A Word From the President

Fellow Rotarian Rick Carlson once told me that I don’t have to be a millionaire to be happy or to help other people. It was a simple statement, but I was deeply impressed when I heard it. Are you happy as a Rotarian? Are you happy as a person? I ask you this question because I want you to make our community happy on Oct. 14.

The following story is about a man who didn’t become a millionaire (even though he was close to it), but is still happy, knowing that he made a small yet meaningful contribution to the world. I hope you like it.

According to my two daughters, “UGG” Boots are enjoying a tremendous popularity among girls all over the world. I forgot since when, but at the beginning of every winter, we have to spend close to $400 for our two daughters’ UGG boots. After spending a fortune several years in a row, I began to look around for a cheaper option; after all, when one pair of shoes cost more than $160, it is inevitable that certain competitors will come up with cheaper knockoffs. Both online and offline, I found a few cheaper alternatives, and I strongly suggested them to our daughters. But our daughters would not even look at these other alternatives. According to them, somehow the girls today developed an eye to tell which one is real and which one isn’t. They also told me that those who wear the real UGGs seem to look down upon those who don’t wear authentic ones. I told our two daughters that UGGs are just a form of shoes but they strongly disagreed with me. They insisted that UGGs are a piece of art, not just shoes.

I read somewhere that the company manufacturing UGGs will make 900 million U.S. dollars this year alone. It is interesting to note that these boots were developed by a 69-year-old Australian man named Shane Steadman almost 40 years ago. If the company makes close to $1 billion per year, I thought Mr. Steadman, the founder and inventor, should be wealthy beyond his wildest dreams, but, contrary to my imagination, he still remains a very humble man, literally. He missed out on a life of wealth and comfort.

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When he developed these special shoes, he apparently charged only a few dollars per pair, and then he sold the trademark rights to a U.S. company called Deckers Outdoor Corporation in 1983, under the condition that he receives a lump sum of Australian 10,000 pounds and just three pairs (yes, only three pairs!) of free UGGs per year. If I were in Mr. Steadman’s shoes and missed this kind of fortune, I would have been pretty devastated. However, Mr. Steadman didn’t feel bitter about losing the opportunity to strike it rich. As a matter of fact, he still feels proud to have played a role in turning his humble Australian invention into a worldwide popular product. After all, as our two daughters insisted, he invented a piece of art, not just a product.

He has been living in a three-bedroom house for nearly 50 years. Apparently, he started as a surfboard maker and stayed with that job for all his life. With the craftsmanship he developed from surfboard-making, when a friend asked him to make shoes, he could easily craft sheepskin UGGs. So in 1973, Mr. Steadman introduced his first UGGs to the world. Apparently, his first UGGs had bits of meat attached to them, just like Lady GaGa’s most recent garment which made a tabloid sensation because of real beef attached to it. From the ugly look, and also the first reaction from the people who all uttered, “Ugh,” when they saw his first product, he decided to register the shoes’ trade name as “Ugh.” Personally, I like the name.

Mr. Steadman could have made a fortune if he came to the United States with his product. However, the love of his homeland and surfing didn’t allow him to come to the United States. He was very happy with the 10,000 pounds he received from the U.S. Company, as it was sufficient to put his two children through private school.

It is too bad that we are not buying the UGGs from Mr. Steadman directly, in which case we will pay him only a few dollars, as opposed to $160 per pair now. Who knows? He may offer one of the three free pairs he still gets every year from the U.S. Company?

OK, so much about the happy Aussie. We are just one week away from our annual fundraising. Thanks to the hard work of our committee members, the event itself is well under control. What we need is your participation. All we need is the kind of money that will buy a pair of UGGs shoes. UGGs get worn and wasted eventually. However, your donation to Edina Rotary Foundation will shed light on needy people in this community and the world community. Are you a happy person? Our annual fundraising is your opportunity to make other people happy. If you cannot come to the event on Oct. 14, please make sure that you turn in your raffle tickets and monetary donation. Let’s remember that we are in the business of “Reaching Within to Embrace Humanity.” See you on Oct. 14 at Hotel Sofitel! Thank you.

**Nominating Committee selects Nelson for 2014-15 District Governor**

The Nominating Committee for District Governor has recommended James E. Nelson of the Rotary Club of Minneapolis City of Lakes to serve as Governor in the year 2014-2015.

Nelson has been a member of the Rotary Club of Minneapolis City of Lakes since 1999. He served as president in 2009-2010 and has been a member of the District 5950 Foundation since 2010. He is currently an Assistant District Governor.

Nelson is currently an attorney and shareholder in the firm of Briggs and Morgan, P.A. His Rotary classification is “Real Estate Law.”

Challenges must be submitted to Past District Governor Larry Zilliox, Chair of the Nominating Committee, by Thursday, Oct. 13. Challenges should be sent to Larry Zilliox, PDG; 360 Karens Way NW, Alexandria, MN 56308-4678 or Lakemina@gctel.net.

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**It’s not (just) your father’s Rotary.**

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6 p.m. Friday, Oct. 14, 2011
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