



The Strand

The Newsletter of PRLS

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Listening

Eric Nicolet was one my Rotary heroes. He died a few years ago, to the regret of everyone who ever knew him. He was literate in an unreading world, imaginative in the midst of dullness, innovative when surrounded by clods. He was everything any thinking person could aspire to be.

He was, in addition to everything else, a past president of three Rotary Clubs and, when I first met him, the long-

time editor of the Ventura East Club's weekly bulletin.

Eric had this to say about listening. "I know that in listening we sometimes miss part of what is read or, for that matter, something just said. Most of us have partial listening skills. We never do training for listening.

"That reminds me of an experiment I tried years ago when I was teaching high school. I had one class that just would not quiet down when the bell rang. One day, after fighting to get quiet for several minutes, I just put my finger to my lips with a 'sh-h-sh-h' until the room was quiet. I went on listening for a moment. The room was quiet. Finally, I broke the silence and asked them what they heard. 'Feet shuffling;' 'Someone walking in the hall;' 'Birds outside; 'A car on the road,' all the little noises that we are usually unaware of.

"Well, it worked that day. So I started every day with some type of listening exercise, sometimes music, sometimes I read, or I prepared a student in advance to read. The exercise was never more than three minutes. At the end of the

school year, I asked the students to evaluate their listening.

"The responses were amazing: 'I listen to the minister;' 'I listen to my mother;' 'I hear the birds every morning;' 'I listen in classes;' and so on. I do not know why I never did it again."

"There are bulletin editors all over Rotary, some, like me, retired after years of self-imposed deadlines and witnessing the varying quality dull whatever inspiration ever existed. For me, Rotary is a conduit. It puts me in a setting of men and women who are continually amazing with their unbridled enthusiasm and can-do dedication."

"That's what it does."

Practice Forgiveness

"Forgiveness" is one of those super-strong character traits some of us *never* quite grasp fully. Those of us who share the life-long weakness of "Get even at all costs!" find the leadership trait of forgiveness our biggest trial. But it's there,

nonetheless. Be willing to forgive those who make honest mistakes. When dealing with volunteers, which is what all of us in Rotary are supposed to be, in varying degrees, we always—*always*—have to remember that in this and other similar organizations no one *has* to do anything at all.

Indeed, we all know people in our clubs who do nothing, say nothing, contribute nothing, and about whom we wonder perpetually, “Why are these people still here?”

We should forgive even those!

Also, be willing to forgive yourself after you acknowledge that you, too, are capable of error. Self-flagellation is not an attractive quality in a leader.

Will people let you down? Count on it! Will people not do what they promised you they would do? Absolutely! It’s axiomatic. In Rotary, if you’re the Program Chair and you’ve never had a scheduled speaker fail to show up, all it means is that you haven’t been a Program Chair very long. What do you do? You have in your mind backup programs you can activate at the last minute.

Similarly, if you’re a leader and no one has ever disappointed you, you haven’t been a leader very long. What do you do? You have in your mind backup people whom you can activate at the last minute.

Some years ago, the appointed District Group Study Exchange Chair had decided he didn’t want the job. When did he decide that? Two weeks

before the first visitors were coming in from abroad. What did the Governor do? He activated someone else to pick it up, and the replacement did just that. The “pickup” did, in two weeks, what the other guy had been unwilling to do in six months. The original chair will be back, someday. He got caught up in a family problem, and it distracted him *way* away from his GSE responsibilities. Why will he be back? Because after the smoke cleared, the Governor called him and, in effect, forgave him “his trespasses.”

Suck it up! Deal with it! Move on! That “other train” is coming—that person who hasn’t let you down, *yet!* Then, when you find the person who is so incredibly trustworthy, believable and hard-working that he makes even *you* look bad, forgive him for that, too.



Don’t Become Indispensible

Organizations need indispensable institutions, not indispensable people. It’s safe to say that, lacking leadership instruction or leadership experience, a person finding him/herself in that position will tend to take easy ways out of leadership dilemmas and will, when push comes to shove, do things themselves rather than replace the people who were supposed to do them. In today’s lingo, they “micromanage.” What happens then? Typically, the person being managed thus will, if it hasn’t happened

already, just quit without telling anybody, figuring that if the president wants to do the job, that’s just fine. What happens then? The president is on the way to becoming indispensable, since others will see that they don’t have to do their jobs — the president will complete the unfinished jobs.

So, where does that leave the club? The institutions of The Rotary Foundation, District leadership and the basic principles of the Four-Way Test are all in place; the club has started on its way to falling apart.

What can you do? You can replace people who aren’t doing what they said they would do. **OR** You can explain to them the error of their ways. **OR** You can do it yourself. In other words, you can help build a sense of responsibility in others while at the same time encouraging the movement forward of your club **OR** you can do things all by yourself. You can move happily into the future with a better organization, or you can make yourself indispensable and watch while your club folds up around you and you increase your personal work load exponentially.

That doesn’t seem like a reasonable choice to make. Becoming indispensable, both in your eyes and in others’, is absolutely *not* the way to go!



Preferable Behavior The Wisdom of Rotary

Presidents: “Where there are good men in business, lying and

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cheating should be more difficult; truth and candor and fair dealing should be easier and more popular.” (Robert E. Lee Hill in an address to the 1935 International Convention in Mexico City)

I used to teach “Business Ethics” in the graduate school of business at California Lutheran University. I could never see the point of including the class in the curriculum, nor of subjecting the students to hour after hour of sophistry. “If they didn’t learn ethics and morals at their daddy’s knee,” I thought, “it’s way too late to be introducing them to the topics now.”

Not for the first time (or the last), I was wrong. People can be changed. People can “get religion” by seeing that an honorable life is preferable and attainable. They can adopt the idea that keeping one’s word is not only acceptable behavior, it’s *required* behavior in society.

Does that mean that one three-credit course will, no doubt about it, alter the crooked habits of a lifetime? Of course not. It means that they’re given yet another chance to see that honor, trust and truth constitute preferable behavior.

In Rotary, we are in the graduate school of ethics and morals. Our leaders are our professors. What our leaders do, what they say, how they say it, and what the clubs do while they’re presidents (or governors) are all reflective of what they, personally, stand for. Every year, a conscientious president having an agenda for fairness and truth has a chance

to move more people in that direction.

Take a chance. Take a stand. If Rotary is as good as we all say it is, let’s do yet another good deed for those around us.



Viva la Difference! (NOT!)

The Wisdom of Rotary

Presidents: “He who loses his faith, loses his hold not only on the present, but on the future.” (Walter D. Head, in an address to the 1940 Rotary Convention in Havana)

Our Rotary future is pretty secure, thanks to the efforts of members everywhere.

Wait a minute! Which members are *you* thinking about? Do you mean the ones who can scarcely make the minimum of meetings in order to maintain bare eligibility for membership? Do you mean the ones who eat in restaurants, drive expensive cars, see first-run movies and yet won’t pay their Rotary bills on time? Do you mean the ones who have something else urgent on their plate when it comes time for (pick one): work parties, committee meetings, fund-raisers, ethics forums with school kids, highway pickup?

Oh, wait another minute! You must mean the ones who attended the District Assembly last month, one place or the other. You must mean the ones with perfect attendance. How about the ones who pay their bills on time, contribute to the

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Rotary Foundation and agree to help out every time the phone rings? Oh, right! Those are the ones.

What’s the difference between those two sets of people? One “gets it” and one doesn’t. How is it that in the same club one member “gets it” and another one doesn’t?

It’s easy to say that good leadership makes all the nice things happen, but that’s what it is. Those members who attend District Assemblies, graduate from Master PRLS, become Paul Harris Fellows and Foundation Benefactors, show up for District Conferences, help plan club events, are right there at every club social event—those members are the people who make Rotary’s future secure.

See the difference?



Standards? I Don’t Need No Freakin’ Standards!

Some years ago the keynote speaker asked the following questions at Mid-Term Seminars:

1. In most clubs, most nominated people don’t know what standard of performance is expected. If you had no preconditions for your president, why is anyone surprised that he/she doesn’t live up to your standards?
2. How many of you here today, when you were nominated, were not told that if you accepted the nomination you had certain things that the club expected you to complete before your year in office?

3. How many of you would not have accepted the job if you had been told what standard of performance was required of you?

4. How many clubs are essentially on auto-pilot, without expectations except those that come from the District Governor?

5. How many years will you let this go on, where your club has no real standards of performance, no written set of general rules that would tell a person whether and when he/she was doing what the club expected?

6. Lastly, how many more times will you ask people to take the presidency without telling them how and why they can learn to do the job?

The answers to each of those questions are themselves suitable for inclusion in entire books on leadership. I'm guessing that most of the presidents of our clubs would not accept the positions, if they knew what it took to be really good at their jobs — to move clubs forward in service, to energize the lazy, to get the attention of the unwilling, and furthermore to do all this in one year.

At the end of their term in office, with the only visible rewards outside of self-satisfaction being those offered by receipt of a piece of paper at a District Awards event that cost too much, was 100 miles from home, where the food was no good and the speeches were boring, how many would repeat the experience?

As someone once told me when I asked him if he was

going to run for Governor one of these years, "I may be stupid, but I'm not nuts! I know what I went through as my club's president. You think I'm ever going to try to motivate 62 (at that time) clubs to get out of their slovenly ways?"

"Geez! If people saw what it took to become a really good president, they wouldn't take the job!" I hear that a lot. And it's true. We have large numbers of club presidents who want the honor of having been in the position, but don't want to hear of standards of performance. We've even had governors with that sort of thinking. One of the latter told me one time that you can't accomplish anything without having been a governor. So, he made it to the position, let his aide run the district, and then serve in his post-year assignments. His year was forgettable, but fortunately came between strong governors on either side of his year in office.

Well, these few paragraphs won't change people or the aura of some clubs. Someone reading this might think, though, "Maybe I should take a wee peek at some reasonable standards of performance. I wonder if there's a list of things I should do. I wonder who has such a list. I wonder if I can motivate my club to move forward instead of sideways. I wonder if, during my year as president, I can change the 80-20 rule to 70-30, or 60-40, or even, (heavens above!) 50-50. Is it possible that I could get as many as half my club involved? Could I really do that if I

applied myself in the meantime?

Well, could you?



Dilbert Lives!

A couple weeks ago there was a "Dilbert" cartoon in the paper that struck my eye. Dilbert has just made a presentation to his work colleagues. In the first panel he says, "That's my plan. Now I'd like to open the floor to your soul-crushing negativity

In the second panel, the three people who have listened to his talk say, "You have written humanity's final chapter! "Darkness stalks us!" "I'll never know love!"

In the last panel, Dilbert says, "Anticipating it didn't help."

David Gore (Goleta Noontime) has been the PRLS Extension Chair for several years now. He has successfully exported PRLS to districts both in this country and abroad. An important element in that successful track record is obtaining district buy-in to the program before any detailed planning work is done. When speaking with districts considering PRLS, David has been consistent in pointing out to his audience, "If you don't have the eager concurrence and personal support of the next three District Governors, any program you start will not last."

Without that kind of multi-year, positive buy-in, here's what you get: "It wasn't my idea, so I'm not going to follow

through with what is otherwise a great plan.”

One of the important reasons that Mid-Terms were started in 1996 was to try to rid our district of such thinking. Following the successful introduction of PRLS and Mid-Terms, we have unofficially subjected most of our district’s new program initiatives to this three-year buy-in rule. This of course means that some initiatives with limited support have never seen the light of day, but it has also meant that those that were introduced onto the district stage have had considerable and consistent support for the first three years of their existence. This momentum has allowed many a good idea to survive and thrive, and go on to accomplish many productive ends in our district. PRLS started out like that (with the concurrence of four DGs); the fall District Conference (three DGs), the twin District Assemblies (three DGs). Over the past fifteen years, we have moved from being a backwater district to becoming the foremost district in the world in terms of leadership training for our presidents and district staff.

We’ve accomplished that distinction because we mostly don’t have “soul-crushing negativity” -- because the procedures that began in Master PRLS-3 (Facilitation Skills) permeate our corporate behavior. We continue to write Rotary’s first chapter; light stalks us; we know love.

Let’s keep it that way!



Rotarians Down Under – The P(ea)rls of the Community

By Helen Blunden (Moorleigh Moorabbin, Dist 9810)

When Rotary District Governors John Davies of 9800 and Dick Garner of 9810 scratched their heads over how to increase the skills of Rotarians in their districts, little did they know that some months later their partnership would introduce an international Rotary leadership program into their districts.

Thirty-eight Rotarians from Districts 9800 and 9810 undertook the Basic Potential Rotary Leaders Seminar (PRLS) followed by the Masters PRLS, over two days on Saturday 17 and Sunday 18 November 2007 in Melbourne, Victoria.

PRLS is a life leadership course that provides an environment for current and potential Rotary leaders to learn leadership and communication skills.

Basic PRLS covered leadership theory such as how to lead with vision, how to conduct an effective meeting and how to speak in public with confidence. Masters PRLS continued with intensive and practical modules in Impromptu Speaking, Prepared Speeches, Facilitation Skills, Situational Leadership and Project Management.

“The course has been running in the USA since 1993 and as part of our 2007-2008 Strategy Plan, we wanted to increase the leadership skills of Rotarians. With the help of

experienced facilitators Laurie and Maureen Bond from the Rotary Club of Bulawoyo, Zimbabwe, we rolled out PRLS into our respective districts and achieved the same success as they did when they established the same program in six South African Districts” said District Governor 9810 Dick Garner.

Roger Reece of RC Doncaster said, “PRLS provided me with a basic toolkit of skills that all people in business and Rotary could benefit from. People need to be familiar with these in order to lead, effectively communicate issues and help their clubs and



their projects run better.”

Assistant Governor Ron Brooks of RC Forest Hill agreed in its value. “PRLS shows us how to improve Rotary’s image and set an example of how professional people should behave.”

Historically, the inaugural Basic PRLS in Australia was delivered to the Rotary Zone 7/8 Institute at the Gold Coast, Queensland in November 2006. Steve Kruger (now DG District 9600) and Walter Buchanan (now DGN District 9600) invited Doug Hoffman and David Gore from District 5240 to deliver the program.

Twelve graduates of PRLS are now committee members with the aim of rolling out

future Basic and Masters PRLS across both Districts. The first Basic PRLS will be run in Melbourne on Saturday 15 March and Sunday 16 March 2008 with Masters PRLS soon to follow. Already there is great interest across the Districts for Rotarians to become “p(ea)rls.”



Standards for a Successful President: Where do they come from?

By Wade Nomura (Carpinteria Morning)

What is the difference between a successful President and a “just get by” President?

The difference is simple; a successful President usually comes from a successful club. Successful clubs develop their presidents for success by setting their own high standards. Every effort is made by the club to ensure this success.

Candidates are selected based on their willingness to do whatever it takes to prepare for the office of president.

Standards are set, including an educational process. These items usually include club board positions that educate the potential candidate to the Rotary process. The job of club secretary enlightens the candidate on the reporting processes, club member familiarization, the different Rotary programs, events, and seminars. Chairing the different Avenues of Service allows one to understand the ideals of Rotary better and how each of these avenues affects the individual Rotarian. Successful

Presidents will always have a passion for Rotary, and this passion is the driving force toward their success.

The efficiency of good presidents also comes from their leadership skills. Our District leads the Rotary World in what it offers in leadership training. We offer PRLS (Potential Rotary Leaders Seminars), Master PRLS, Foundation Seminars, Membership Seminars, Matching Grant Seminars, Poverty Seminars, the Presidents-elect Retreat, Mid Terms Seminars and District Assemblies. Where did all these educational classes come from? They all came from Rotarians who understood the importance of well prepared leaders. I am a member of the District’s Education and Training Committee, and know that we all take this assignment very serious. I have been involved in every one of these venues, and I have seen the successful clubs and presidents attend all of these events on a regular basis. I have observed that these clubs and presidents do not feel *obligated* to attend. **They want to attend**, because that’s their clubs’ standard.

Successful clubs build the “Service Above Self” motivation that is shared by the entire club. These clubs can pick almost any member as president and have success. Good Presidents come from Good Clubs. Take a look at your club. Are you doing everything possible to enjoy Rotary? To develop good leaders? To become a

successful club? To set high standards?

The most rewarding thing about Rotary is the success you and your club share, and it all starts with a commitment for developing a plan — a plan for success.



Doing Well While Doing Good

This is hard for me to understand, but I’m told that in some clubs, in some years, the members get tired of doing good in the world. They sometimes see “reap as ye shall sow” as an impossibility, tainted by lack of appreciation for their efforts, both physical and financial. They *want* to feel they’re making a difference, and they really are, but the aura of gratitude somehow doesn’t make it as far as Joe Sixpack, sitting in the back, volunteering where and when he can, paying up as seems appropriate.

Every year, in every club, in a hundred different ways, we all have opportunities to contribute to the wellbeing of people we’ll never know, never meet. Some clubs don’t make a big deal of it – they just go forward meeting the many needs of mankind without a sound. Other clubs have difficulties, either because of a built-in club culture or because of that year’s lack of club leadership.

In any event, and for whatever the cause, the sowing and reaping are not ours; they’re Rotary’s; and we’re the witting participants. Want personal recognition for your

accomplishments and contributions? Take out an ad in the paper. Want public acclaim for your unselfish actions and donations? Get a skywriter to fly around your neighborhood for a few hours. Expect to be thanked for your generosity of spirit? Forget it.

In most clubs, in most years, we are led by people who understand that Rotary is neither a source of appreciation nor an avenue for people for whom personal recognition is a passion.

I'm not saying that's the way it should be; I'm saying that's the way it is. Suck it up!



Why I'm in Rotary

By Barbara Butler (China Lake)

Editor's note: Sharon Girod (China Lake), in her PRLS class on "Communications," asks her students to "tell your Rotary story." This is one of the submissions.

I have been attending Rotary meetings for 35 years as a "Rotary Ann."

When my husband died some five years ago, the Rotary Club of China Lake made me an honorary member.

After a year, PDG Darrell Johnson asked me to join the club as a full member, and I accepted!

My husband ran the Scholarship and Ambassadorial programs. I became the Director of New Generations, and through this avenue of service I have been able to carry on my husband's legacy.

Youth seems to me to be the most important asset of our society. We as Rotarians have

the ability to teach our kids about "Service Above Self" and to encourage them to "Lead the Way."

My passion is Youth Service – my energy will always focus on youth – the Rotarians of tomorrow.



Burned Out?

What does it mean to commit to giving *some* of our strength to Rotary? Sometimes we say we're burned out – our strength has been expended heavily for a period of time. We've maybe tried extensively to solve an impossible problem. That's possible isn't it?

Mostly, though, when we say we're burned out, we mean that what we've done – what we're tired of – has gone unappreciated.

In the Napoleonic Wars, there are records that Napoleon's generals, though heavily laden with awards and honors, coveted personal praise from Napoleon himself most of all: "Good job." "I'm proud of you." "I'm glad you're on our side." "Thanks for what you did today."

These were men whose lives were tied to the Emperor, who were the veterans of the hundreds of battles fought during those bloody times. And all they wanted, really, wanted, was a good word from the boss.

It makes you wonder about being "burned out," doesn't it?



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PRLS Instruction Dates through the end of this Rotary Year

- 4/19 - Basic PRLS, Bakersfield
- 4/25 – Basic PRLS, Oxnard
- 5/3 – Master PRLS 1, Extemporaneous Speaking, Bakersfield
- 5/17 -- Master PRLS 2, Planned Speaking, Bakersfield
- 6/7 -- Master PRLS 3, Facilitation Skills, Bakersfield
- 6/10 – Special Session Master PRLS 3 & 4; Facilitation Skills and Situational Leadership, San Luis Obispo
- 6/11 – Special Session Master PRLS 5, Business Planning, Project Management, San Luis Obispo
- 6/21 -- Master PRLS 4, Situational Leadership, Bakersfield
- 6/28 00 Master PRLS 5, Business Planning, Project Management

Qualified Active Instructors

- Bud Biery (China Lake)
- PDG Arnie Dowdy (Pismo Beach/Five Cities)
- Les Esposito (Montecito)
- Bob Fonarow (Paso Robles)
- Stewart Fries (Solvang)
- Sharon Girod (China Lake)
- David Gore (Goleta Noontime)
- Don Gunderson (Fillmore Sunrisers)
- Doug Hoffman (San Luis Obispo de Tolosa)
- Mary Howard (Oxnard Sunrise)
- Betty Miller (Santa Maria Breakfast)
- Wade Nomura (Carpinteria Morning)
- David Rachford (Santa Barbara)
- Rodney Skidmore (Simi Sunrise)
- Kim Woods (Westlake Village Sunrise)

Qualified Guest Instructors

- PDG Brenda Cressey
- PDG Jim Hawkins
- PDG Jock MacKenzie