

Rotary Club of Santa Rosa West

Bulletin for November 16, 2009 Visiting North Korea

By Bill Dodson

Preliminaries



President Susan Nowacki eloquently called the meeting to order of this very fine chapter of a great (the best!) organization at the St Rose Meeting Hall.

Pledge: **Carson Mitchell** led us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Rotary Moment: **Gary Lucas** once again provided us with a thought provoking Moment.



Our Greeter: **Phil Talamantes** introduced Barry Silver from the Downtown club. There were no guests at today's meeting.

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Coming Up:

11/30 - Erin Prucha, a Santa Rosa acupuncturist will discuss how acupuncture got started in the U.S. and the most recent trends its use

12/7 - John Jones, Rotary Club of Santa Rosa Sunrise
For the past 13 years, John has participated in several Rotary Eye Care projects around the world

12/14 - Polio, Past District Governor, Larry Myers

12/19 - Christmas Party

12/21 - TBA

12/28 - DARK

1/30/10 - [Crab Feed](#)

Announcements & Such

Jim Hinton requested Rotarians to bring food to support FISH (Friends in Service at Home) over the next two meetings. This organization, which includes Jim's wife **Carolyn**, provides food for those in need and, as you can imagine, they are finding more people in need.

Janet Coddling reported on the Rotary Foundation dinner held recently in Rohnert Park. The event was well attended, President Susan was acknowledged for her inspired table decorations and Phil Talamantes won a bottle of wine in the raffle.



Jim Hinton will host the next Friendship Dinner. Mike Merrill reported that his recent Friendship Dinner included Harry Rubin, Phil Talamantes, Anne Abrahms and their respective significant others. Mike said you get to know members much better over dinner and recommends others try it out.

Casey Williams gave a status report on the upcoming Crab Feed, otherwise known as 'The Good, The Crab and The Ugly'. Meetings are being held on Tuesday evenings at Sequoia Pacific Mortgage on Mendocino Avenue. He urged members to bring wine and fill baskets for the auctions. Past President David McDonald did a terrific job of auctioning off the ad space for the back of the raffle tickets. Jim Valinoti was the highest bidder at \$350! And Harry Rubins volunteered to be in charge of the ticket sales.

Harry Rubins also noted that last year he was given a pin to acknowledge his honor as Rotarian of the Year. Having recently found the pin, he proudly pinned it on our current Rotarian of the Year, Jim Valinoti!

Recognition

Scott Bartley and **Bill Fisher** were forced to sit through a rendition of the Happy Birthday Song

Jim Hinton made sure that President Susan was recognized for her birthday and fined \$64. You figure out her age.



Getting to Know You

Our own **Joe Perez** is a talented ballroom dancer! Who knew? **Joe** and **Scott Bartley** became Rotarians in 1983. **Ken Kushnir** sponsored Joe who was kind of a techo geek in school. He went into broadcasting in TV and became an Air Force pilot. In 1982 he worked with Jim Johnson at TV50 before building Sonoma County's Public Safety Commission System. During his 15 year tenure he also created the communication consortium that coordinates emergency services throughout the region. He also sold airplanes for 5 years. Twelve years ago, while vacationing, he met and soon married Deirdre who shares his passion of ballroom dancing. These days Joe plays with airplanes at the Air Museum, dinks around with geeky gadgetry and dances. He is very proud of his grown sons and stepsons.

And the winner is...

Jim Benoit had ticket #475239 and tried to pick the right marble but got the left one instead.

Casey Williams had #475231 which got him a bottle of wine that will be in the auction at the Crab Feed.



Program: Visiting North Korea (otherwise known as PDRK), Roland and Beth Fellows

Chris Young introduced **Roland** and **Beth** Fellows who were childhood friends that married 70 years later. They have since traveled extensively and shared their recent trip to North Korea with us.



Roland and **Beth** were fortunate enough to be granted visas to North Korea for their recent visit. Over the last twelve years only 2000 American citizens have been able to enter this country. The travel industry is not one of the country's big businesses; there are only three flights in and three flights out daily. Their president is referred to "My Dear Kim Jong Il". PDRK has the largest hotel in the world, which is not completed yet but shows an imposing image in the skyline of PyonYang city. There is also a 150,000 spectator stadium where, for \$300 a ticket, they watched 100,000 people perform for the audience.

"Keepers," or escorts, accompanied them wherever they went in North Korea. They were not often allowed to use their camera (although Roland managed to take some photos in a sneaky fashion) but they did have a series of slides that showed empty streets and some of the areas where the North Koreans express pride. The hotels have lots of bars, the Taedong River has very little boat traffic and the "grey" markets are run by members of the military.

They were there during the 60th anniversary of the formation of PDRK so there was a great military presence. The food was not very good, cell phones or internet services are not allowed and electricity is in short supply. And there are very few bicycles as walking is the predominant means of transportation. They generally dislike Americans which might help explain why so few of us have been there. Given all of that, why go? But we are fortunate that Roland and Beth did go so we got a peak at what life is like just north of the demilitarized zone that our military patrols to this very day.

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