob Mills	Darren Isted <i>“Damned Media”</i>
15 Apr	Roger Thomson	John Hillson	T.B.A.
22 Apr	Dennis Wells	Mike Birrell	Raymond Leach MBE <i>“Aerial surveying of high pressure pipelines”</i>

DISTRICT EVENTS

**Thursday 2 April : next District Council meeting at Mildenhall
(6.30 meal for 7.30 start)**

Saturday 18 April: District Assembly

INNER WHEEL CLUB OF LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY

OVERSEAS SERVICE SUPPER

Saturday 28 March 2009

St Paul's Church Hall, Pixmore Way.

Speaker - Dr Peter Gough, Chairman of The Khandel light project

7 for 7.30pm

£12.50

Tickets from Mary Ireland (Tel: 682034)