

“WHAT’S IN A NAME badge.....”

(.....or remembrances of a Regional Rotary Foundation Coordinator)

*Contributed by PDG Ron Lucas*

Some weeks ago, members will recall I asked the club if anyone had a spare magnetic strip for my Rotary name badge as mine first disintegrated and then was lost. I had the front part but not the back. I hunted around in my Rotary memorabilia box and found one given to me in my earlier Rotary ‘life’. I have worn it since on my RIGHT jacket lapel and it has generated some curious comments from “that’s a big one, Ron” and “what’s it all mean”. For the record it says....” **RON. Ronald WGLucas – Regional Rotary Foundation Coordinator 1997-99**”. Wearing it at the club for the first time brought back many happy memories some 24 years on.

However, I still blame John Sutton for starting it all in 1973 when the club met at The Borough Arms. John tapped me on the shoulder and asked me to take on the task of Host Counsellor to an American Ambassadorial Scholar, Ann Yancey, coming to Keele for a year in September 1973 from Astoria, Oregon, USA. This I accepted and that was the beginning of my association with The Rotary Foundation (TRF) some 47 years ago. And so serving through the ranks of the District 1210 Foundation Committee I became Chairman during 1983 – 87, District Secretary 1987- 92 (only, I maintain, because my office had a large photocopier for the piles of papers we used to post to clubs in those days), District Vice-Chairman, Governor-Elect and then District Governor 1995-96, one of 29 Governors in these islands. In those days, when nearing the end of “Governor’s year”, a letter would arrive from RIBI Secretary inviting Governors to serve on a RIBI Committee the following year and asking what is your preference? My preference was The Rotary Foundation Committee or The Vocational Service Committee. I was given TRF to my delight and I served the year 1996-97 under Chairman PDG John Hammond of Loughborough. That was it so far as I was concerned but then to my astonishment, I received an invitation from the Secretariat to serve as Chairman of the RIBI Rotary Foundation Committee 1997-99 closely followed by an invitation from Rotary International to serve as a Regional Rotary Foundation Coordinator (RRFC) for RI Zones 17 & 18 (Great Britain & Ireland).

Having accepted the invitation, I received **THE BADGE**. Naturally the two jobs overlapped in many ways – developing the Rotary Foundation programmes through GB&I, speaking at seminars including two in Dublin, advising and assisting Districts when asked, creating TRF programmes for RIBI Conferences and Institutes, chairing half-yearly meetings with the 29 District Foundation Chairs, etc. But perhaps the most stimulating were the training visits to One Rotary Centre, 1560 Sherman Avenue, Evanston, IL. 60201, USA, the global HQ of Rotary International, situated in the upper floors of a Rotary owned 18-storey block close to the shores of Lake Michigan.

I remember flying out from Manchester on American Airlines for O’Hare, Chicago, on the 11.00am flight and arriving at 1.00pm in Chicago Central Time and after a short break meeting with my fellow RRFCs from around the world at One Rotary Centre – 27 of us in total. One or two of whom would subsequently become President of Rotary International. Jose Adolfo Herrera from the Dominican Republic was made Moderator and I was appointed Facilitator. Exciting times, which resulted in my travelling to Evanston to plan future training seminars for the RRFCs as well as participating in the seminars themselves, all with the assistance of the excellent RI staff and all flights at 11.00am from Manchester and eight hours later I was there. The Rotary fellowship was palpable as it was global.

Here are just a few of the memorable moments from my time as a RRFC.....

.....with my fellow RRFCs Oddmund Wallevik (Norway) and Hans Rilling (Germany) planning and facilitating the Rotary Foundation sessions at a Zones 13-18 RI Institute in Gothenburg, Sweden in November of our first year.....planning and chairing a Foundation Seminar for the Ireland District in Dublin and being hosted by John Wheeler SC, a State Counsel, and his wife Una, also a prominent Rotarian in Ireland, and meeting Una's mother a 'dyed in the wool' Northern Irish Protestant and being forewarned not to open discussions on the 'Irish Question' ..... an afternoon's walk along the shores of Lake Michigan after a heavy morning and lunchtime session at One Rotary Centre and being joined by RI President Glen W Kinross (Brisbane, Australia) for most of the walk as he shared with me his hopes and aspirations for his year as President.....being entrusted by their Foundation Committee to deliver the Yorkshire District's papers for the University of Bradford to be considered as a Rotary Centre for Peace & Conflict Resolution Studies and safely delivering the papers to the Trustee Chairman Cliff Dochterman at One Rotary Centre (Bradford's application was successful as is well known).....being present at the House of Lord's when Trustee Chairman and Past RI President Robert Barth presented The Rotary Polio Champion Award to Labour's Secretary of State for International Development Clair Short MP for her support of the PolioPlus Programme during her time in office.....attending a Reception at the US Embassy in Grosvenor Square for all the 25 Rotary Foundation Ambassadorial Scholars in London hosted by US Ambassador Philip Lader, himself a former ambassadorial scholar at Oxford University, and also present Trustee Chairman and Past RI President Bill Huntley.

Just a few of the many happy memories of a wonderful two years as a Regional Rotary Foundation Coordinator for these islands and there are many others. But one experience must be unique in the annals of Rotary International. It was the time when I was invited to introduce Past RI President (1994-95) Bill Huntley (Alford & Mablethorpe), the incoming Foundation Trustee Chairman, who was going to give the inspirational after-lunch talk in the restaurant at One Rotary Centre before all our RRFC and staff. Bill is a Yorkshireman, although resident in Lincolnshire, but nevertheless a proud Yorkshireman, as I am. So, my pitch was to emphasise the occasion, unique to One Rotary Centre, that a Yorkshireman was introducing and inviting a fellow Yorkshireman to address the meeting. The significance of this event was lost to many from the far side of the world but not to Bill and me. Bill Huntley MBE died in 2006 and when I attended his funeral service in Sutton-on-Sea in March 2006, I recalled that moment a few years earlier and I inwardly smiled.

My name badge means a lot to me, and I wear it with pride for the opportunities for Rotary service it gave me and the happy memories it represents.

RWGL/Word/C

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