

# Q&A

*with John F Germ, Aide to RI President  
by RI Director Ashok Mahajan*

**What is the health of Rotary worldwide?**

Rotary with a membership in excess of 1.2 million individuals and over 32,000 clubs in over 200 countries and geographic regions is alive and well. With Rotary Clubs working on many projects involving health and hunger, literacy, water and sanitation projects, youth activities and our Number one Project — Eradication of Polio — Rotarians are providing

that much needed community service to enhance communities and to create world peace.

**What are the major challenges Rotarians will have to face in the coming years?**

As Rotarians we must realise that our organisation needs to continue to grow or we become a stagnant and diminishing organisation. With many of our members reaching their older years and

either dying or becoming less active, we need to instill the Rotary philosophy into younger members so that Rotary continues to grow worldwide. With an increased membership Rotary will remain a very vibrant organisation to fulfill the needs of the individual communities. With the extra activities younger individuals are finding themselves involved in, we must make Rotary relevant to their needs. We must look to



the future of enhancing the organisation through technological advances. Computers and air travel have made our world much closer and we must respond to these changing times if we are to be a successful organisation.

### **Will we conquer polio in the next three years?**

I firmly believe that Rotary will fulfill its mission in the Eradication of Polio. Since 1985 Rotary and its partners have made great strides in conquering polio. It will be the continued work of this partnership that will allow us to eradicate polio in the remaining four endemic areas. In order to conquer polio, we need the full cooperation of the local governments and they must emphasise the need to fully eradicate polio, while there may be other pressing needs in their countries, we must continue to work with governmental officials to gain their understanding and support so that we can eradicate polio from the face of the earth. Yes, it is possible and yes, it will be done.

### **What can Rotary do to stop membership attrition? Why have we stopped growing?**

It is not Rotary that can stop membership attrition. It is each of us that must provide mentoring to individuals we invite to become members of our clubs and it is each of us that must insure their becoming actively involved as well as properly educated. Each of us must continue to invite individuals to become Rotarians. It is not the club or Rotary International that can stop attrition or that can help a club grow. It is up to each individual member to make this happen. Someone thought enough of each of us to ask us to become a Rotarian. We must look in the mirror and ask ourselves, "Do we think enough of someone to ask them to become a Rotarian." This is not just a one-time event, it is an opportunity and obligation that each of us has on a regular basis to help identify prospective members, invite them to become Rotarians, and have them get actively

involved through properly educating them about Rotary, and assisting them in becoming involved in community projects. It is an active Rotarian that will continue to help our organisation grow and be able to fulfill the needs in our respective communities. Membership is every one's responsibility and each of us must accept our responsibility by inviting new members.

### **Will Rotary remain relevant two decades from now? Will we be active and strong at the end of our 2<sup>nd</sup> Century?**

Rotary will remain relevant as long as our members decide to be so. No one can predict what the future will hold, what difficulties communities will have in the future, or what the world needs may be. Rotary must continue to change with the times, responding to the needs in their communities, and exercising our responsibilities as individuals in making the world a safer and better place to raise our children and grandchildren. Rotary will only be as active and as strong as we desire it to be throughout this next century.

### **Do you agree that many of the clubs face attendance problems?**

Yes, many clubs are facing attendance problems and for various reasons. We must make our club meetings relevant. We must have timely programmes, reports of activities that clubs and club members are involved in, and must reach out to our current members to ask them why they are not attending the Rotary meetings. At the recent Council of Legislation that was held in April 2007, the attendance requirement was changed from 60 percent to 50 percent. While this is the requirement, it should be the goal to have every Rotarian attend as many meetings as they possibly can. It is through this fellowship by attending meetings that each of us gains experience and knowledge from our fellow Rotarians. It was fellowship that began Rotary and it will be fellowship that will continue Rotary in its second Century of Service.

### **Do you have any suggestions by which clubs can improve attendance?**

It is my belief that attendance at club meetings can be improved by well publicising the programme, holding the cost of attending the meeting at a minimum and by having an active attendance committee, which contacts each member that was not at the meeting to find out why and to encourage them to come to the next meeting. It is not necessary to have a very expensive meal to have a good Rotary meeting. Cost is becoming more and more a factor in Rotary and especially with the younger Rotarians. Time is also a factor so we must make the meetings respective of an individual's time so that they will feel that their time was well spent by attending the Rotary meeting. We must respond to the individual Rotarian's desires for programmes, projects and maintain cost within their budget constraints.

### **Could you suggest some ways cost of Rotary can be reduced?**

We should evaluate all of our expenses and determine how to cut costs by potentially outsourcing printing cost, IT cost and also at the club level we should look at the reduction of cost in printing, meals, etc. We should further examine our meeting structure and ask ourselves the question, "Do we have to have meals at every meeting?" "Can we increase our income by having more members and decreasing our operational costs?" "Is it possible to secure sponsorships for conferences?" This would certainly reduce the cost to the members for attending.

### **Why do Rotarians find it so difficult to practice vocational services most important constituent - ethics?**

I do not find it hard for Rotarians to involve themselves with ethical behaviour. Ethics is the background of the Rotary organisation and should be practiced by every Rotarian at every club in all of their activities. The Four Way Test should be utilised at every

meeting, we should make every effort to have it in every school and as Rotarians we should practice it everyday in our business.

**Should Rotarians be more transparent at all the financial dealings with Rotary? How?**

Rotarians should not only be transparent in all the financial dealings with Rotary, but transparent with all financial dealings they have with any individual, any merchant or in any business dealings. Identity of interest should be fully explained to anyone where there is a potential conflict. If a Rotarian stands to gain from doing business with another Rotarian or a Rotarian's business, it should be clearly identified as to what the conflict might be. For example, if a Rotary member serves on the Board of Directors of a company and is doing business with that company then certainly that should be identified as a potential conflict of interest. If a Rotarian is doing business with their club or their district, they should certainly identify this relationship and should furthermore provide adequate documentation as to the expenditures that they are requesting reimbursement for.

**In all the "messages" of Rotary profounded by RI Presidents, why is vocational service ignored?**

I do not believe that vocational service is ignored in any of the messages from the Presidents. The classification system for membership at a Rotary Club has always been emphasised. Vocational Service has further been emphasised in the Presidential Citations. Rotary's core values representing the guiding principles of the organisation culture include the following comments concerning integrity: "We are committed to and expect accountability from our leaders and fellow members, both in the results of our efforts and in the processes we use to accomplish our goals. We adhere to high ethical and professional standards in our work and

personal relationships. We are fair and respectful in our interactions, and we conscientiously steward the resources entrusted to us." The establishment of a Vocational Service Committee with the statement of purpose to review the Rotary International core values guided principle on "integrity" and make recommendations to the Board of Rotary International on programmes that could be adopted by clubs is to be presented at the October Board Meeting.

**If Rotary has to champion the concept of ethics in all of our deals, what should it do to achieve the desired goal?**

Rotarians should continue to exercise the highest integrity in all of their relationships. By adopting and practicing

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The 4-Way Test in all of our endeavours, Rotarians will be champions of ethics. We should continue to emphasise the importance of The 4-Way Test, and furthermore we should work in our communities through business associations and educational associations to have The 4-Way Test adopted and practiced.

**Don't you think the prominence of vocational service will enhance the image of Rotary?**

Yes, I think by being a Rotarian, utilising the Four Way Test in our everyday life, and living by high ethical standards truly does enhance the image of Rotary. We continue to utilise the classification system, which places prominence to Vocational Service and stands out Rotary from other service organisations.

**What is the future of TRF?**

The future of The Rotary Foundation depends on each of us. The funding for TRF comes from individual

donations and it is only through these contributions, investment incomes and management of the funds that we are able to do Ambassadorial Scholars, Peace Scholars, Matching Grants, Humanitarian Grants, District Simplified Grants and many other grants that assist in the supporting of the many projects that are needed around the world to combat hunger, literacy, health projects, water and sanitation projects, and the many other projects that individual communities need in order to improve the lives of its citizens. I believe the future of The Rotary Foundation is very bright and through The Rotary Foundation, we will continue to provide services to those in need.

**What message would you like to give to the Rotarians?**

Rotary is a strong and vital organisation. Rotary is a people organisation. Its members are those that have specific classifications that have been invited to join Rotary for the purpose of providing service to others. The motto of "Service Above Self" has served Rotary for many years. We should continue to practice "Service Above Self." As a people oriented organisation we should continue to invite qualified individuals to join our organisation. We should continue to have our members involved with community activities and in many cases partnering with other organisations so that we can provide the needed services required to enhance lives of citizens in our communities. We can only do this by having more willing hands and caring hearts. The future of Rotary is up to each and every one of us. If we do not do our part by increasing membership, enhancing the image of Rotary in our communities, and continue to provide the good work of Rotary, then Rotary will no longer exist. If each of us does our part then not only will Rotary and The Rotary Foundation continue to flourish, communities around the world will also improve.