



Michael David Driebe, President 2015-2016, Rotary Club of San Marino

My service as club president came rather unexpectedly. A few months before the President-Elect was to take over, he had to step down due to family and business concerns. Since I had served as President of Pomona Rotary many years before, the selection committee asked me to step in. In a moment of weakness, confident I could handle that job and my role as District 5300 Rotary Foundation Committee Chair, I agreed. In turn I asked all the 2014-2015 board members and committee chairs to stay in their roles and thankfully they did.

The year began as it traditionally does with club members walking out as I opened my first meeting. It's done "tongue-in-cheek" to make sure the new president doesn't think too much of themselves. Our first meeting opened with a phrase Russ Osmonson used during his year and I'm happy to say is still in use today, "Welcome to San Marino Rotary, the club that *Makes a Difference.*" At this first meeting and all my subsequent ones I used the opening to share a quote from Rotary founder, Paul Harris, and the closing to share a story about the impact of The Rotary Foundation on the lives of people around the world.

The weeks rolled on featuring my own address to the club, and then the remarks of DG Randy Pote the following week at Southwestern Academy. That summer included a Rotary on the Town Event put on by Lucille Norberg and her committee at Santa Anita Race Track and featuring a "Miss Relay Contest" where gentlemen donned frilly dresses and make up to parade around the infield raising money for charity.

We learned about plans for the new San Marino Chinese Club building, we heard craft talks from new members and from members who weren't so new, and we inducted members with a bit more formality than in the past, which reflected on things like restoring eyesight to those who would never see us or planting trees under which we'd never sit.

We heard from Gilda about her Rotary International Convention experience in Brazil and from Isaac Hung who participated as a volunteer with the International Medical Mission Alliance in El Salvador. Jean Brodhead and her committee lead us on a Rotary Reader journey of their own to find deserving schools and to present an age-appropriate book for each student in need at those schools. We worked together to fight polio and to learn more about the international effort to end the disease in the wild. We went to "Rotary Basics" and worked with the San Marino Chamber of Commerce to salute our city's fire fighter and police officer of the year. Program Chair Georg Eittinger brought guests from Germany who shared their musical talents with us, and we heard from Los Angeles County Supervisorial Candidate, Kathryn Barger.

As summer turned to fall, San Marino Rotary Charities began the search for worthy area charities to make grants to. A graduate of Southwestern Academy, Lorraine Acero, received a District 5300 scholarship grant of \$5,000 to help with some of the college costs she couldn't meet on her own. We heard from "baseball prankster," Jay Johnstone, had a party at the "Flying A Garage" and amended our

bylaws to allow the board to fill vacancies so we would have standing committees that more accurately reflected RI's new club structure.

Not everything was fun and games, though. As a board and as a club, we had serious discussions about preparing invocations and jokes. Members were asked to remember that our members and guests are a diverse group, and that humor should not promote stereotypes, be sexual in nature, or offensive to any ethnicity, social status, or national origin. Simply put, jokes should not be something we would be uncomfortable having guests or children hear. Invocations were even more difficult, as they related to an important and intensely personal subject for each of us. We were asked to be sensitive to the diverse range of beliefs held by everyone who attended our meetings and avoid references to any particular faith in the prayer or its conclusion.

We were pleased to learn that the District would reimburse both our La Casa Christmas Party and Rotary Readers Project. Fary Yassamy donated her dental skills to serve hundreds of people at free dental clinics in Fresno, Ventura, and at the Fairgrounds in Pomona. Her service, and that of more than one hundred other dentists, was coordinated by the California Dental Association to offer much-needed care to the poor. As October ended, we learned about the Michael White Adobe on the High School grounds and the efforts to save it. We gave thanks to Eric Block for sponsoring our dinner at the "Flying A" and said so long to Greg Custer who left because of his business relocation to Newport.

The holiday season commenced with Craft Talks by Scott Kwong and Calvin Lo. We also were paid a special visit by the Rose Queen and her court. We saw the election of some fine Rotarians to the San Marino City Council, and through Lucille's leadership of the "Socialist Committee," we had an amazing holiday party at San Gabriel Country Club, where we were serenaded by the very talented San Marino High School Choir.

Before the year ended we saw the Vocational Service Committee put on a very successful Career "Speed Dating" event for veterans at PCC, matching grants from District 5300 of \$15,500 for the Global Grants sponsored by our club, we heard from Lee Baca on fighting crime, and from Greg Johansing and Eugene Sun who delivered their Craft Talks. A very brief Annual Meeting took place, bringing Denise Wadsworth and Debbie Herbert to the board. And in the spirit of the season we heard from Rob Fiedler who asked for our help to collect used but useable warm clothes, umbrellas, blankets, sweaters, jackets, hoodies and scarves to help those without a home to weather the coming winter. Our final program for the calendar year was given by Hans Jorg Neumann, who spoke about the reunification of Germany just twenty-five years before.

The New Year began with another wonderful Rotary Float in the Rose Parade and a presentation to our club by William Covino, President of CSULA, who noted the university's accomplishments and the challenges faced by the entire CSU system relating to the state budget. January also saw a leave of absence for me as club president as I needed surgery to straighten out some bad vertebrae in my neck. The club carried on and enjoyed craft talks, book distributions by Jean Broadhead and her committee, as well as, a wonderful cello concert by Ferran Albrich. Russ Osmonson conducted a Social Hour at the Canoe House, and Scott Kwan volunteered to carry the Relay for Life gavel to another club to keep the fundraising effort moving forward. We also saw the resignation of long-time member Doug Larner, who decided to begin a well-deserved retirement from Morgan Stanley.

In February, Cari Toneck, Chief Compliance and Risk Officer at Methodist Hospital, addressed the club on the topic of building quality in healthcare, while managing in our nation's most regulated industry.

Bob Houston's "Big Chili Cook-Off" took place the following week with the Titan Athletic Boosters taking first place in the popular vote. The expert judges declared the entry from the San Marino Chamber of Commerce as their winner. Kudos to Bob for another great contest. Not to be outdone event-wise, Lucille created another wonderful, "Rotary on the Town" at Mission 261 to celebrate the Lunar New Year, and used the evening to announce that her successor for future events would be Grace Yang. February closed with more book distributions and our club's 4-Way Speech competition, featuring five very persuasive young people.

In March we welcomed Kimmit Haggins, who talked with us about the Kilimanjaro Coffee Cup, a program to help the poor coffee farmers of Tanzania. Russ continued his own version of Lucille's "socialism" by hosting another social hour at Canoe House on St. Patrick's Day, we heard from Bill Davis of Southern California Public Radio, Nat Read told us about his new novel on homelessness, "Speed Bumps" and we held another wonderful Paul Harris Foundation luncheon on March 24th in newly opened space at the Huntington Library and Gardens where we honored community servant, Lisa Link. Considering that most of us are well beyond the age of bringing new babies into the world, March was also remarkable for the arrival of Benjamin Axel Von Thiel and for the remarkable performance of the HMS Bel Canto Choir.

Spring arrived and so did a thought provoking talk by Damien Ardestani, better known by the pseudonym and artist name, XO.V. A Swedish Platinum-certified artist, songwriter and producer, he shared photos and videos of rescue operations by I AM YOU, a volunteer organization based in Lesbos, Greece, at the heart of the global refugee crisis. The Vocational Service Committee conducted another successful "Career Speed Dating" hour at PCC's Veterans' Center. Ron Fiedler and his panel selected several young people from local high schools to go to RYLA, April 15 to 17. These students later came to the club to tell us about their experience. Other talented young people also distinguished themselves, with the help of Aaron Gil and Grace Yang, by presenting their award winning work at the Annual Art Contest on April 21st. The month closed with a talk by Dan Singleton, "From Skateboards to Scramjets," describing his remarkable engineering career and the adventures he had along the way.

May featured the District Conference in San Diego, another wonderful Rotarian get together in Isaac and Celia Hung's back yard and our support of "Candyland", a junior/senior prom for special education students from all around the west San Gabriel Valley. We also heard from Charlene Ung, who shared memories of her escape from Vietnam and the path that took her from there to her work at JPL, and from that charming gentleman, Joe Coulombe, founder of Trader Joe's. We enjoyed two Craft Talks. One from Sharon Park and the other from a somewhat reluctant Fary Yassamy. Both did a beautiful job. Sadly, the month closed with a memorial for Rotarian, Dick Cooper, who exemplified our motto of "Service above Self."

June arrived, and with it the close of my year as President. As I relished the prospect of the best job in Rotary, that of Past President, there was one more major undertaking for the club, the San Marino Motor Classic. It was the successful result of a great deal of planning, ticket sales and hard work, which resulted in tens of thousands of dollars for the club to use in support of our community.

June featured another tradition, the annual "Salute to our Service Academy Appointees." We also heard a wonderful Craft Talk from our Program Chair, Georg Eittinger, who shared his craftsman's journey with us, as well as, a few secrets of the Stradivarius. Finally, the demotion and the swearing in of President, Gilda Moshir! It was heartwarming and fun and without a doubt, one of the highlights of my year.

It was a time to reflect on all those who through their time, talent and treasure served our membership and our community. They are the ones who added another chapter to our club's distinguished history and they are the ones who carried on our tradition of leadership. Everything San Marino Rotary accomplished in 2015-2016 was possible because of them and I am honored to have led such a remarkable group.