

Calgary South Rotary  
A Time for Renewal 2009/2010

Let me begin by expressing to each and every one of you as fellow Rotarians in the Rotary Club of Calgary South, what a wonderful honor and privilege it is for me to be the 55<sup>th</sup> President of this great Club. I know of no greater honor than to be selected to lead an organization of business people and professionals who are themselves leaders and I know of no greater privilege than to have the opportunity to lead a club with the history of success, accomplishment, and fellowship that ours does.

With credit to our own Peter Penner and with reference to his book on the history of our Club, Manchester to Calgary South 1955 to 2005, Rotary Fellowship in Action, I would like to briefly acknowledge that history. On December 16, 1954 Ron Jenkins gave notice to his Rotary Club of Calgary about the formation of a new anniversary club in Calgary to celebrate Rotary's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Formerly ratified in January 1955 our Club chartered April 7, 1955.

Charter member Don McNeill remembered the parent Calgary Club as somewhat elitist. They came across as somewhat "secretive", lodge like in their behavior as members. The Manchester Club, on the other hand, chosen from businessmen working in the Manchester area, were seen as the "second rung", so to speak, men who launched successful businesses more recently and who, once they learned to know each other, bonded through good fellowship.

Don concluded that this fellowship developed into something quite profound, a foundation to build on. Jack Westbrook only reinforced this view of the "fellowship" and the good fun that was had in those first years. He would not have wanted to miss a meeting for anything.

The Club's first President, Harry Cleven, brought friendship into Rotary and his successors organized family picnics, family visiting, father and son and daughter banquets. Everyone had a chance to get to know the children and took

an interest in them. This was one of the most important considerations in the Manchester/South Club.

Although I was not asked to join this Club until 1989, I feel very closely tied to its early years. Don McNeill was Fran's (my wife's) uncle. He served as Club President in 1964/65. Fran's grandfather, Leishman McNeill, was President of the Rotary Club of Calgary in 1955, the year our Club chartered. Don Magee, my father-in-law, joined this Club in 1960 and served as President in 1974/75. In May 1975 I married my bride Fran, Don and Marion Magee's daughter. So my early years with the Magee's and the McNeill's consisted not only of getting to know and love the family but also getting to know and love Rotary for it was a large part of their lives.

Don McNeill once said to me, "Bob, you'll never leave a meeting of our Rotary Club not feeling better than you did when you arrived." I have found this assertion to be nothing but the truth.

Based upon the foundations of fellowship and family I mentioned earlier, our Club has achieved a remarkable history of success. The house we meet in regularly is the result of a successful partnership with the Calgary Exhibition & Stampede. It is as much a part of our identity and who we are today as is the foundation of fellowship and family our Club is built on.

Rotary Challenger Park, the Stay-in-School Scholarship Program and Golf Tournament, the Rotary Flames Partnership for Life, our commitment to the Calgary Rotary Clubs Foundation and the Rotary International Foundation, our continuing commitment to local and international charitable undertakings and, perhaps most of all, the excellence of our Dream Home partnership with the Calgary Exhibition & Stampede can serve as no better examples or testimonials to our success as a Club.

I have had the opportunity to travel in Europe, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Mexico, much of the United States and most of Canada. In visiting many other Rotary Clubs for the

purpose of make-up meetings, I have never found a club that appeared to have the spirit of fellowship and goodwill that permeates this Club. Our Club's willingness to take on new and challenging tasks, it's can do attitude, it's ability to get the job done are commendable. In our early years we may have been seen as second rung but I assure you we have become second to none! This is easily confirmed by our Club's recognition as the best large Club in District 5360 by Mark Starratt during his year as our District Governor 2008/2009.

Notwithstanding this history of success I do have some concerns for the future of our Club. I am concerned that we have become somewhat complacent with our success, too self-centered, too parochial. I am concerned that support for some of our programs and functions is on the wane. Support of our Youth Exchange Program, the Dinner Club, and some of our social events such as the lobster supper is dwindling. We have had some difficulty in filling our shifts for the Dream Home project. There is some controversy with regard to the equality of contribution and credit for the effort

provided. Too much reliance is being placed upon too few. We are drawing from the same well too deeply and too often. Most concerning, our membership is in decline and our attendance lags. According to district records in 2004 we had 175 active members. Today we have 153, a net loss of 22. Our attendance used to be approximately 85%. Today we struggle to achieve a percentage above 75.

It is with the history of success behind us and with these challenges ahead of us that I suggest it is time for renewal. I choose this word carefully. I did not say reinvent, I did not say replace, I did not say rebuild. I said renewal.

George Deegan and his rotopedia would tell us renew means to make like new, to restore, to refresh, to re-invigorate. And so, the objective of my year as President of our Club is to restore, to refresh, to re-invigorate, to make us like new again, to return to our foundation of fellowship and family.

During my year as President elect many of you and your partners offered congratulations and support; many of you offered comments on our Club and its activities; what pleased you and what displeased you; what your hopes and fears were for the future of Calgary South. I have tried to carefully listen to these comments and to draw direction from them. I have looked back at my near 20 year relationship with our Club and have recalled our history as told by Peter Penner, Don McNeill and Don Magee.

From this I have developed a number of goals I hope we can achieve in obtaining our objective.

**Goal Number 1** - I hope to conduct a further strategic planning session in the Fall of 2009. Yogi Berra said,

"If you don't know where you are going, you will end up somewhere else."

Past President Dave Marchant started this process in November 2007 with our first strategic planning session.

Unfortunately only 16 members found time to participate at the session but approximately 100 members responded to Dave's pre-session questionnaire. Many topics were discussed and issues identified but no strategic plan emerged. If Yogi is correct, we may be headed for somewhere else, and so it is my goal to complete the work started by Dave and with your input and support have our Club adopt a five year rolling strategic plan.

**Goal Number 2** - The future of our Club, our country, our planet is in our youth. We have been strong supporters of the Rotary International Long-term Youth Exchange Program. Fran's and my daughter Anna spent a year away as a Rotary Youth Exchange Student in New Zealand sponsored by the Rotary Club of Centennial and our daughter Patti a year in Germany sponsored by the Rotary Club of Canmore. As the parent of two daughters who had this exceptional opportunity and as one of the host families and counselors of five different exchange students I cannot emphasize enough my view of the importance of this program. These students are often the leaders of tomorrow.

In sponsoring and supporting this program we have the opportunity to instill in these future leaders at an early age Rotary's four way test. Think what our world would be like today if all of its leaders followed that test. These students give us new perspectives on foreign cultures and customs and our families the opportunity of life long friendship and love of families in foreign lands. As an example of what it means to a student to be selected to go abroad as a Rotary Exchange Student I want to share this story. Selling tickets at the Dream Home this year a young man and his girlfriend approached the booth I was in. He told me that five years ago he was sponsored by the Rotary Club of Airdrie and spent his year in Turkey. Although still a student he wanted to buy \$20.00 worth of tickets on our Dream Home as a way of showing his continuing thanks and gratefulness to Rotary for what he described as his life changing experience.

I have asked Kate Stott, who is also the mother of a Rotary Exchange Student, to chair our committee this year and I ask you to give your unreserved support for the renewal of this project.

**Goal Number 3** - Our Club owes a huge debt of thanks to our Treasurer, Art Borzel. Art became our Treasurer in 1997, over ten years ago. At the time he thought he was retiring but ended up with a full time job. With proceeds from the Dream Home, the Stay-in-School Golf Tournament, Casino, New Members Auction and Calgary Rotary Foundation alone we have annual revenues which exceed \$1,000,000. With the Stay-in-School Scholarship Trust and the Calgary Rotary Foundation we have funds entrusted to us in excess of \$2,000,000.

Acting on the recommendation of the Audit Committee, in May the Board approved the formation of the new Finance Committee to review our financial and accounting practices and to develop procedures for reporting, budgeting and financial accountability so that we will continue the good work done by Art with the assurance and knowledge that our financial house is in order. The new committee chaired by John Price will, over the next year, put in place these necessary procedures and we will engage the assistance of

a part-time bookkeeper to manage our financial records and accounts. I ask for your cooperation with John and his committee during these changes.

**Goal Number 4** - One of Fran's and my most pleasant introductions to the Rotary Club of Calgary South was to be invited to join the Dinner Club. As a new member we were invited to the homes of other members, members of varying lengths of experience in our Club, from the most long serving to other newbies like ourselves. Food and fellowship were abundant and members and their partners soon became friends. We learned much about the Club, its members and their families and shared stories about ourselves. Close ties to our Club were made or strengthened. Unfortunately the last few years participation in Dinner Club has lessened and maintaining the commitment to host fellow Rotarians in exchange for being hosted has been broken.

I have asked Greg and Joanne Martin and Marianne and Manfred Jost to reinvigorate our Dinner Club. It will not be expected that you provide a gourmet meal or set out the fine

china and silver, just provide the opportunity to share a social evening of fellowship with a little food and beverage on the side.

I would ask you join in this quarterly event with your partner and I ask you as well to renew your support of our partner's Fall Social, the lobster supper, Christmas Luncheon, Chinese New Year, Valentine's Day Lunch, President's Ball, the Rotary Fellowship Weekend and the Dream Home Kick-off and Wind-up. It is through these events that we become more than just a lunch club. We become a family of Rotarians.

**Goal Number 5** - I am somewhat embarrassed to tell you that until last year I had never attended a District Conference or the Rotary International Convention. What a loss to me as a Rotarian. Now having enjoyed both experiences I have come to realize that R. I. consists of two words - Rotary which we experience weekly and International. Until I had attended these conferences I had no practical sense of how international our organization is and the impact we as

Rotarians have on the world. We can all read in the Rotarian or on the R.I. website about the international projects our organization sponsors but until we have heard first hand at District Conference or the R.I. Convention what an impact we have or can have on those less privileged, we have no concept of the power to change each of us individually, acting as a collective, has. This point is clearly brought home hearing from speakers such as Ki-Moon, Secretary General of the United Nations, Mia Farrow, actress and Ambassador for Unicef, Dr. Jane Goodhall, conservationist and humanitarian; and by sharing fellowship with Rotarians from the four corners of our District and the four points of the Rotary world's compass.

Next year the Rotary International Convention is in Montreal Quebec from June 20 to June 23. The District Conference is in beautiful Banff from May 28 to May 30. The first 150 registrants for the District Conference will receive \$200.00 from the District toward their registration for Montreal. Partners are eligible for the same subsidy. And so it is my goal to have at least 40 members of our Club attend District

Conference and at least 20 members of our Club attend the R.I. Convention.

It is also my goal in enlarging our Club's horizons to encourage other Clubs to visit with us and for our members to visit other Clubs. I have suggested to the Presidents of the 11 other Calgary Clubs a monthly exchange whereby 10 or so of our members would do a collective make-up at their meeting and they would send a group to ours. Our first opportunity is July 29 to visit the Rotary Club of Calgary Millennium.

**Goal No. 6** - It has been said that the engine of Rotary is membership and the fuel of Rotary is the Rotary Foundation, for without members there would be nothing to power the vehicle and without funds there would be nothing to drive the engine. In our Club we see annually the benefit of the proceeds of the Calgary Rotary Club's Foundation and the programs those funds allow us to support. So too do we see the benefit of our contribution to the Rotary Foundation in the matching grants we receive to support our World Community

Service projects. Our renewed commitment to giving to these foundations, especially in times when the need was never greater and the resources available diminishing, is critical to the continued success of Rotary at the local, district, and international level.

**Goal No. 7** - My last, and to me my most important goal in achieving our objective, is to increase our active membership by a net of 22 members. To do so we will need approximately 30 new members over the next 12 months. Where do we find 30 new members and how can we be assured they will be quality Rotarians some may say. These are good questions. Here are the answers. Members of Calgary South look to your sons and daughters, your grandsons and granddaughters, your sons and daughters-in-law, your partners in business and profession, your colleagues, your neighbors, your friends. We need nothing more than your endorsement of these new members by your sponsorship to ensure they will be quality Rotarians, for you as a quality Rotarian will nominate no-one of lesser ability or dedication. 69% of the 100 members responding to Dave's

survey viewed the optimum size of our Club at 180 members, and 17% saw us as large as 200 members.

The challenge for the future success of this Rotary Club in my submission is simply this. The challenge is not that our Rotary Club will exceed the capacity of our premises, the challenge is that our commitments have exceeded the size of our Club. If we are to refill the well and lighten the burden we will do it by asking more to do less not less to do more. My goal is 175 active members by June 30, 2010.

Attendance is also critical to the continued success of our Club. Although the R.I. bylaws allow attendance to be maintained at 50%, our Club's bylaws mandate our members to maintain an attendance of 66%. To me this is clear direction on the importance of attendance in maintaining the foundation of fellowship and family we are built on. Make-ups can be accomplished with relative ease, by visiting one of the other eleven Clubs in Calgary, attending Committee meetings or as simple as going online and attending one of the E-Clubs at any time of the day, any day of the year.

My emphasis on these seven goals to achieve our objective is not to take away from any of the other committees or projects we have. It is however to emphasize what I believe essential in securing the future success of our Club and ensuring its ranking as the best large Club in the District and perhaps the Rotary world.

I cannot achieve any of these goals or the ultimate objective of renewal of the Rotary Club of Calgary South without your support. I will not be aware of our successes or failures without your feedback. I will try my best to make myself available to all members to hear their comments, criticisms and concerns. I may not always be capable of the response you are looking for but I will always listen and respond.

John Kenny, President of Rotary International for 2009/2010 has adopted as his theme:

"The future of Rotary is in your hands".

In doing so he stated:

"The future of Rotary will not be shaped at R.I. headquarters, it will be shaped in each and every Rotary Club because it is for each of us, as Rotarians, to do what is necessary to keep Rotary strong."

"In Rotary, everything we are, and everything we aspire to become, lies in the hands of Rotarians in their Clubs. If our Clubs are congenial and our meetings well run, if our service is carefully planned and competently carried out, if our members are qualified, honest, and respected in their vocations and communities, then all of Rotary will thrive."

"Each one of us is standing on the shoulders of generations of Rotarians past, and it is our responsibility to determine Rotary's future."

In conclusion, I say to each of you as Rotarians and members of the Rotary Club of Calgary South, we are standing on the shoulders of those who chartered our Club and those who would not accept a position on the second rung. For the future of not just Rotary but for the future of the Rotary Club of Calgary South I ask you to join and support me in renewal. The future of this Club and the future of Rotary is in our hands.

Thank you.