25th Anniversary of Women in Rotary

Rotary District 5280

Sunday, May 20, 2012
Throughout the course of the first nearly seven decades of Rotary’s history ran the thread of debate about women as members, yet the first constitution of the Chicago Club #1, adopted in January, 1906, makes no reference to gender, referring only to “persons.” There were a number of unsuccessful attempts made to provide for the admission of women.

Before 1987, women were permitted to attend meetings, give speeches, and receive awards. Women relatives of Rotary members could form their own associations and were authorized to wear the Rotary lapel pin. Young women could join Interact or Rotaract, as well as study abroad and participate in the youth exchange program.

On its 25th anniversary, June 1977, the eight members of the Rotary Club of Duarte admitted two women, Mary Elliott and Donna Bogart, shortly followed by a third, Rosemary Freitag.

The Board of RI terminated the club. Duarte re-named itself the “Ex Rotary Club of Duarte.” In June, 1978, the club filed a suit in the California Superior Court against the RI Board decision. The RI Board appealed to the United States Supreme Court in 1986.

In 1986, Seattle International admitted 15 women members and a year later filed a brief with the United States Supreme Court in support of the Duarte Club. The Oakland Club #3 wrote to the General Secretary of RI questioning the termination of Duarte’s charter.

On May 4, 1987, the US Supreme Court voted a 7-0 unanimous ruling that Duarte could not discriminate against members because of gender. Duarte had the final say when in June, 1987, Dr Sylvia Whitlock was inducted by DGE Dr Kim K Siu as the first woman Club President in the history of Rotary.

In 1989, the Council of Legislation voted to change the Constitution and By-laws to permit the admission of women into Rotary. At that meeting, 328 delegates or 73.7%, voted in favor of deleting the word “male” from the constitutional documents. The vote followed the decades-long efforts by men and women from all over the Rotary world to allow for the admission of women into Rotary clubs, and several close votes at previous Council meetings.

In less than a year after the Council’s vote, women were members of Rotary clubs in 33 countries and territories, representing 5,000+ clubs in 239 districts. Women were Rotarians in such diverse countries as: Australia, Bangladesh, Brazil, Chile, Columbia, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Korea, Mexico, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Thailand.

Within 5 more years, the first 8 women would serve as governors for the year 1995-96. Women have held numerous positions at the zone level. At the RI level, women have chaired many committees.

The equal status of Women and Rotary was recognized by the appointment of Carolyn E. Jones of Alaska as a Trustee of The Rotary Foundation for four years in 2005 and Catherine Noyer-Riveau of France to the RI Board for two years from 2008. Elizabeth S. Demaray of Michigan is servicing on the RI Board for 2011-13.

Men, through their actions, changed the face of Rotary. by the strength of their convictions, and by the course of their dedication, through partnering together men and women have helped Rotary grow in stature, world peace and understanding has been encouraged and Rotary continues to help alleviate some of the suffering of the people of the world.
Sylvia Whitlock had no intention of making history when she was invited to join the Rotary Club of Duarte. When she became the first female Rotary Club president in 1987 after the California club’s 11-year legal battle with Rotary International to admit women, she became the symbol of women’s equality to Rotarians the world over.

“I didn't do this; I was just there," Whitlock said. "But now I stand for something. The biggest job that I have is to represent Rotary with integrity.”

In 1982, Sylvia, a school principal, was introduced to Rotary by Richard Key, Duarte’s Superintendent of Schools and President of the Duarte Club at the time. “Richard thought with all the women principals and women administrators, he could increase the club’s membership by inviting women to join. It was not a woman’s issue; it was a membership issue. When I see women, especially young women, involved in Rotary, it makes me proud," says Sylvia.

Sylvia Whitlock was born in New York City, educated, through high school in Kingston, Jamaica. She earned a B.A. in Psychology from Hunter College in New York. In California, she earned a Masters Degree, cum laude, in Education from Cal Poly, Pomona, and a Ph.D., cum laude, in Education, from Claremont Graduate School. She earned another Masters Degree, in Marriage and Family Therapy, from Azusa Pacific University, and began a second career as a therapist.

Sylvia Whitlock was born in New York City, educated, through high school in Kingston, Jamaica. She earned a B.A. in Psychology from Hunter College in New York. In California, she earned a Masters Degree, cum laude, in Education from Cal Poly, Pomona, and a Ph.D., cum laude, in Education, from Claremont Graduate School. She earned another Masters Degree, in Marriage and Family Therapy, from Azusa Pacific University, and began a second career as a therapist.

Sylvia considers Rotary to be the best vehicle she knows for humanitarian ventures in service to mankind. Some favorite club projects have included sinking water wells in Nigeria, setting up an AIDS Center in Jamaica and supporting an orphanage in Mexico. She continues to be inspired by the many Rotarians who have taken the organization to the edge of tomorrow and is committed to using the opportunity she has been given to further the cause of Rotary, in her community, in her country, and in the world.

Sylvia will serve as District Governor 2012-13 for District 5300. She has three grown children and is a multiple Paul Harris Fellow and benefactor.
Esther Johnson, First Woman Rotarian in District 5280

Esther Johnson was inducted as the first woman member of the Rotary Club of Santa Monica, and the first woman in District 5280, in November 1986. This was the year a state appellate court upheld the admission of three women into the Duarte Rotary Club in 1977 opening Rotary membership for women in the State of California.

For 10 years before she became a member of Rotary, Esther was the Executive Secretary to the Rotary Club of Santa Monica. She also played piano at the club’s weekly lunch meetings while it was still an all male organization. Esther was a true one-woman guard dog at the Rotary gate, protecting the club from inappropriate or insufficiently committed members. She was so loved by the members that more than 10 past presidents sponsored her into Rotary.

Esther is referenced in a December 2008 Rotarian Magazine Conventional Wisdom article as the first woman delegate to register for the 1987 Rotary International Convention in Munich, Germany. She would laugh telling the story of presenting her signed papers to register and the Rotarians asking if she was presenting them for someone and she would say, “No, for herself as a Rotarian.” They were not sure what to do!

She was a very special lady. She was so unaware of the significance of being the First Lady of Rotary IN THE WORLD! Although all of in District 5280 were well aware of this tremendous honor. Rotary Officially recognized Esther at the urging of Past District Governor Bob White.

Esther was born in Massachusetts and lived in Colorado. She met her husband Oliver at church. They married in 1936 and moved to Santa Monica in 1944. She retired from her executive position at the club in 2000. Esther passed away in 2004.

Past District Governor Vicki Radel expressed thanks to Esther for paving the way for women in Rotary and remarked that "Esther was an inspiration for us all."
I was a bilingual elementary school teacher for 5 years in the 1970's. My first two years teaching I taught at Maxwell Elementary in Duarte. My principal was Donna. She was in the class of women who sued Rotary. I remember the day she and another school principal went to the Rotary meeting in Monrovia and were not allowed in. The doors were actually locked so that they could not even physically get into the meeting. Boy, were they fuming!!

That day I wondered, what is Rotary all about and why is it so important to her to be involved with a bunch of old white guys? (LOL!) But that was long before the judgement in 1987. That was all the way back in about 1979. The universe is so magical. Who would have known 25 years later Rotary would be such a huge part of my life.

Thank you to Sylvia, Rowena Ake and all the women who broke the Rotary ceiling for us.

Val Velasco
Rotary Club of Westchester
August 1993

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By permitting women to become members of Rotary Clubs, we have introduced a vibrant and important dynamic into Rotary. Women have brought an enthusiasm and commitment to serving others that has made every Club better, and consequently has made Rotary better.

I am grateful to have been able to serve beside some exceptional women, and I believe they have made me a better leader because of the example they set. We are very lucky in District 5280 that we have many women in leadership positions, and we are lucky that 25 years ago several women and men had the courage to stand up and insist that women be included as Rotary members.

Brad Robinson
Rotary Club of Beverly Hills
District Governor 2011-12

When the R I convention was in Los Angeles in 2008, Palos Verdes Sunset hosted an group of 50+ Rotarian at the Point Vincente Interpretive Center, of the tip of the Palos Verdes Peninsula. We had a spectacular view of the Sunset as we had dinner and our program. As the Club President I asked each guest to tell us about their home Rotary Club. Several ladies indicated they were their clubs first female President and boosted about how many women were in their clubs.

One female President asked if we had ever had a woman president and how many women we had in our club. I was reluctant to answer because our answer would exceed what everyone had said. So, I asked Ruth Kane our Club Secretary to give the answer. Ruth said our membership was just under 40% women and three women had been our Club President. It was gratifying to hear the very loud applause.

Training for District Governor has been very special, especially because I have had the pleasure to train with Sylvia Whitlock and she will always by my classmate!

Lew Bertrand
Rotary Club of Palos Verdes Sunset
District Governor 2012-13

I have been a Rotarian for 23 years (proudly with perfect attendance). One of the greatest moments in this 23 year history, for me, is when the men of my club approached me and said they no longer think of me as "a woman in Rotary" but as a Rotarian. Makes me wanna cry just thinking about that. Now isn't that just like a woman.

Best Rotary wishes to all.
Sheri Polak,
Rotary Club of Woodland Hills
Aide to Governor Lew Bertrand
I was invited in 1989, by a colleague psychologist, to join the Redondo Beach Riviera Rotary Club as the third female member at that time. A few months later, I was invited to be a board member and the rest is more or less history :).

I served as club President 1994-95, Area Representative in 95-96, Chaired Foundation Celebration Silent Auction in 96-97, served as District Vocational Service Director in 97-98, was appointed Assistant Governor of Vocational Service in 98-99 by Carol Wylie, our first female District Governor, was slated to serve as Executive Aid to DG Jack Jones in 1999-2000 but was also chosen as DGND before his year began and he rightly decided I would be far too busy preparing for my year as our 2nd female DG for 2000-01.

The female Rotary ride has been a grand one for me. The only resistance I have received came early on and was not related to service overall. When asked in my own club what position I wanted to serve I said "International Service." After all I am fluent in Spanish and our sister city club was La Paz so it seemed a natural fit. I was told by a Latino member of the club that he didn’t think that was such a good idea because when in La Paz the men are in one room visiting while the women stay in the kitchen or another room having coffee. I did not make a fuss, simply went on the next trip to La Paz and made sure to encourage the women to come into the main room to interact as an entire group. It worked :)

Another memory I have is when asked by PE Mark Smith what I wanted to do during his year as Pres I said, "serve as Secretary." He told me that’s not the natural progression to become President that the tradition is to serve as Treasurer first, then Secretary, PE and President. I readily explained that "I had gotten a divorce, in part, because I refused to balance the check book and I had no desire to be Treasurer." I was elected Secretary instead!

So I guess I’ve always been a bit of a respectful individualist in Rotary asserting myself but trying not to step on the ties of others while I do so.

My greatest thrill in Rotary, even though there have been several, was when I traveled to India for a National Polio Immunization Day. While administering polio serum drops to a 7 day old baby I found tears involuntarily rolling down my face, to be part of our “Service Above Self” organization that puts their hands as well as their money into saving lives of so many Innocent children is a sincerely humbling experience.

Another great experience was when I was invited as a keynote speaker to a District Conference in Napier New Zealand. The DG whom I met at DG training was an architect and chose Napier for his conference because it was destroyed by earthquake in 1924 and was totally rebuilt in "Art Deco" theme. As the former Preservation Chair of Art Deco Society of Los Angeles it was a real thrill to be onstage in an exquisite Art Deco theater in the Art Deco capital of the world speaking about District 5280 programs in particular our fantastic Ambassadorial Scholar educational and cultural exchange program and our 50 year tradition of Summer Japan Exchange with Tochigi. I have travelled 13 times to Japan in what began as a personal Peace Mission taking teens to tour Hiroshima. As a result I vowed to learn Japanese and now skoshi Nihingo hanashimasu (I speak some Japanese).

Then there was the participation in the Parliament of the World's Religions, I know I invited in part due to my "Service Above Self" involvement in Rotary. In Cape-town, South Africa, I lead a group meditation for world peace. On a program that Nelson Mandela opened and the Dali Lama closed. I also participated in a small breakout session of 30 people where the Dali Lama himself looked me in the eyes, smiled gave me a "thumbs up" and "A-OK" sign. An unforgettable experience!

Of course I would be remiss if I did not mention on a District trip to Costa Rica I met an ideal Rotary partner Peter, who has since become my fiancé. Together we lifted an 82 year old woman into a wheel chair donated by Rotary and we have been joining hands ever since to help the less fortunate.

I became a Rotarian because of the International appeal, I stay passionately committed to Rotary because of the inner city "Peace Projects" and my life is greatly enriched as a result. It is my sincere honor to serve!

In Ongoing Service,
Vicki Radel
Rotary Club of Redondo Beach
Past District Governor 2000-01
I am very proud to be a member of Rotary International! In August of 1987, I was the 3rd Women inducted into District 5280. I was sponsored by two outstanding Rotarians’ Howard Drollinger Founder of HB Drollinger Company, and Scotty Miller with Garrett AiResearch where he was the official greeter for every Dignitary visiting from any Country, such as Margaret Thatcher and Michael Gorbachev.

I have done makeup in numerous Countries; I have always been respected highly as a Rotarian, for example three months after I was inducted I was on a tour of Spain, having the opportunity to do a Rotary makeup in Alicante, Spain at the City Hotel. I was welcomed and assigned an interpreter and they seated me next to the head table.

After an exciting Spanish speaking meeting and a seven course lunch, I was asked to speak. I was very pleased to speak of the Polio Plus Inoculation to eliminate Polio. Our Club had raised an approximate $150,000.

As President of Westchester Rotary in 1995-96, Rotary has personally helped me and our community, and countries!

I look forward to OUR Future!
Rowena Ake
Rotary Club of Westchester
July 1987

I was inducted as one of the first four women in the Downey Rotary Club (four of us joined at the same time, so as not to be a token woman), in October, 1988. I will have 25 years perfect attendance in October, 2013.

I have been honored to serve the Downey club in a number of positions, mainly as president of the Foundation for two years, 1994-96, when we introduced our club’s main fundraiser (up to then), the 10K raffle night.

Although there was fierce opposition by some Rotarians to women joining Rotary, once I was invited to join and came to the meetings, I could not have told which were the objectors. All were unfailingly courteous, friendly and helpful.

Rotary has been a wonderful opportunity for service. But it has been more, more even than a club. I had 115 instant friends in Downey when I joined. Some friendships have mellowed into long term relationships, and there is a family feeling, a sense of a home within the greater Downey, and world, community. I am proud to have been a Rotarian for 24 years, the most that any female Rotarian from Downey could claim.

Lorine Parks
Rotary Club of Downey
1988
My most rewarding experience was in Zambia Africa. Several members of Crenshaw Watts Rotary Club traveled to Zambia to deliver Mosquito Nets to women and children in an attempt to save lives from the dreaded disease of Malaria. The graciousness in which we were received and the look of joy on the children and women faces touched my heart in such a manner. I knew that Rotary was the vehicle by which I could help my sisters abroad to live and thrive, my Rotary moment, committed me for a life time of service above self. I congratulate all women of Rotary in the work that they do. We have come a long ways, thanks to those pioneering women who paved the way.

Cresie Page  
*Rotary Club of Crenshaw-Watts*  
June 2001

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I have been in Rotary since 1988 and was the first woman in my club. I loved the meetings when it was 44 men and ME. Our board meetings used to end with booze and games of poker. In fact that is where I learned to play poker! Things have changed since then but the good works of Rotary have not. I have traveled internationally to work with kids affected by Polio, been to many international conventions, have made up meetings in different cities and countries, served as president for the 50th Anniversary of my club and served as president again, chaired many club and district positions, worked with youth and enjoyed them at RYLA. And I met my husband through Rotary.

I will be a member for many years to come.  
Elyse Beardsley  
*Rotary Club of El Segundo*  
1988
I am the third female president of Palos Verdes Sunset Rotary, and our current president elect is another outstanding women. From our perspective, there is no glass ceiling. I had my Rotary moment several years ago with Project Amigo in Colimas, Mexico when I met a student I was sponsoring and realized how much difference we were making in the lives of people in a cooperative Rotary Project.

My current Rotary effort is to work with Paul Harris members of District 5280 with the goal of having every member become a Paul Harris fellow to help us broaden our reach to do good for a better world.

Astrid Naviaux
Rotary Club of Palos Verdes Sunset

For several years before women became members of Rotary, I would visit Westchester Rotary Club, invite them to community and high school events and participate in their activities. In July 1987 Rowena Ake was inducted into the club. I became “the other woman” in August, 1987. Yes, that was the name I had by several members until a couple years later when more women were inducted. I did actually really like it when it was 75 men to 2 women!

Rotary Information was extremely formal. Ten past presidents and community leaders in business suits sitting around a conference table with me at one end and my sponsor way at the other end. Past District Governor Earl Smith started the meeting saying, “I don’t believe in women in Rotary. The Supreme Court says we have to let you in. Little Lady, do you still want to join?”

My knees were shaking so much I could not have gotten up if I wanted to! So I just said, “Yes.” At my induction with my husband and two sons present each one of the men walked up, shook my hand and said, “Welcome to Rotary.” I was immediately put on a committee that I served on for 10 years.

Months later, PDG Earl Smith asked to speak to the club. “I was wrong about women and Rotary. We are better because women are members.” One of my proudest moments in Rotary.

That first year spouses were being introduced at a luncheon, “This is my Rotary Ann.” My husband made everyone laugh when he said, “I guess I am her Rotary Andy!” It was difficult enough learning how to merge women into the club but what to do with husbands was the beginning of a new club culture. The adjustment did not take long.

There have been dozens of committees, leadership roles in clubs and the district, lots of friends, working with youth, training leaders, lots of success stories and so much more. The smiles on faces when we have accomplished our projects knowing we have helped others is what it is all about. Rotary is a passion shared with others to do good.

Carmela Raack
Rotary Club of Culver City
August 1987

I meet Mark Ameli at the Rotary meeting and we were married 12 years ago :)

Guity Javid
Rotary Club of Rancho Park
A friend of mine who is an Olympic Gold Medalist invited me to attend a Rotary meeting. I was honored, he eventually became my sponsor.

Carmen Schaye
Rotary Cub of Los Angeles

While in law school and before joining Rotary, my Constitutional Law professor gave me the assignment of briefing the 1987 Supreme Court Case, which eliminated the requirement that Rotary membership be limited to men, opening the Rotary doors to women. At the time, I had no idea I would become a Rotarian.

Since my induction in September of 1995, Rotary has been a constant in my life. The mission of Rotary has inspired me to a level of service that has brought many rewards in return. Those rewards come in many shapes and sizes, from the friendships that have been born to the appreciative faces of those that have been helped by my club, District 5280 and Rotary International. It gives me a great deal of pride to be a Rotarian, working together with other men and women to make a difference.

Cozette Vergari
Rotary Club of Westchester
September 1995

I started working for a Culver City Rotarian in 1991, Tim Giarraffa, just a couple of years after women were allowed to join. My memory is that it still seemed very much like a men’s club and most of the Rotarians I was introduced to at the time seemed less than warm about the prospect of increased women members.

Over time, I realized that Rotary was an amazing service organization and women began to get more and more involved. I also found it to be an excellent opportunity for young people, especially the shadow program where young students could spend the day with a local business owner to experience that vocation. In addition, I found the student exchange program to be incredible.

Tim and I became good friends and I helped him with Rotary projects on and off throughout the years. He passed away in late 2004 and it took me some time before I was able to pick up where he left off...to continue the good works of Rotary in honor of my dear friend. I am proud to be a Woman in Rotary and I am honored to work along side so many wonderful Rotarian women!

Lisa Schwab, Treasurer
Rotary Club of Playa Venice
Past President 2009 - 2010
2007

My Rotary year has been very exciting. Being a member of a large support group of other Rotarians- men and women has made it a great experience. Now let's get women on the International board!

Melissa Albers
Rotary Club of El Segundo
President 2011-12
I joined Rotary in 1991 in order to better network with business men in the San Pedro community. There were two other women in our club of over 60. I was the Executive Director of the YWCA of the Harbor Area at that time and one of our supporters asked me if I would be interested in joining.

Now, 21 years later, I realize that joining Rotary was one of the most important “happenings” in my life. I learned to love the organization and what it stands for. Although I did lots of good things for my community through my job at a non-profit helping women and girls, Rotary made me look beyond my city to what was happening just over our borders and at what was happening in the world.

I didn’t do very much during my first year in Rotary. Getting to know the members (almost entirely men) was difficult for me as so much of my life had been dedicated to working with women in need. But I did get to know them and made so many friends I would not have had, but for Rotary.

After the first year, I plunged right in, volunteering for projects, to be on the Board and eventually President (twice). I have always tried to help the district as well. So many women there were mentors to me. Women have made such significant contributions to Rotary with their hard work and dedication. Many more women have joined our Rotary club over the years and they have added energy and direction to it.

Being Assistant Governor for various Avenues of Service at the district level was great – I realized I could make a difference in the way things were done and what we could accomplish if all our Rotary clubs worked together. The women who served as District Governors have been role models for us all....

So here I am – still a Rotarian – still loving it!

Helene Pizzini  
Rotary Club of San Pedro  
1991

I was put into Rotary in January of 1995 when my boss who had been a Rotarian at our company was transferred out of state so I have been a Rotarian now for 17 years. As a member of the Vernon club I was one of two women in the club for the majority of the time and now that we have merged with Rio Hondo the number of women in the club is increasing. I believe that letting women join Rotary was one of the best things the organization could have done and it has strengthened it immensely.

I have worked in almost all the avenues of service in my club and have been involved in District service which I have found to be very rewarding. My “specialty” is working with the young men and women through Interact and Rotaract and I have had numerous “Rotary Moments” over the years. The most memorable one has been when I was selected to be the District 5280 Rotarian of the Year and when I was presented with the award I was surrounded by Rotaractors. Another moment was on a bus ride to RYLA when we were caught in a snow storm and I was on a bus with 50 students for 8 hours before finally arriving at camp! You can’t beat memories like these and I wouldn’t have had them if it had not been for Rotary.

Marie Fremd  
Rotary Club of Rio Hondo-Vernon  
January 1995
It is indeed an honor to be nominated to serve as District 5280 governor for the year 2014-2015. Looking forward to becoming the 4th woman governor of our District. I am proud to belong to an organization that is inclusive and represents the world we live in. This gives Rotarians an edge in fully understanding and relating to the needs of everyone regardless of race, gender, religion or politics. Rotary is alive, continually evolving, maturing with time, but always with one goal - SERVICE and that's what unites us.

Congratulations Rotary.
Elsa Gillham
Rotary Club of Wilshire of LA
District Governor Nominee 2014-15

My first experience with Rotary was in 2001 in Taveuni Fiji when Jeff and I attended a Rotary meeting. The club had about 15 members and half of these were women including the President. Whenever I was in Fiji for the construction of our house, I would attend Rotary meetings, help with their fundraisers, and provide a student scholarship.

I never really knew that Rotary had been men's exclusive club until I joined the Redondo Beach Rotary in December 2003. I am certainly glad that 25 years ago women became part of this great organization. Together we can accomplish so much more.

Have a great celebration.
Karen Weigel
Rotary Club of Redondo Beach
December 2003

Rotary has become significantly better with the inclusion of women. The best is yet to come. I am sending this from Quito Ecuador on the way home from Machu Picchu and the Galapogas.

Larry Bender
Rotary Club of Hawthorne

Women have been a blessing to our organization. Things are always more vibrant when men and women work together!

John Nugent, PDG
Rotary Club of Westchester

I am so grateful that Rotary now includes women in its membership. No matter how challenging the struggles were to eventually have women accepted into membership in this world renowned organization, we are now together, men and women, working side by side to fulfill the goals of Service Above Self.

I am so proud to be a Rotarian, and my membership has truly enriched my life. I am have enjoyed making so many friends because of my membership in Rotary. I believe that it is not the gender of the members, but the spirit of caring, reaching out and making a difference both local and internationally for those in need that is most important.

I believe as Rotarians, we have a common bond of beliefs, and we should all celebrate our membership in Rotary together.

Shirley Giltzow
Rotary Club of Lawndale
January 1994
I've been in Rotary for about thirty years. The move to include the ladies in Rotary is the smartest, and best, action that this club has ever made! Our average age, per member, was pretty close to sixty, and the membership numbers were melting.

I had written my first and second books, and was giving speeches in places like Hong Kong, London and Katar! In Hong Kong, it turned out that my makeup was an all woman's Rotary session! The President was in tears, before the meeting, so I volunteered to address the group. I spoke to the group about the universal love of the Olympic Games, and how I was trying to add more women's events to future programs.

I told them about my experience of representing the USA as a Volleyball player in the first Games for that sport, and how the Japanese women won the Gold Medal, which gave them two Olympic Gold Medals, since their Men's Judo Team won the only other one. I also told this unique group how 90% of all the funding for the sport of Volleyball, ever since, for hosting international events and their international television rights has come from this tiny country called Japan!

All I can say is that all of us had a grat time, and the club’s new President came smelling like a ROSE!

MO’H Michael O’Hara
*Rotary Club of Pacific Palisades*

I appreciate the opportunity to work with other Rotarian women who make a difference through their efforts to help create a better place for all people and across all nations!" 

SP Andrade
*Rotary Club of LAX/Lennox*
May 2005
I spoke at 17 Rotary clubs throughout Southern California on the topic of intercultural communication before being asked to join one near my home but it didn’t feel like a match. Later an invitation came to speak on the night the Palos Verdes Sunset Rotary Club was chartered on 6/7/89 after which Marilyn Ginsburg and I chatted in the parking lot for over an hour. At a meeting presided by Jim Gamble at Erv Samuelson’s home, the members were so diverse, interesting, genuine, wonderfully warm and sincerely welcoming that I had no hesitation in accepting the invitation to become the fifth female in the club when Dru Brammer became my sponsor. Since September 29, 1993 my life has been filled with club, District and international activities and projects, enriching my life immeasurably and furthering my leadership, personal and professional growth.

My most unforgettable Rotary moment came on September 11, 2001. As president, I debated on whether to cancel our Tuesday night meeting but ultimately decided that after such a stunningly traumatic day, maintaining normalcy with our weekly routine would be beneficial to all concerned. It was both moving and comforting to discover the room filled as we shared heartfelt hugs with fellow Rotarians in our mutual shock, grief and loss. A visiting guest who happened to be a psychologist, stood up and validated that we had made the best decision by “doing just what the doctor would have ordered.”

Baron de Rothschild said: No man can be rich without enriching others. I believe the heart of Rotary is caring about others. The soul of Rotary is sharing our time, talents and resources with those less fortunate. The spirit of Rotary is empowerment of those we serve, so that they can actuate their dreams and reach their potential.

Albert Schweitzer said it best: The only ones among you who will be truly happy are those who have sought and found a way to serve. This Rotarian says being one contributes to happiness, well-being and longevity.

May the 4-Way Test be with you for the rest of your days!
Angi Ma Wong
Rotary Club of Palos Verdes Sunset
Past President 2001-02

There are so many wonderful experiences I wouldn’t know where to start. I have done local food banks, Rotary Service day at the Los Angeles Food Bank, International work with Mexico, etc

I do a lot of volunteer work with other organizations, but Rotary gives me the chance to do so many other service roads.

Sometimes you wonder what you are put on this earth for. Now I know, it is to do Rotary Work!!

Jackie Crowley
Rotary Club of Palos Verdes Sunset

I attended my first Santa Monica Rotary Club meetings in 1990, and was inducted in January 1991, making me a 21 year Rotarian. Our club had a little more than a dozen women at that time with a club membership of around 170 - obviously things have changed a lot since then.

Traveling and making up internationally at various Rotary clubs has been an eye-opener on the issue of women Rotary members. In Vienna’s central city club just a few years’ ago I was well-received but told that they had no women members (I was the only woman at their luncheon), and a few years before that in Stockholm’s central club they had to assure me that in fact they HAD a woman member, but she wasn’t there that day (!)

A counterpoint, visiting Venice last July I went looking for - extremely hard-to-find in the small unnamed streets - the Rotary Club of Central Venice and had the great fortune of arriving in perfect time to meet their incoming president, an accomplished and gracious professional woman.

Hope that adds to the conversation on women in Rotary!

Judy Neveau
Rotary Club of Santa Monica
Service Above Self is a motto that makes no mention of a person’s sex. It is only fitting that Rotary brings together like-minded individuals, who despite their varied professions, political and religious beliefs, age and sex, work together to make a difference in our world.

When I first became a Rotarian in 2001, I had no idea the positive impact it would have on my life. Not only have I been able to connect with countless leaders, women and men alike, who truly believe in service above self, I have also been able to make friends with Rotarians in many parts of the world. This would obviously not have happened if Rotary in the U.S. was still reserved exclusively for men.

Amy Worthington  
*Rotary Club of Wilshire of LA*  
2001

Women over the years have meant a lot to Rotary. When I was President of the Old North Redondo Beach Club I would have been lost if not for three woman in that Club. My Rotarian of the year in 97-98 was a woman

Chuck Anderson  
*Rotary Club of Redondo Beach*  
Past District governor 08-09

As a second generation Rotarian, following in my father’s footsteps at age 30, the experience has been immeasurable. Rotary is my extended family. Joining Rotary as a young woman taught me how to feel empowered, confident and how to give back to my community, here and abroad. I have experienced many of life’s challenges and blessings with Rotary at my side, which has made the journey that much more encouraging.

Julia Parton Rosas  
*Rotary Club of Palos Verdes Peninsula*  
Past President  
1996
The truth is "I love Rotary" I love that our funds help people all over the world and that gives me a good feeling for my soul. Pretty simple :)  

Kim Williamson  
Rotary Club of Westchester  
July  2005  

Kudos to those brave women who paved the way for the rest of us to join this wonderful organization. I know the men in our club have NEVER made us feel like second class citizens; in fact, our last 5 presidents have been women! I think Rotary is much better off having let women in. I love that men and women have united to serve our communities as only Rotarians could!  

Happy 25th, ladies!!  

Jennifer Floto, President  
Rotary Club of Hermosa Beach  
Small Club of Excellence 2011-12  

One story from me...When I was proposed for membership, we actually had a member resign because of it. I am told that he was looking for an excuse to leave and I was it.  

Mindy Stogsdill  
Rotary Club of Lawndale  
October 1991  

I am glad women are able to serve in Rotary. I am a member of the same club, the Rotary Club of Pacific Palisades, in which my father was a member for many years, so I am glad to be able to carry on the tradition.  

Nancy Cleveland  
Rotary Cub of Pacific Palisades
WOMAN
Lyrics by John Lennon
Submitted by Ingo Werk, PDG

Woman I can hardly express
My mixed emotions at my thoughtlessness
After all I'm forever in your debt
And woman I will try to express
My inner feelings and thankfulness
For showing me the meaning of success

Ooh, well, well
Doo, doo, doo, doo, doo
Ooh, well, well
Doo, doo, doo, doo, doo

Woman I know you understand
The little child inside of the man
Please remember my life is in your hands
And woman hold me close to your heart
However distant don't keep us apart
After all it is written in the stars

Ooh, well, well
Doo, doo, doo, doo, doo
Ooh, well, well
Doo, doo, doo, doo, doo
Well

Woman please let me explain
I never meant to cause you sorrow or pain
So let me tell you again and again and again
Sadako Sasaki was born in Hiroshima, Japan, in 1943, two years before the bomb was dropped on August 6, 1945. She didn't show any effects of the radiation until ten years later when she developed leukemia. A dear friend came to the hospital and shared with her the ancient Japanese legend. The story held that those who fold a thousand paper cranes will have a long life, since cranes are a symbol of longevity.

Sadako began folding cranes in hopes of healing her illness. She folded day after day, but died on October 25, 1955 after completing 644 cranes. Her classmates completed folding the 1,000 cranes so that the origami tokens could be buried with her. Many young people in Japan were touched by Sadako's story. They collected money to erect a statue of her holding a golden crane in her up stretched arms. The statue was placed in the Hiroshima Peace Park atop the Mountain of Paradise in 1958. Dedicated to her and all the other children who died from the bomb, the statue is engraved with these words:

This is our cry,
This is our prayer:
Peace in the world.

Millions of Peace Cranes have been sent to Hiroshima in the ensuing years to honor one little girl's courage and her dream of folding a 1,000 paper cranes. Because of this child, people the world over have come to understand that this tragedy must never happen again and that peace must come to the world.

Sadako Sasaki’s quote: "Paper crane, I will write peace on your wings and you will fly all over the world."

The little cranes need to fly to all kinds of public places where people will be reminded of Sadako and the intention of peace coming to the world, giving them to strangers, and leaving them wherever I go. When each crane is finished, I write peace on the wings and blow a prayer—May Peace prevail on Earth—into the tiny hole in the bottom so that each can carry the energy of peace.

Jo Wharton, cranesflyerforpeace.com

One of the gifts to Sylvia Whitlock was a bag filled with hand crafted Peace Cranes. The crane is a part of the RI Peace Through Service banner for 2012-13 Sylvia’s year as District Governor for District 5300.
December 2008, Los Angeles 5 hosted the Rose Parade Court along with the District Governors and distinguished women who would be riding the Rotary Float representing the seven Southern California districts. Pictured are some of the many women attending that luncheon.

Invocation
Chris Offer, Past District 5040 Governor 1999-2000

Please join me in a moment of reflection and thanks:
With our friends beside us,
And no person beneath us,
With the bonds of Rotary between us,
And our worries behind us,
With our goals before us,
And no task beyond us,
With a thirst for knowledge,
And a dream of a Polio-free world,
We are thankful for our Rotary friends and the time (meal) we are about to share.
*Bless the women with us today for their efforts and friendship in Rotary service,
*Bless the men who were so dedicated to include women in Rotary membership,
*Care for those not with us today as we share in Rotary,
*Guide us as we work together – men and women in partnership – as we continue “Doing Good in the World.”
Thank you, Shalom, Amen.

* Words added for the Women in Rotary luncheon.
Thank You for Your Support to the
25th Anniversary of
Women of Rotary
and to Everyone in Rotary who Provides
Service, Friendship and Caring
for the Good of the People in the World

Thank you to all who have written
comments and to others who will share their experiences with each other.
They are enjoyable and meaningful to read.
As we have assisted in the lives of others
we have benefited by enriching our own lives

Thank you to our Door Prize Donors
for their generosity.

Thank you to Killer Shrimp for the
Delicious Lunch

Committee
Val Velasco, Carmela Raack
Veronica Martinez, Ann Murakami
Event Assistants
Christa Ramey and Melody St. John

The program given at the luncheon was in a booklet format. The pages have been reconfigured with pictures added for a pdf.