



# **The Desertarian**

**Newsletter of the  
Rotary Club of Palm Springs, California**

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September 21, 2011

What a beautiful day in Palm Springs and beautiful room for our luncheon today. We were surprised by beautiful black and gold linens and a very nice buffet featuring our favorite comfort food, macaroni and cheese and meat-loaf.

**Meeting Convened:** President **Mike Sellin** rang the meeting to order a few minutes late to allow our large crowd to visit and be seated.

**Bill Lentz** led the flag salute with the Pledge of Allegiance and **Mark Davidson**, complete with a shiny new blue badge, led us in the 4-Way Test. Rev. **Jim Griffes** offered an insightful invocation giving us something to think about during lunch.

Yours truly (**Jamey Canfield**) introduced visiting Rotarians and guests. Noel Downes and his lovely bride Paula were visiting all the way from the Hitchin Tilehouse Club in Hertfordshire England. We were also pleased to welcome Greg Persall from Yucaipa and Kirk Reed from Wilmette, IL. We also had three guests. **Jamey** did an excellent job!

**Announcements:** President **Mike Sellin** reminded the club to come to the unveiling of the new computers that are being donated to Raymond Cree Middle School through a Rotary International matching grant on Tuesday September 27 @ 1:00pm at the school.

**Christine Cross** recognized **Nancy Palmer** with her Paul Harris "Plus 3" pin, signifying a new level of giving to the Rotary Foundation. Congratulations **Nancy** and thank you!!!

**Milt Levinson** made a number of announcements including a request for volunteers for labeling and distributing dictionaries for Cahuilla school Thursday September 29, a reminder to sign up for the progressive dinner on October 29, 2011 (Yum-Yum!) and a "save the date" for volunteers to help with the serving of meals to veterans and members of the military separated from their families for the holidays at the Mizell Center on Christmas Day. Sign-up list to be forthcoming.

**This Weeks Program:** **Jim Dunn**, Had the honor of introducing our speaker for the day, **The Honorable Steve Pougnet, Mayor of Palm Springs**. Mayor Pougnet has been serving the citizens of Palm Springs since 2002 as a city councilmember and since 2007 as mayor. The mayor has served on numerous boards, committees and commissions during his time in the desert with a focus on improving the quality of life for desert

residents and the business community. The Mayor has also served regionally to ensure that Palm Springs is properly represented in regional issues.

Mayor Pougnet shared that the Rotary Club is his first fall presentation each year and he recognizes the good work of our club and appreciates our contributions to the community.

The Mayor covered four topics in his presentation: budget, public safety, economic development and Measure J.

This year the city has a balanced budget with a small surplus. The groundwork for this success was laid through the work of the city council in responding to the economic slow-down. The hard decisions made then have allowed the city to remain financially stable.

The tourism marketing budget was increased due to the recent success of the bureau of tourism's programs and the importance of tourism to the city's economy. Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) collections were up by 20% this year showing a robust rebound of the hotels and hospitality industry overall. Incentive programs enacted by the council to promote business investment have been successful as evidenced by the renovated hotel product and new restaurants and shops on Palm Canyon. These programs put the city in position to be successful. Sales tax collections are up 10%, there is only a 13% vacancy rate on Palm Canyon which is better than most areas in our competitive set. Re-invigoration of downtown is a major focus of the mayor and council.

Crime is down for the fourth straight year. Al Franz, our new police chief, has made a strong commitment to community based policing. The police are working closely with individual neighborhoods and neighborhood groups to develop strong relationships. Public safety represents approximately 50% of the city's budget.

Measure J is a proposed 1 cent sales tax increase that will be used to purchase and improve the public elements of the downtown revitalization plan including parking, and streets in and around the Fashion Plaza area and fund many needed capital projects and improvements throughout the City of Palm Springs. This will help backfill the city's budget for the money taken by the state and allow the city to properly invest in our infrastructure and facilities. Roadways, parks, libraries and the city's utility grid would all be projects that would be funded through Measure J. It is estimated that 60% of the sales tax will be paid by visitors and tourists. Ultimately, the revitalized downtown will generate significant positive economic impact including new jobs, visitor spending, and help our existing businesses to grow and prosper. Currently, the city is considering the formation of an oversight committee to work with the mayor and city council in identifying and prioritizing projects and spending.

**Recognition:** Dr. I.Q. (**Milt Levinson**) was in the house for a hearty fining session with questions out of the latest issue of The Rotarian. Topics ranged from birds to Rotary Leadership to travel and even Whooping Cough (also known as pertussis). Dr. I.Q.

stumped the room and there were no correct answers, even from the finest minds in Palm Springs. Highlights included **Dr. Alderman** who not only missed the question, but was fined an additional \$20 for asking too many questions of our speaker. **Thomas Smith** received a special assessment for not wearing his Rotary Pin. **Bob Ellsner**, our official “class clown” received multiple assessments for “Questionus Interruptus” throughout the fining session. In the end, a good time was had by all, especially Dr. I.Q.

**Happy Dollars:** Lots of happy people today! **Judy Bronstein, Christine Cross, Frank Peabody** and even visiting Rotarian **Noel Downes** all celebrated something special.

**Marble Game:** For a refreshing change, **Hal Castle** did not have the winning ticket! **Bob Barrett** was the lucky winner of \$28.00. When it came to looking for his marbles, **Bob** missed out on a whopping \$835.00 jackpot by drawing a green marble. Too bad, **Bob!** Better luck next time!

**Next Meeting (September 28):** Next week’s speaker will be Scott White, President and CEO of the Palm Springs, Desert Resorts Communities Convention and Visitors Authority. Scott will give us an outlook on the hospitality and meeting industry in Greater Palm Springs. Master **Tim Ellis** will be handling the recognition portion of the meeting so be sure to bone up on your tourism info.

**Guest Editor: Jamey Canfield**