

The following Address was given to those who attended the Rotary Club of Rotorua 90th Birthday Celebration/Christmas Function by Past President John Heaton RHHIF on Monday 11th December 2017 at the Rotorua Golf Club

It is a privilege to have the opportunity to speak on the occasion of the celebration of our Club's 90th anniversary. I thought that in this talk I should go back to the beginnings of the Club and also recount some of the more light-hearted moments. There are a number of connections between some of our first Rotarians and current or recent members.

We owe a debt of gratitude to Gary Spence for his work in producing the book for our 75th Anniversary. Tony Baker is currently taking orders for a reprint of this book. As well as the archives now owned by the Public Library, the book is a very valuable source of information for the Club and has been very useful for me in my preparation. Tony Baker, Garth Wilson and I had a great experience some time back in going through the old archives in preparation for the handover and they are now available at the Library for any of our members to see.

The year 1927 saw Rotorua with a combined urban/rural population of just over 7,800, a town with wide tree lined streets, no tar seal, no roundabouts and very few motor vehicles. A town square where the Howard Morrison Centre stands today and the lakes were sparkling and clear. To illustrate changes in Rotorua over the years I recently recounted that I attended Rotorua Primary School in the late 1930's early 1940's at the time of the Second World War. One of the pupils was a girl called Olga Short and every day at midday her Father collected her and they went home for lunch. Her Father was Harold Short and at the time was Rotorua's sole Traffic Officer. His car was an Austin 7 and he was the Building Inspector and the Dog Inspector so he was obviously employed by the Borough Council.

On the 17th October 1927 a meeting of citizens was called where it was resolved that a Club called the Rotorua Rotary Club, be organised and that the Standard Constitution of Rotary International be adopted. The Club was to meet at the Te Runanga tea kiosk which was opened by Joseph Ward in 1903. The Charter members of the Rotorua Rotary were to be 25 in number and the following members formed the foundation of the Club.

Herbert Bertram, Surgeon

Joseph Buddle, Accountant later Buddle Joyce & Buddle

Fred Bunyard, Borough Engineer (who did the impossible and developed the sewerage system for Whaka and Ohinemutu)

Ossie Coleman, Draper (Chairman State Housing Commission managing the transit camp sited where Pak 'n Save now stands)

Cecil Clinkard, Taxi Proprietor (1st Mayor of Rotorua later an MP. Clinkard Avenue named after him)

Jack Douglas Davys of Hampson & Davys Solicitors, later Davys Burton. Hampson was our

recent member Jim Hampson's uncle.

John Duncan, nicknamed Doc Spa a doctor at the Sanitorium.

George French a grocer and 1st Secretary of the Club.

Robin Adair Gardiner, Editor of the Hot Lakes Chronicle, later, Morning Post now Daily Post.

Halbert Goudie, a Forester, Goudies Block south of Kaingaroa named after him.

Sid Hay GP. His rooms were on corner of Fenton and Pukaki Streets - our family Doctor.

William Hill, Manager Tourist Dept. and as Tourist Dept ran Rotorua up until 1923 in those days he was the First Citizen of Rotorua and met all the dignitaries.

Norman Keane, Seed Merchant and Carrier Fenton Street.

Cedric Knight, Electrician.

Herbert Munro Martin, Farmer Ngongotaha

William Morrison, in charge of the State Forest

Thomas McDowell, a land agent, Mayor of Rotorua and the 1st President of the Club and the Great Grandfather of Honorary member Ian.

Walter McLean, Town Clerk

John McLean, owned both Australia and Australasia private hotels.

John Roberts, Manager BNZ man of great importance in the town.

Leo Ryan, father of past member Jack and founder of RM Transport a coaching company located where the Post Office used to be in Hinemoa Street. In more recent times were local General Motors Dealers.

Alby Ryder, Headmaster of Rotorua Grammar School, gave the school its motto Ad Astra Per Aspera. (To the stars through great difficulties)

Joe Southwick, Pharmacist and father of past member Doug.

William Wackrow, Mill manager from Koutu.

In all, a good spread across the fabric of the business and professional community.

About two years into the life of the Club things were rapidly going downhill with the very real possibility of a need to wind up but, with a very strongly worded letter from President William Hill the situation was turned around and the Club then went from strength to strength.

Golf has always obviously been well to the fore in this Club, no more so than in the firm of Davys Burton. There is a story about social golf in the 40's.

John Burton was Ross Burton's father, Dick Lord was assistant manager of the BNZ and an accomplished writer of short stories. Harry Dukeson accountant a past President and Joe Witherow a tyre specialist and Past President and Ross Burton's father in law.

This poem describes Joe Witherow.

Six foot two and nineteen stone, a massive frame of blood and bone

He stood upon the golfing tee, a perfect sight for all to see

His clothes were new look in extreme, befitting not a Prince but Queen

Plus fours in colours so designed, to leave all Whaka far behind.

Capping his sartorial blunder, he had of course a modern trundler

Huge bag and clubs to regulation, to conquer any situation
While little John was white and tense, as Harry looked with pride on Joe,
And talked in terms of real dough!
The match was mastered by brilliant play, while John's most gentlemanly play
Contrasted strangely with the crude, diversions made by either bloke
To put him only all the more, determined to improve his chore.

But virtue triumphed over might, and the end was soon in sight
As John with most consummate skill, prepared his victims for the kill
No matter how they strove and tried, the Rotary boys went for a ride
Equipment, strokes and all their arse, could not triumph over class.

In 1966 I was invited by immediate past President Peter Verrall to consider joining Rotary and I didn't have to think too long as with the make up of the club and it's standing in the community it was considered a real privilege to be asked. That year Rotary in Rotorua had been in existence for 39 years. At the time I Joined only one member of any qualifying vocation could be eligible for membership. Once having been inducted, attendance at a fireside meeting would be required, where a number of senior club members would provide information on the operation of the club and leave the member in no doubt as to his responsibilities as to attendance, make ups, committee attendance and general participation in club activities.

Due to my involvement in a number of other organisations I had difficulty at one stage in attending a committee meeting. Past President Mid Battersby took me aside to find out why. Mid was the Ford Dealer in Rotorua and was a man of some influence, as these were the days of severe import restrictions and a scarcity of cars. You had to go down on bended knee and beg to go on the waiting list and this did not always work. Anyway, when I explained my situation he said, look you are already doing a good job in the community, you don't need to be a member of Rotary. He knew how to get the message across. Well, I had no intention of leaving Rotary, so I very quickly re ordered my priorities so that I was able to be fully involved in my Rotary responsibilities.

The importance of engaging new members fully in the life of the Club was recognised and so early on we were allocated a job and each succeeding year I found myself with a major responsibility leading up to my year as President 1974/75.

The Club was involved in a number of continuing service activities in which the whole membership would participate and these I feel, gave us a sense of the real worthiness of our Club.

One was the Sunday outings for children from the Queen Elizabeth Cerebral Palsy unit. Two cars would be rostered each Sunday to collect the children and their Nurse for a fun afternoon experience.

Second was the Blood Bank Appeal held in a public hall where the Schools and Public at large would provide donors, and Rotarians and wives would provide assistance for setting up, making teas and generally providing manpower as required.

Third was the Annual Health Stamp Appeal where the Club members were allocated areas and secured pre-sales to businesses in that location. This was a very important source of funding for the Health Camps.

The Club ran a number of very successful Community Service projects over a reasonably short span raising something in the order of \$10,000 each which enabled the building and purchase of the YWCA facility and the Senior Citizens building in Ranolf Street.

Probably one of the Club's most rewarding projects was the Annual Home Show masterminded by Harold Holmes which netted around \$20,000 each year. Harold had a very dedicated and hard-working committee including Ian Smith and Tony Hill who spent many hours in the organisation and preparation for it.

The whole Club membership was involved for a few days in the setting up, providing manpower during the show and dismantling and cleanup afterwards. One cannot underestimate the great benefits of the camaraderie, fellowship and general strengthening of the Club through an exercise such as this.

We had a large membership in those days and for each committee we had a Chairman and a Director who sat on the Board.

Directors meetings were quite challenging as they comprised two parts, firstly business and then fellowship and I can recall on at least two occasions driving home in the early hours as the sun was rising. We had a number of very hard driving go getters, who worked hard and enjoyed a little play afterwards, unfortunately none of these particular fellows are with us today.

Annual dinners were always a great occasion, black tie, men only. These were held at the Grand Hotel up until the fire which razed it in 1973. Owned by Sir Ernest Davis's company the hotel possessed many valuable paintings and art works which fortunately, had been removed for cleaning just prior to the disaster. Traditionally the wife of the incoming President entertained all the directors' wives to dinner at her home. With the demise of the Grand Hotel we had to find another venue for my changeover in 1974 and we chose the DB hotel. This would be the last men only dinner as next year, Incoming President Ross Tyler arranged for the Ladies to be present.

At one of the earlier Annual Dinners at the Grand Hotel when Magistrate Paterson was a guest the occasion went on just a little longer than the licensing laws allowed. Every night at 11pm, Senior Sergeant Hogan did his beat and imagine his luck to find this group in the inner sanctum of the Hotel, supposedly breaking the liquor laws of the country. Incidentally, Hogan had been transferred from Hastings because of addiction to the dreaded drink. He

crept along the verandah, slid up a window and jumped in, landing immediately in front of Magistrate Paterson.... Paterson never moved a muscle.... Hogan, it is said, changed colour and without a word, leapt back out the window, never to be seen near a Rotary Annual Dinner again.

By the time I was installed as President I had served in virtually every position in the Club except Secretary. In my Presidential year I was fortunate to have relatively new member Harold Holmes as Bulletin Editor as he did a great job redesigning and updating it. I was also fortunate to have Radio Station Manager Bill Judd as Programme Organiser as he had amazing contacts right throughout the country and brought some very eminent speakers to our Club. We had:

Len Bayliss – Chief Economist Bank of New Zealand

Graeme Crossman – All Black

Captain Fred Ladd – Pilot famous for flying under the Auckland Harbour bridge.

K B Burnside – Police Commissioner for New Zealand

Sir Geoffrey Roberts – Chairman Air New Zealand Vote of thanks by Tony Baker

Sir Keith Holyoake – At a joint meeting with the Lions Club

4th November – Was one of the best - We had a Vocational workplace visit to our Honorary Member Ian Smith's business Trewmaster, where his Manager, fairly new Rotarian Peter Oldham gave his classification talk. At that time Ian employed 250 people directly and without workers provided employment for a total of 500 in all.

One of our past members Jack Stafford was President of Rotorua Lakes in the same year as my Presidential term. Jack as many of you will know, was quite a character and always had plenty of stories to relate and he had a very distinguished record as a Spitfire pilot in the second World War. The members of his Club got one across Jack on the last day of his term. On the 30th June 1975 they produced a bulletin titled The Hot Lakes Debacle. The headline, Club President and Directors Replaced - no reasons – just rhymes. One of their wordsmiths produced the following: "Ode To Jack The Tripper"

Like a colossus he doth the earth bestride, his head thrown back, mouth laughing wide,
And, cradled in each mighty arm , a damsel of exquisite charm,
A super stud of world renown, no man could take that hard won crown,
So in his dreams – the vision graphic, he quite forgot the household traffic,
Until Edie at the breakfast table, shouts with all the breath she's able,
"Time to get up Jack – Jack, do you hear?". He answers meekly – "Coming dear".

It is interesting to note that after a large number of our members left to form the Rotorua West Club in 1965, three years later, in Doug Ewert's term as President, his best attendance was 124 made up as follows: Members 111, Hon Member 1, Visitor 1, Visiting Rotarians 12, Apologies 8. So that gives us a total of 120 members of the Club without any possible silent members. Rotorua Lakes was formed with 24 members from our Club in 1970 and in my year as President 1974/75 we had an average weekly attendance of around 75. Along with many other Clubs and organisations we are having difficulty in maintaining and

increasing our membership, but it is good and very positive that we have decided to be innovative and open minded in our efforts resolve this situation. A excellent article in Rotary Down Under has pointed out the possibilities for Rotary in New Zealand by rationalising and strengthening our whole organisation, so that is a challenge for us all to consider.

Over the years Rona and I have been involved in a number of Student and Youth exchanges as well as friendship hosting and we have found all of them particularly rewarding and good fun. One in particular, was a youth exchange where we hosted a girl called Helen from Wales, who filled a teaching position at Rotorua Boys High School. The stories we could tell, would keep you entertained for hours and some would make your hair stand on end.

Helen's father was a doctor and Rotarian in Wales and we thought that he may have hoped, by her coming to New Zealand we would sort her out. It just didn't happen.

Rotary has been very good to both Rona and I and in the earlier years we attended a number of District Conferences, great experiences where we were inspired by amazing speakers and enjoyed fantastic fellowship. Rona joined Inner Wheel when it was formed in Rotorua and served a term as District Chair even before she was President of the Club. She has made wonderful friendships there and together we feel privileged to have been a part of this great organisation and thanks to you all for listening.

Past President John Heaton
Monday 11th December, 2017