

# !!!BUZZ!!!

January 8, 2020

Pres Wes rang the virtual bell for our meeting on this fine, sunny Friday afternoon. And those Rotarians remotely present rose to recite the 4-Way Pact. Wes welcomed our speaker Rick Hamish to our meeting. William Porter (guest of Rick) was also pleased to be with us. We segued from guests to the “good news” part of the program (always warm/fuzzy happiness provoking). We saw the two widowed penguins, giving comfort to each other who gathered to watch the lights of Melbourne, Australia. Then we heard of the UPS driver who was honored by a neighborhood he served. The third was the Senate Staffers who, under the duress of last week, had the courage to take custody and safeguard the electoral college ballots.

 **Happiness** 

Nanette S. was \$5 happy for her Mom’s 95<sup>th</sup> birthday last Monday, who got a flower cake! (not a typo).

Pres. Wes was \$5 happy for the officers of the Club who worked hard throughout the year and especially in the past week to keep the club running.

Bill L was happy that he and Mimi have been healthy through COVID-19, and they look forward to a better year this year (so do we Bill, and we also send you our wishes for peace and comfort for the loss of your brother and sister-in-law).

Rosemary J was happy because her close relatives, after 8 clean COVID-19 tests, were able to enjoy Christmas together.

John S was happy because his grand daughter Ashley arrived safe at College in Georgia where she begins her new adult life!

Pres. Wes was further happy because his best man (at his wedding) is a teacher in tech school in Texas, and got to be an unine-ologist! (Ewwwww!)

## **Announcements**

Jean S announced that our Ace grant program has been completed. The scholars expressed their gratitude for being able to focus on learning. COVID-19 has wreaked havoc on everything, but Jean expressed hope for the scholars' future. And now Ace II begins.

And Tom G noted, on the subject of Ace II, that Ace II needs 31 mentors. Please volunteer. You don't need to be a Rotarian to be a mentor.

George P had a lot to say about the Classic preparations (put March 13 on your calendar). We need sponsors. If you know anyone at local businesses, please forward that contact information to George and Lisa (who will do the actual asking).

On the subject of the Classic, Julie C spoke about the preparations for this year's Virtual Classic! Look for video/digital tickets for the Virtual Classic. You will be getting calls and tickets. There will be printed tickets too, for those who need it. Check out the Classic Website, which you can get to from Clubrunner.

Later, Tom G announced that the scholarships for 2021 are up on the website. Let your contacts at the schools know.

## **Queen of Hearts**

Tom G enthusiastically hyped up the Spinning, Vertigo inducing Process that selected a winner for our Queen of Hearts (it's not a raffle) – who turned out to be Mary Jo S, disappointing the rest of us (not really). Mary Jo picked card # lucky 7, which as things turned out, was not quite so lucky for her (as it was the Jack of Clubs). We're so sorry Mary Jo. Better luck next time! And Tom gushed out his appreciation for those Rotarians who have been regularly playing the game.

## ***Finemastering***

You know its a bad sign when our Club President introduces the next segment of our meeting with a suggestion that members should just go on the website and pre-pay their Finemaster Fines now .... But on that cheerless note, he introduced our very own Michigan State Spartan and son of Dee Troit Michigan Allen G who wasted no time illustrating the wisdom of Pres Wes' opening remarks by immediately fining:

Allen wore a vintage Rotary Club sweater (and gave passes to everyone who was also wearing that same type of sweater, and fines to everyone else);

When Pres Wes somewhat impetuously noted that the sweater was older than he was and asked Finemaster Allen how he could be expected to have one, the Finemaster agreed, fining Wes \$5 and also fining his dad (Don C) and his uncle (Jim F) for not giving such a sweater to Wes (Wow! – *a triple play!*);

Allen was disappointed that there were very few entries to the weekly Finemaster Question – and anyone who didn't respond was fined accordingly;

If you haven't reached out to another Rotarian, you're fined \$4!

The pin-less were fined.

Everyone who hasn't adjusted to the change of the year was fined (marking 2020 on a check or other document rather than 2021);

There were some doozies in the responses to the weekly Question (something funny about Christmas/Santa)

Jodi B: Dear Santa, define Good!

Don C: Hi Santa. Before I explain, what do you know already?

Jean S: "the buttons on my jeans have been social distancing on me"

Steve L: "Christmas has been canceled. Unfortunately, you told Santa you'd been good. He died laughing!"

Moving along,

People who wore TIES to our virtual meeting were justifiably fined.

**Bill Kelly was fined for advertising** (I bold faced this because Allen wanted you to know that you had been fined in absentia);

If you own real estate in Florida or Arizona, you're fined, except for Bob K!

If you did not make it to Midnight on New Year's Eve, you're fined – no excuses!

And if you haven't been fined, you're fined \$3.00 (which vindicates Pres Wes' initial suggestion that everyone should prepay their inevitable fines).

And with that, mercifully, the fining sputtered to a close. Thank you Allen! May we have another? And then he did!

Roger S and one other Rotarian submitted answers to the Question that were not suitable for mixed company (so he's fined);

Vince S' response (leave the gun, take a Cannoli) drew a fine (it was actually a quote from the Godfather), as Vince pointedly complained to no avail. Too bad Vince! The line wasn't a "hit" with Finemaster Allen.

## *Program*

Rick Hamish spoke to us about high speed rail (“HSR”). The goals of advocates of HSR are to build stronger communities (making it easier for families and friends to visit), while lowering carbon emission at a diminished cost (because train tracks are less expensive to maintain than roads). The USA focuses almost entirely on driving, at a huge financial cost and environmental impact.

High Speed lines travel at 125 – 250 mph. We don’t have operational HSR in the USA yet (but they are building one in California). To do it you have to build a rail line that isn’t crossed by local and interstate highways. Tracks need to be optimized for speed so you can’t run freight or commuter lines over them.

If HSR came to our region, the waypoints would probably be, from Chicago, to St. Louis, or Milwaukee-Madison-Minneapolis, or to Indianapolis-Detroit-Cleveland or Indianapolis-Louisville. France, Spain, Turkey and China have all built HSR. Costs are a lot less than air fare to go to the same places. Carbon emissions are greatly reduced by a factor of 4 – 5. HSR is substantially less expensive to build (it is about 10% of the cost and land use of highways).

California is beginning to create a HSR network, designed for 125 mph. Rick explained how the network that is now being built would work, and how it would integrate with existing transportation networks in California. He also described the potential for HSR in our area. The impediments are many. Metra was designed to transport people between the Chicago loop and suburban parking lots – a business that went away last March. Metra needs to focus on moving people from suburb to suburb.

Questions: Who would own the tracks? A: Metra owns some of its tracks. There are many alternatives.

Q: Who would pay for it? A: A mix. The highway fund might be a source of funding.

Q: Would the cost of bridging road networks in dense urban areas outweigh the cost savings you spoke of for HSR? A: not really. That cost is taken into effect.

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And with that, Pres. Wes rang the virtual bell on another fine virtual meeting of the Friendly Club! See you next week!