

Lend a Hand

# The Strand

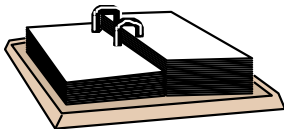
## The Newsletter of PRLS

### Volume 6 Issue 3

### January 1, 2004

## PRLS Calendar

- January 10** MPRLS 1, First Presbyterian Church, San Luis Obispo
- January 17** Mid-Term Seminar, Sheraton-Four Points, Bakersfield
- January 24** Mid-Term Seminar, Poinsettia Pavilion, Ventura
- January 31** Mid-Term Seminar, Radisson Hotel, Santa Maria
- February 7** MPRLS 1, Richter Hall CLU, Thousand Oaks



- February 28** MPRLS 2, SLO County
- March 13** MPRLS 2, Nelson Room CLU, Thousand Oaks
- March 20:** MPRLS Graduates' Forum, Poinsettia Pavilion, Ventura.



## Identify the Weak Points

It's not enough to categorize a club as being "weak" without doing something about telling the sitting club president what *exactly* "weak" means.

Comparing that club against a "strong" club isn't really the answer, because every club — even two clubs in the same community — has a different culture, perhaps meets at a

different time of day, gathers at a different meeting location, and attracts different types of members because of those two differences alone, never mind all the other possibilities.

In some clubs, the weakest member of the board of directors is assigned to Vocational Service, because no one has ever come up with ways to do traditional VS projects, so the Avenue of Service attracts less-energetic board members who don't aspire to change the club's VS culture. But, how is a club to know that ten miles away there's an imaginative, energetic VS Chair just bursting at the seams with ideas?



In some clubs, the weakest member of the board gets Community Service, because the CS projects are repeated year after year and require no

additional initiative. Across the District, in a city with the same population, in a club of approximately the same size, are more projects being done every year than can be claimed by any other service club in that or any city!

It's too easy to say that the sitting president of the "weak" club didn't pay attention during PETS, didn't attend the District Assembly, attended Mid-Terms during the year that some other Avenue of Service was the topic of discussion, doesn't live in the same city where the club meets, has a demanding job and a poor family situation. Those are all justifiable reasons for a poor presidential performance.

But, for whatever the reason, a poor president doesn't know what's good and bad, weak or strong. How can we get past that lack of information? Easy.

1. A strong, perceptive Group Representative or Assistant Governor who sees serious club shortcomings can call in so-called "experts" from around the District. They can be persuaded to help, to provide their years of experience to the president and the "weak" board members. Even really

recalcitrant office-holders will consider accepting advice from someone who's willing to drive 100 miles to give it.

2. A sitting Governor will inform the president that the club is weak in, say, Vocational Service, and "Here are some steps you can take to get your VS Chair educated and, with luck, motivated."

What does it take to start that ball rolling? Call the Governor or the Assistant to the Governor and ask, "I wonder if you'd ask someone to look in on my club to assess our strengths and weaknesses." A team will come in, and a month later you'll be on your way toward having a renewed, vigorous club whose members are enthused, active and more effective, perhaps, than they've been for years.



### We Can Get Our Own PRLS Class?

One of the primary indicators of what is called a "weak club" is looking at the numbers of members who are PRLS and MPRLS graduates. It is a truism that the strongest clubs have the most, the weakest clubs the fewest. But we have some pretty remote clubs; it's tough for a Rotary Club president to get members to drive 125 miles on a Saturday to attend a PRLS session, then drive back those same 125 miles, only to realize that you didn't learn much specifically about Rotary.

And that's the case, you know, because the PRLS curriculum has always been aimed generically. Rotary clubs attract leaders in other situations; PRLS' s aim is to help educate people so they can go back to help in every leadership situation in which any of our members find themselves.

But it might be an easier sell if the PRLS session came to the club, instead of the club having to go to PRLS. The members of the China Lake, Paso Robles and the Santa Barbara Clubs already know that a club can host its own PRLS class almost any time it wants, assuming that enough notice is given.

How do you do that? You get in touch with PRLS Chair **David Gore** at 805-568-5314, ([david@davidcgorecfa.com](mailto:david@davidcgorecfa.com)) and ask him.



- What he'll say is:
  - Guarantee 25 people in attendance (Rotarians, spouses, Interactors and/or Rotaracters)
  - Agree on a date
  - Follow the registration guidelines
  - Select a venue, and interface with local vendors for beverage and meal arrangements
  - What results can you expect?
  - What *will* happen is your members will probably wonder why they've been fighting it all this time. Typical of the comments made, particularly by older members, is that they

wish they'd done this years ago. To be truthful, "years ago" the program wasn't nearly as good as it is today. And today it's not as good as it will be in the future. PRLS is a living organism, growing in content, passion and pertinence every year. Does that mean you should wait twenty years to attend so you can more closely approach Nirvana? No. Go twice, three times! Your author has attended thirty or more sessions, and learns something new every time. That may be because your author is a slow learner, but he doesn't think that's the case.

What *will* happen can best be explained by a very short part of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," where it says, "transfigures you and me." That's what will happen — PRLS will transfigure your members, and your days of dubious reputation as a "weak" club are limited.



### From the website—

[www.PRLS.org](http://www.PRLS.org)

### Well, What Do We Expect? (Part 2)

By reading about business leadership traits in the various periodicals available to all of us, you come across some decent lists of qualities possessed by those whom we consider "successful." Here's the second of five in the newest list I've read. One was posted in the last issue. The rest will

follow over the next three issues.

**They were extraordinarily determined and ambitious.**

Somehow, within Rotary, a visible, expressed ambition to lead is sniffed at. Older members sometimes consider it "pushy." Newer members try to stay out of the way of the blatantly ambitious person. I've seen examples of the latter actually being driven out of Rotary because other, lesser souls couldn't stand the idea of a year-long assault on their time and talents in the name of our organization.

I think it's true that the blatantly ambitious arouse resentment, but the key word there is "blatant." Remove that, and you have what is otherwise thought of as "hard working." As with toothpaste, it's all in how you wrap the package.

Certainly, the odds are that determined, ambitious people who seek positions of responsibility will not fail once they're in office. They may leave a trail of dead bodies behind them, but goals will be accomplished and objectives realized. You want to turn a club around, for example, get someone like this who will spit in the eye of tradition and concentrate on achievement.

Will the club survive? Surprisingly, yes. And it'll be stronger for having gone through the exercise.

**Elitism**

Can't you hear them now? "Rotary isn't like it used to be—we used to have in Rotary all the car dealers, the city manager, the entire Board of Supervisors, and the heads of all the aero-space companies. Now all we have is their secretaries and gophers."

Should we feel badly about what we hear every now and then? Not in my book, we shouldn't!

In those days, the average Rotarian donation to The Rotary Foundation was under \$30/member. Now, it's over \$300 in our District. In those days, members came to lunch (the clubs were mostly lunch clubs) in the premier eatery in town, shook hands, had a subdued conversation with others at "their" table, then went back to work and didn't think about Rotary again until the following week.

Seventy percent attendance was pretty good in "the good old days," and there was normally pretty decent financial support for community activities.

International opportunities were rare, and rarely understood. Vocational Service? Fund-raisers? Forget it!

Well, to the people who rue the absence of those days, I say, "Look what we have now! We work hard, we play hard, our community participation (and financial contributions) are a LOT higher than they used to

be, because each of our clubs has at least one fund-raiser.

Do I agree with those who don't see the "elite" in our clubs? No. I see the "elite" in our clubs, being effective, helpful, considerate, giving.

I guess I'll never understand some people's idea of "elite!"



**Want to be an in-print author? Send your "Strand" contributions by e-mail to [rbm717@adelphia.net](mailto:rbm717@adelphia.net).**

PRLS Registrar **Diane Galvin** asks that those in receipt of the printed version of this newsletter send her your updated e-mail address. [bear72993@earthlink.com](mailto:bear72993@earthlink.com)

**District Education & Training Committee**  
  
District Chair: **Dick Wieler** (Thousand Oaks) [whippet239@aol.com](mailto:whippet239@aol.com)  
  
PRLS Chair: **David Gore** (Goleta Noontime) [david@davidcgorecfa.com](mailto:david@davidcgorecfa.com)  
  
Registrar: **Diane Galvin** (Moorpark) [bear72993@earthlink.com](mailto:bear72993@earthlink.com)  
  
PRLS Website Editor and "The Strand" Editor: **Jock MacKenzie** (Westlake Village) [rbm717@adelphia.net](mailto:rbm717@adelphia.net)

