



Lamorindan



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

April 18, 2008

Thomas Black – Photography
Ron Brown—Editor
Kevin Croak – Publisher

Guests and visiting Rotarians:

Nancy Polis – Keep coming Nancy, we'll get you eventually!
Katie Rose – Best raffle ticket seller in the West
Joe (Last Name here please!) – Benecia Rotary
Kate Glass – Center for Early Intervention on Deafness



PR and Announcements

Tom Black, self proclaimed expert on arranging photo opportunities, talked about Rotary sponsored mural displays now appearing at Bank of the West. Photo in local newspaper was of Rotarians Larry Buson, John Sherry and Tom Black. Paul was the crack photographer. Prez Paul then finagled his way into another picture by virtue of piggy backing on a trip to Google with some Moraga Rotarians and their foreign exchange students. What was that all about?

Kate clearly and patiently explained the mission and purpose of the Sunday May 4th 10am walkathon at Moraga Commons Park benefiting the Center for Early Intervention on Deafness walkathon schedules. This, in the face of several needless interruptions by two CEID board members who are also recognized troublemakers at our own otherwise fairly sedate, proceedings.

Brad Davis reported on the latest Lamorinda Sunrise Foundation meeting results. The foundation is soon to have \$96,000 under its management. He was pleased to say that it has produced an average 7.5% return over the last three years.

Zuska Reports on Spring Break

Two neat things happened the week of Spring Break. First Pat Flaherty invited Zuska and Katie Rose on a visit to many of Pat's favorite places in San Francisco where he grew up. The highlight was a visit to the Pacific Ocean where Zuska had her first opportunity to actually touch the ocean. They had an amazing lunch at the Cliff House where they were able to enjoy the beautiful view of the sea. It was a wonderful day that the girls will never forget.



Now, about Stinson Beach. That was an amazing experience. She spent the whole week with Steve Ware's family, in a great house, at a beautiful beach with wonderful people. Zuska felt like she was in paradise. Nature was lovely and the prettiest part was the beach and the sea. But she had nightmares about the possible danger from sharks, which she thought about all of the time she was near the water. Later she had a chance to try boogie boarding so she decided to break away from her fears. She thinks it was a good choice because she had so much fun. The best part is that the shark's haven't been as hungry as she thought! Zuska also learned the word gullible and the phrase holy smoke. You'll have to ask her how that came about.

Program: “If I can do this, anyone can”



This morning the membership and guests were treated to an immensely powerful and inspirational presentation by Dyan Bender, who lives right here in Lafayette. Until August 25, 2000 Dyan’s adult life consisted mainly of her job as a software/hardware trouble shooter for East Bay Point of Sales Systems (EBPOS), and in competitive horse show jumping. She started riding when she was nine years old. Working with her horses was an all consuming endeavor.

On that fateful day her whole life literally came crashing down. Competing in a show in San Diego, Dyan’s horse stopped dead in her tracks right at the barrier, but Dyan continued on, in a full somersault over the rail, landing squarely on her upper back. Her backbone was shattered. But due to a lot of luck (her spinal chord remained intact), and the skill of an emergency crew and surgeon, she narrowly escaped being paralyzed from the chest down.

So that was the good news! However, what has ensued over the following years turned out to be a monumental challenge. After the first emergency surgery, recovery time in the ICU and 3 months flat on her back, she was then restricted to wearing a Kevlar body shell, which required help from two people to put it on her. All the while she was taking increasing levels of medication to help control the constant pain. Her life was totally collapsing around her. She couldn’t sit or stand for any appreciable length of time, couldn’t work, drive, go to a restaurant or the theatre. After 2 years of intense pain, physical therapy, and more surgery the doctors told her there was nothing more they could do for the pain, numbness or weakness. She fought with her insurance company for an entire year to get them to authorize removal of the two ugly titanium rods that had been inserted into her back to hold it together while the bone grafts healed. Usually they were left in place, but in her case they were part of the problem and needed to be removed because they were irritating the nerves and muscles. Finally she won that battle, but she also got her insurance cancelled, because her care was just costing the company too much money.



She hit rock bottom on what she described as her “birthday celebration from hell” at Postino’s restaurant in 2006. Dyan couldn’t sit for more than 10 minutes at a time, couldn’t eat her food, and came to the tipping point that despite the loving support she had constantly received from her family and friends she looked at herself in the mirror and decided “I’d had enough, pushing 200 lbs...a slug that was either in pain or pretty much a zombie from medication. This wasn’t living!”

So what did she do? Dyan found a new doctor who would actually take the time to listen to her needs, and was genuinely interested in helping her to get her life back. They struck a deal. If the doctor would agree not to tell Dyan no, she would follow his direction for the next 15 months. He told her that at the end of that time she would either be feeling better or else she would have broken down enough that there would be something to fix! Wow!





The doctor changed her medication and prescribed walking, with the warning that it was going to be really hard. He wanted Dyan to work up to walking 2 miles a day. She decided to go for 3 miles on the first day. Not a good idea! She backed off on the distance but hung in there. The first month was horrible. She took her pain medication and headed out each day without fail. Over the next four months she went from barely being able to get around the block to walking for 2 or 3 hours every day. Dyane lost 30 lbs and gradually discovered that she needed less and less pain medication.

This profile in courage story could easily end right here. But wait until you hear the Rest of the Story!!

In October of 2007 at another family birthday Dyan asked her brother about a group called Teams In Training (TNT) the worlds largest endurance sports training program, specializing in walking and running marathons and half marathons. Her brother had previously participated in this program and encouraged her to check out the possibility of training for a walking marathon. She did. However the TNT winter session only offered running. Although a former top notch athlete, Dyan had never run and, oh yes, she did have a broken back. Undeterred and at the request of the TNT Coach, who decided he would probably never see her again, she called the doctor who had promised never to tell her no, and got his permission (reluctantly) to give it a go.

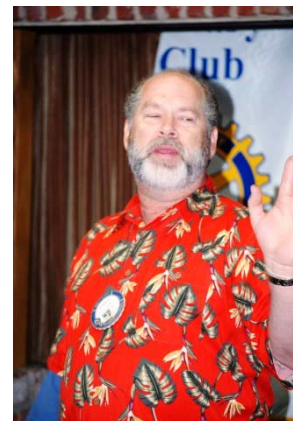
Of course she signed up for the program. One little problem to overcome though; no feeling in her left foot and down the back of her left leg. She had no idea if she really could run. And besides, it was winter...and dark...and really cold. For the first month she hated running (sound familiar) and at first she was often passed by walkers who went faster than she could run. It took her almost 2 hours to run her first 7 miles. But she did it!

So how's she doing now? Last week she won her age group in a 5K marathon!! Her doctor "still doesn't understand why running works for her. He says it shouldn't. He just shakes his head and tells her as long as it works, to keep on doing it." By the way this wonderful doctor is not a specialist in back injuries or surgery. He happens to be a family practitioner, who is an obvious expert in the art of personal healing.

If you think this is an amazing story (and it is) it is important to know that in the Q&A Dyan revealed that as part of her athletic life as a show jumper she has suffered broken bones in her legs, ribs, shoulder and lord knows where else.

She also says that this latest experience has completely transformed her life. She is back to working part time in her old job, runs half marathons, is a client of Thomas Peeks' Fitness Together program, and enjoys life with her family and friends to the fullest.

Wouldn't it be great if we all could have a fraction of the intestinal fortitude that this remarkable woman continues to demonstrate?



Work Project Report

Subject: Garden Park Apartments clean up day

Our leader Brad Davis offered special thanks to Cal Lee, Ron Brown, Hays Englehart, Ernie Furtado, Zuzka Frllickova, Joanne & Ulrich Luscher and Krysten Laine for their participation in Clean Up Day at Garden Park Apartments today.

We and some of the tenants took the cover off the swimming pool, then weeded the flower beds before planting and watering rose and oleander bushes, and geraniums. We trimmed mature oleander bushes bordering the parking lot. We provided seeds for their community garden; beans, squash, pumpkins, tomatoes, and lettuce.

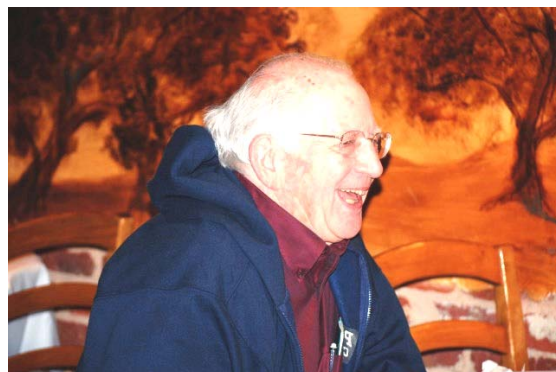
To take the annual pumpkin carving party to the next level, we began discussing a joint project with the tenants; build two planter boxes, prepare the soil, plant pumpkin seeds, grow and harvest the pumpkins, then carve them. They are excited. We are excited. Let's do it.

The participating tenants enjoyed the day. We enjoyed the day. A win-win.

Reporter's observation: Of special note was the awesome job performed by Hays in wielding an electric shear to trim of about 100 feet of oleanders. He did manage to clip off the license plate of one of the other volunteers who had parked too close to the bushes. (Not really, but it was a close thing!) The tenant volunteers were enthusiastic and appreciative of the efforts. What made the day were the kids who latched on to us as helpers and stuck with it the whole time. If that doesn't tug at your heart strings it's time to check yourself for a pulse.



Chuck Yeager writes Cal Lee parking violation ticket as Hays Englehart looks on disapprovingly.



Briefly Noted

By Prez Paul
April 19, 2008



I didn't do nothin' Saturday night. Vegged out watching TV. The Comedy Channel. Lewis Black, my favorite stand-up comedian. He ranted for two hours about our lousy government. I couldn't help thinking, what a great country this is that people can do that and not be thrown in prison or shot.

Glenda and I had spent the day listening to 18 Rotary Peace Fellows in Berkeley talking about their passionate interests in changing the world. These students from 18 different countries know about war and injustice. They are in a two-year Peace and Conflict Resolution graduate program at UC--brilliant, dedicated people who are not discouraged by the violence, corruption, factional hatred and injustices they have seen and experienced.

When you listen to these young professionals, you know they are going to make a difference in the world. This has to be one of the best programs that Rotary International sponsors.

One young woman lawyer talked about the problems in her country of Sri Lanka—about the ethnic violence and need for rewriting a constitution that is “fair and beneficial to all the people.” Those are my words. She referred to the same need in many of the emerging countries of South Asia, Africa and Latin America. Countries, by the way, where Rotary has clubs.

It is a simplistic thought but Rotary represents some pretty terrific values that we, in this country, take for granted: Service Above Self and The Four Way Test. If those values were expressed in “constitutional language” in some of those countries, it would go a long way in establishing freedom and justice for many people in the world. Why does it have to be so complicated? Why can't people agree on a few simple truths?

You and I can be proud of supporting 70 Peace Scholars at six universities around the world who are thinking about it—and doing something about it.

Paul

