

The Training-Wheels of PE Nancy

A Photographic Essay by George Rebane, Club Photographer
10 June 2007

Our club's weekly luncheon meeting on June 7th began innocently enough. Master leader and reigning President David 'The Kidd' Kenitzer had relinquished bell and gavel to president-elect Nancy The Kemp. This lady has so impressed the club's keen-eyed and



wizedened elders that she was tabbed early for an accelerated path to club leadership. And lo, we behold her less than three years into her Rotary career being catapulted into a position held just recently by acknowledged club greats - Peerless Pierce, Benito ('Bam Bam') Baretta, Karefree (with kid) Kim, Fearless Fultzee, and still in-residence, 'The Kidd' Kenitzer. An awesome set of shoes to fill for anyone with only two feet.

At the appointed hour Nancy approached the podium to marshal the attention of the gathered gaggle – a no mean feat that has brought other substitutes to tears – and reached down to ring the Rotary Bell of Leadership entrusted to her care for that auspicious and hopeful debut. Reaching down, her hand flailed nothing but air – the bell (gasp!) was gone and the meeting had yet to start. The club's intrepid photog caught our fledgling

PE (see Exhibit A above) in the middle of a desperate babble to explain away her misfortune before an audience of hardened and stone-faced Rotarians who had seen it all before.

To show that the faith of the leadership had not been completely misplaced, PE Nancy reverted to 'thinking on your feet' and immediately reached for what in the military is known as a field expedient. She picked up the non-descript dish used usually for fines and began banging on it with the gavel still miraculously in her possession (see Exhibit B on the right).

Swallowing hard, PE Nancy now drew on an inner strength that we hope she will have a surplus to draw on in the coming months. In her ensuing remarks she carefully navigated us through the flag pledge and a few forgettable words of inspiration. After some self-serving rhetoric about her upcoming



administration during which we may expect very large fines, she settled into the usual announcements and introductions. In fairness one must add that the lady did comport herself admirably by drawing attention to the cohort of constant conversationalists who don't really give a damn about the ongoing meeting. She called them to account and actually expected that the chair have at least a share of their attention span. All this was done in a pleasant businesslike manner which bodes well for the coming year. An example of her demeanor as the meeting progressed is shown in Exhibit C above.



The meeting then progressed to the main even – our program of the day presented by our resident naturalist, the good Dr. Ron. Ron subsequently introduced our guest speaker,



geologist David Lawler, who could not wait to tell us about the perils of mercury in the mountains and the why and wherefore of its removal efforts. His presentation began before Ron, nervously fingering his Adam's apple, realized that he was no longer needed to continue the give-and-take bonhomie of a traditional warm and extended Rotary welcome. (Exhibit D left, note presentation in progress.)

The meeting at this point actually got interesting which contrast was later brought up by some of the more outspoken club members (they also correlate highly with those eschewing soporific behavior during the course of our weekly conclaves). In any event, we were all treated to an engrossing and informative presentation, and learned that it took a gazillion pounds of mercury to mine the Sierra gold over a period of more than a hundred years. Since mercury is not the most benign of ingestible ingredients for

pregnant women and other people wanting a longer life, the tale told got more and more exciting. (See Exhibit E below, Ron had already figured out it was time for him to am-scray else fall victim to an energetic gesture).



The presentation continued in this manner with Mr. Lawler giving no rest or quarter to idle curiosity as he rolled out the terrible history of where and how the mercury got there and the valiant effort of his team to do what can be done. At the end (of which more is to be said) it came to light that the entire world, contributing its every shekel for several years, cannot afford to clean our mountains. So as we did with the bomb, in these mountains we must learn to love mercury.

Mr. Lawler had so much information to present that our meeting would have lasted into the weekend had it not been for the diplomatically valiant efforts of PE Nancy. At about

1:25PM (local time) she began what may only be described as a matriculation dance on the step leading to the entry hall. This exercise was hidden from the gathered Rotarians but fully visible to Mr. Lawler in the intervals when flailing arms and piercing eye-contact with his audience allowed his attention to divert towards our gesticulating and gyrating leader. After ten minutes of this the presentation came to a proper conclusion with all in attendance promising not to eat any mercury.

Dear Reader, we now finally come to the more harrowing and significant part of this report. The attentive Rotarians among you will remember that in that historical dining hall – yes, the Victorian Dining Room – there is still a purloined bell the pated public peals of which on that afternoon will forever mar the otherwise marvelous debut of our future leader. Under her cool and collected external demeanor PE Nancy was not about to let the sun set on her ignominy. Her eyes flashed this way and that seeking to fasten on anything that would give away The Thief. Well, as luck would have it, The Thief made it out of the dining room with bell in hand and was seen sauntering down the sidewalk toward the National parking lot with PP Baretta in tow. (Lest a wrong conclusion be drawn, this reporter cannot claim that Ben was part of The Thief’s guilty cohort. On the other hand, this reporter has long since given up any balancing effort to claim Bam-Bam’s innocence.)

Your faithful photog now positioned himself so that the following would be faithfully recorded for history (and possibly the Board’s reconsideration of its selection which may soon follow). Through the heavily-curtained windows our eagle-eyed PE fastened on the bell now in pendulous motion by the substantial girth of the escaping Thief. Then, after



taking the briefest leave possible of the entourage gathered around her, she dashed in a most efficacious (like really fast) and unladylike manner after the rapidly receding Thief. Rounding the corner of the hotel she caught sight of The Thief who was totally unaware that his dastardly deed had been detected. With determined and surprisingly agile strides, PE Nancy rapidly gained on the scoundrel while her eyes were fixed on what had been entrusted to her and was now in the grip of The Thief. (Exhibit F left, note bell in hand, self-assured plodding gait followed by surprisingly agile strides.)

Given also the surprisingly slow gait of the over-confident Thief, our future leader made short work of the distance still separating them. To this reporter it seemed that justice was nigh.

But it was not to be. Having single- and red-handedly caught The Thief through the spontaneous display of critical leadership skills, she demanded the immediate return of the bell. The Thief did not even break gait nor turn to give respectful face, but instead informed our would-be leader of her deficient knowledge of the hoary protocols that apply to bell thievery. It seems that there is an 'Olly Olly Oxen Home Free' rule that comes into play once the bell leaves the hotel's historic halls. The 'walking negotiation' was quickly drawing to a close as The Thief approached his small, but very fast, get-away car parked strategically where its egress could not be hindered. The outcome was rapidly becoming clear to all three of us. (See Exhibit H right and note the frenetic appeals of our PE which are making a less than hoped-for impact on the determined Thief.)

At this point of the reportage it becomes difficult to accurately describe what can only be characterized as a humorous, yet poignant, debacle. PE Nancy, after all her valiant efforts, has not even broken the stride of The Thief. All of her studied exhortations of Rotary Rules of the Road (which must be invoked while Rotarians are in motion as the evidence shows) came to naught. The Thief, displaying not an ounce of ruth, simply leaves a very frustrated PE standing de-



jectedly in the roadway. (Exhibit I below, note bell still firmly in grip of the receding Thief).

This indeed was an historical encounter – after all, was there ever a Rotary club president who lost the bell BEFORE being sworn in?? – and it came to an end with PE Nancy standing there muttering something about the Four Way Test into the north end of The Thief heading south.

These then are the events which alter and illuminate our times. And fellow Rotarians, you were there.

