



# Lamorindan



The Weekly Newsletter of the Rotary Club of Lamorinda Sunrise  
Meetings Friday 7AM at Postino's Restaurant in Lafayette

March 2, 2007

Tom Black & President Rich — Reporters  
Dave Dickson — Pictures  
Kevin Croak — Publisher

## ***Report of 03/02/07 by Tom Black***

How fitting that the March 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting followed a Lafayette-centered temblor -- reportedly 4.2 on the Richter scale -- the evening prior, as there was a substitution of scribes that proved of seismic magnitude. To wit (or witless), Tom Black pinch hit for longtime beat reporter Cal Lee, who was off doing something else presumably of equal or greater import or interest. Or maybe he just slept in. Or played hookey. Whatever.

As fate would have it, Tom -- for many years a professional journalist -- arrived bereft of the following: paper, steno pad, eye glasses, hearing aids and dentures (one breakfast serving thus left over for the week following). Not that he would stoop to use any of the aforementioned as an excuse for the quality of the subsequent write-up. Suffice to say that what you are about to read is 1) totally unofficial, 2) totally unvetted, 3) totally inaccurate, and 4) totally uninteresting. Therefore, unless you have absolutely nothing else to do now, even the laundry, stop here.

Dave Watson, keeper of the official birthday and anniversary calendar, rose to say he left the binder at work, and therefore had nothing to report. This proclaimed, everyone was off the hook for a possible fine. Then, one honest fellow, Dan Herbert, raised his hand to confess, totally unbidden, that he had had a birthday on Feb. 15. Perhaps as an indication of what his family thinks of him, he says he was "treated" to breakfast at the downscale Squirrels coffee shop in Lafayette. For his forthrightness, Dan was fined \$15, a sum that doubtless exceeded the cost of said meal tip included.





Watson, a relative newcomer to the club, was asked by President Shearer how many Rotary clubs there are all told (kind of a pop quiz, you might say). Watson responded, "About 10,000." That number is on the shy side by only 22,000, give or take. Surprisingly, Watson managed to escape being fined. Presumably, the Big Kahuna suffered momentary mental lapse. As a result, our coffers are not as enriched as they might be.

Paul Fillinger reported that invitations had been extended to 221 guests for the 12<sup>th</sup> annual dinner auction on March 3. If they all show, the crowd would exceed last year's attendance by at least 35.

Ken Kosich reported that every last blinking member had donated at least one article to the fundraiser. It is not known if this is unprecedented, but if it is, it is. (Sorry, no time to check records.)

Although it went unannounced at the meeting, our intel moles whispered in our ear that Al Sevilla had just returned from his native land, the Philippines, where he attended a high-school class reunion. It is believed, albeit unconfirmed, that Al graduated sometime after the Japanese occupation of the island concluded. Must be the Botox, because Al "looks mahlevous."

So did Marco, the in-training yellow lab he brought to the meeting. Al and his wife Cindy are foster "parents" to the dog, who, after being sufficiently socialized publicly, will go off to be formally trained for 18 months. Eventually, he will be assigned to some lucky physically handicapped individual. Marco was remarkably well-behaved. He didn't say boo, or even bark or scratch at the one flea observed lurking, fangs extended. It was rumored that Al had sedated pooch, although, for lack of time and journalistic curiosity, this could not be confirmed either.





We then were treated, thanks to inviter Buddy Burke, to a very interesting presentation by Michael Kohn. It was on the subject of Mongolia, where he lived and worked (as a writer and reporter) for three years until his return to the States in 2002.

While there he worked – for the equivalent of \$50 a month – for an English-language newspaper, and as a stringer for BBC and the Associated Press.

He parlayed his experiences there into two paperbacks, “Dateline Mongolia,” and “Lama of the Gobi.” Additionally, he has written a travel guide book on Mongolia for publishing house Lonely Planet.



Among other fascinating informational morsels, he told us about the vast 12<sup>th</sup>-century empire of the (in)famous Ghengis Kahn. At its height, it stretched between today’s countries of Hungary and Poland. The native language is, duh, Mongolian. Russian and English also are spoken by the natives. There is a rate of literacy, and 80 percent of the electorate votes (compared with 50 percent of ours).

Although there are some 45 political parties, two predominate.

The native diet is heavily meat (lamb, goat, sheep), with few fruits and veggies, as the land and climate are inhospitable to annual crops of any kind. Moreover, the people are largely nomadic tribes, so tending crops would prove impractical even if they had a hankering for broccoli and bran and the like. We don’t know about soybeans or okra or anything else. Or orcas, which reputedly are not native to Mongolia ... or any other land mass. Go ahead, Google it if you like.



## March 2, 2007—As Reported By Rich Shearer

### GUESTS

Well, we had some, but I managed not to get them down because I forgot that, in addition to exhibiting my unbelievable leadership skills as your Scheming Despot, I had also retaken the reins of the Fourth Estate in Brother Cal's unavoidable absence and Brother Skip's unavailability. (Notice how only the lawyers are called upon to write our doings?)

### GENERAL SILLINESS



Mike Edwards had two watches on. No reasonable explanation was offered. \$20 was assessed against Chuck Yeager. Why? Because I can, that's why. What the heck, I figure my fining practices make as much sense as any of my predecessors'.

We had some announcements about pertaining to the Dinner & Auction, but since you won't see this until after it's over, t'ain't no point in repeating them here.



There was an earthquake last night. It's epicenter was very close to Kevin Croak's house. That was reason enough for His Worship to assess a \$10 "recognition." And thus it came to be.

### PROGRAM

#### Mongolia

What do you do if you are teaching English in Japan, want to switch careers into journalism, but can't get any papers in Japan, Singapore, Korea, Taiwan, or other major Asian outlets? Well, if you are Michael Kohn, you take a job with the English-language Mongol Messenger, circulation 1500 in Ulaanbaator (Mongolia's capitol) writing for expats and embassies, supplementing your income by filing stories from Mongolia with other of the world's newspapers.

That's how Mr. Kohn came to spend three years living in Mongolia, the land of Chingis Khan (the proper name and spelling for the fellow better known here as Ghengis Khan). Mr. Kohn now writes for Lonely Planet, purveyors of some of the best travel guides available, including (but not limited to their guide to Mongolia). He has also written "Dateline Mongolia," a more detailed story of his three years in-country 1998-2000, and "Lama of the Gobi," the story of a 19<sup>th</sup> Century holy man otherwise unknown here but very well-known in Mongolia.

**Mr. Kohn told us some of Mongolia's vital statistics: 2.8 million population; 2 people per square mile, the least densely populated country in the world. He also told us that the population were almost all nomadic livestock herders, which still describes about 30% of the population. We also learned how Mongolia takes a great deal of its modern persona from the Russian. For example, Mongolia uses the Cyrillic alphabet. In fact, the existence of a separate Mongolia is due in large part to the Russian desire for a buffer against China. Close on the heels of the Bolshevik Revolution, Mongolia in 1921 established itself as a communist country, which it remained until the Berlin Wall and the Soviet Union. It now is a democracy, with free elections (80% turnout) and genuinely competing political parties. One peculiar artifact of the Communist days - a very large statue of Stalin that used to be a prominent landmark now serving as the main decorative accent in an Ulaanbaatar discotheque.**

**Speaking of Mongolia's capitol, its population is about 800,000 There are few other urban centers. Bespeaking Mongolia's nomadic roots, Ulaanbaatar itself was not permanently situated until about 1800, even though it was founded in 1639.**

**Mr. Kohn showed many photos illustrating the variety of Mongol scenery. Outside of Ulaanbaatar, there was a common theme running through the variety of the Gobi desert in the south and the mountains in the north and west - vast expanses with nary a human in sight. But animals feature prominently. Included among them re the millions and millions of sheep, goats and other livestock, the animals that make up the bulk of the Mongol diet. Unique horses native only to Mongolia were once extinct, but have been repopulated from stock held in zoos around the world.**

**Prehistoric animals also feature prominently. Roy Chapman Andrews, later head of New York's Museum of Natural History, led explorations of Mongolia and other parts of Central Asia. Among the amazing fossils that have been found in Mongolia include a velociraptor and a protuberates locked together in mortal combat for al eternity. Mongolia is also the place where the first (and I believe only) dinosaur eggs ever found were uncovered.**

**Mr. Kohn has gone on to write other guide books for Lonely Planet, but it is clear that Mongolia still holds a special place in his heart. You can learn more about Mr. Kohn, his books and his travels can be found on his website, [www.michaelkohn.us](http://www.michaelkohn.us).**



## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

February 16, 2007

Okay, I'm cheating by writing this two days after the meeting and the day after the big Dinner & Auction fund raiser. I don't want to jinx anything by guesses or estimates, so I'll just say that all indications are that we had a successful event in terms of money raised. There is no question whatsoever that it was a huge success on every other level: the hall looked absolutely tremendous, we had a great array of auction items, members and guests alike seemed to be having a wonderful time, the food was good – in short, what a great evening!



Also, this coming weekend marks Prez-in-Waiting Paul Fillinger's PETS experience. (That's Rotarianese for "President-Elect Training Seminar" for the uninitiated) where Paul learns the Club Presidents' secret handshake and gets indoctrinated in all things Rotary. Actually, PETS may be the single coolest thing about being a Club President, although not by much. (In case you haven't noticed, I have been having a blast running the meetings - well, maybe not "running" so much as standing up in front and trying to know when to duck.) By having such a great fund raiser, we have sent Paul off with a big smile on his face, mainly because he knows that three-fourths of the money we net will be his "do-good" budget for his year.

And speaking of "do-good" stuff, we still have some projects to take on before I shuffle off my Presidential coil. So take a deep breath, give yourselves a big pat on the back for a job well done at the fund raiser, and then get ready to roll up your sleeves again as Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary once again does its part to show that Rotary really does believe in "Service Above Self."

Rich Shearer  
LSR President 2006-07

