

# **Why Am I A Rotarian**

**By Leland (Lee) Finholm**

The most obvious answer to this question is, “Because I was invited to become a Charter Rotary Member of the Red Wing Club”. Not that I didn’t resist, but because of the persistence of PDG Roland Wilsey and his relentless reassurance that I would have my employer’s support that I finally caved in and agreed to join Rotary.

Joining Rotary is probably the most significant and best decision I have made in my life. It opened a whole new world to me, not only in my community, but throughout the world at a personal level in unimaginable ways at the time that I joined Rotary. It has given me the opportunity to help make significant change and opportunities to others.

A better question would be, “Why am I still a Rotarian?” For me, this question has many answers. I will attempt to provide you with my answer to this question.

Prior to Rotary I didn’t live in a vacuum per say. Reflecting back, I had been in the community for about 15 years with only a few friends outside of work, church, and Boy Scouts. My life was pretty much consumed by work and family before I Joined Rotary. I was actively involved in Boy Scouts from approximately three years old ... my brother is four years older than me and my parents were scout leaders ... to the present that has given me great opportunities and character building through its many programs and my Boy Scout volunteer leadership positions. I served in the US Navy for six years in which I again had leadership responsibilities and had foreign travel that opened up the world to experience in other cultures. My wife, our children and I hosted three exchange students and my wife and I had the opportunity to travel in Germany and Switzerland for approximately one month.

Then I joined Rotary ... I initially stayed in Rotary because of the wonderful new friends and relationships that I gained that I would not have had had I not joined the newly chartering Rotary Club of Red Wing. Never before had I belonged to any other organization that everyone is known on a first name basis and your career or position is secondary. Your career or position doesn’t make a difference in building a friendly relationship. As Rotarians we focus on who the person is rather than what the person’s position is in society. These new friends (Rotarians) all have the same ideals and work ethics as I have and we were all part of a new organization (Rotary) that is based on those characteristics and a lot more.

Rotary brought all my previous experiences to the next level ... in the first year ... I learned so much about Rotary and my own community. I also learned that Rotary is so much bigger than just our personal small world in our community and family. It includes that and so much more. Our new Rotary Club in its first year hosted a Rotary Youth Exchange Student from Finland and a Group Study Exchange Team from Australia. My wife and I were invited to be part of the District Rotary Youth Exchange Outbound Student Selection Committee (and then recruited to

be a Rotary Youth Exchange Country Officer for four countries in South America). Within a year I met a whole new world of people on a first name basis, not only in our Rotary District, but around the world. Talk about getting internationalized!

To shorten up the rest of this dialog on the reasons I am still a Rotarian which has so many answers, I will try to provide a list of what or who Rotarians are as individuals and as an organization world wide that keeps me in Rotary. This list is not inclusive or in any order of priority. Rotarians:

1. have high ideals, morals and ethical standards (The Rotary 4-Way Test)
2. are willing to be servant leaders
3. believe in "Service Above Self"
4. are members of an international organization that is unified in building better friendships to provide goodwill and better understanding in the promotion of world peace
5. are ... as a collective of individuals ... able to unite in common purposes to do so much more then we could as individuals for the betterment of humanity for all
6. are lasting friends immediately from the first time we meet
7. belong to an organization that provides us with countless opportunities that would not be available to us without being identified as Rotarians ... just by being identified by wearing our Rotary Wheel pin

*So Why am I Still a Rotarian* ... because I want to associate myself with people that are Rotarians and I want to continue to model myself to the Rotary ideals and live the

***Rotary 4-Way Test of the things we think, say and do ...***

1. *Is it the TRUTH?*
2. *Is it FAIR to all concerned?*
3. *Will it build GOODWILL and better FRIENDSHIPS?*
4. *Will it be BENEFICIAL to all concerned*