

OPENING SESSION

Protocol for opening, based on Page 65

I want to thank Governor Joaquim Ferriera and his wife Celia Maria, and all District 4420 Rotarians for the hospitality shown to me thus far at this conference.

It is the Rotary way for guests like myself to be cared for in a hospitable fashion, and I am sincerely grateful to Mario Cesar de Camargo and Denise, and also Marcos and Laiz Zanardo, for looking after me. We have been friends for a number of years, and it is great to be with them, and with all of you, at this conference. Thank you.

Even though my wife Jill is not able to be with us, we are privileged to be the Representatives of Rotary International President Ron Burton and his wife Jetta, who as you know are from the Midwest United States, the state of Oklahoma. Jill and I, too, are from the Midwest United States, the state of Missouri. On behalf of President Ron, Jill and I extend a warm welcome to each of you participating in this District 4420 Conference.

Your country is amazing! This is my first time to visit Brazil, it is a country I have looked forward to visiting for a long time.

Allow me to just spend a couple of minutes getting us all better acquainted with each other, as we expand "The Family of Rotary" this weekend. My wife Jill and I have been married for 28 years, and like you, our family is very important to us. Our two children, son Trent, who is a freshman at Indiana State University; and daughter Cara, a junior in high school have school activities, which keeps Jill at home this weekend. Certainly, Jill and Trent and Cara are here with us in spirit.

My home Rotary Club is the Kansas City Plaza, Missouri Rotary Club, a Friday breakfast club chartered in 1986 with a current membership at around 75 members. Our largest fund-raising event benefits a home for abused and neglected children....it is a Jazz Cabaret that this year netted over \$35,000 in proceeds for that organization.

My home Rotary District is Rotary District 6040, of which I was privileged to serve as District Governor in 2001-02, as the second-youngest District Governor in the world that year. With 56 clubs and nearly 2,500 members, it covers much of the northern third of the State of Missouri. There are many small towns and farming communities in District 6040 and in the rest of the state. Missouri is a major producer of soybeans, corn, cattle, hogs and poultry, and its major industries include automobile production, chemical products and food processing.

Kansas City, with a population of about 500,000, is the largest city in western Missouri and District 6040. It boasts a diversity of business and industry, educational institutions, and major league sports franchises like the Kansas City Chiefs gridiron football team, the Kansas City Royals baseball team, our Sporting Kansas City soccer team which won the Major League Soccer Cup last year, and golfer Tom Watson (yes, we are proud of Tom, and we do refer to him as our fourth sports franchise). Kansas City is famous for its jazz music, and barbecue.

Other major cities in District 6040 include Independence, known as the home of President Harry S. Truman and the location of the Truman Presidential Library; Kirksville, the home of Truman

State University and the Kirksville College of Osteopathy, where the practice of osteopathic medicine was started; and St. Joseph, the city where the Pony Express had its origin.

In addition to President Truman, famous Missourians include Walt Disney, the cartoonist and animator who created Mickey Mouse; Jesse James, the notorious outlaw; George Washington Carver, a famous botanist; J.C. Penney, who founded the JC Penney retail chain; Scott Joplin, a pianist who helped develop the music that became known as ragtime; and Samuel Clemens, better known as Mark Twain, whose books about life on the Mississippi River are read worldwide.

Our Rotary District is proud that one of the current Trustees of the Rotary Foundation is from our District, Past RI President Ray Klinginsmith.

We are proud that it was the contribution of one of our Rotary Clubs, the downtown Rotary Club #13 of Kansas City, which was the first contribution to our Rotary Foundation....back in 1917.....when they committed the final proceeds of the 1917 International Convention, \$26.50, as the first donation to the Foundation.

We are proud to have been one of the “Pioneer Districts” in the initial funding for the Rotary World Peace Scholarship program.

And we are proud of our International Community Service project partnership with “Shoes for Orphan Souls”. Some of the stories that come from that project are ones I hope to share with you this weekend.

Certainly, Jill and I are no different than any of you....we love everything there is about Rotary.....and then we have the chance to review the work of District 4420, and realize there is much that we can learn from the clubs in this strong, vibrant Rotary District. It has been a privilege to work with your Governor Joaquim in preparation for this conference.

Seeing such a wonderfully large gathering of Rotarians and guests here today reminds me that RI President Ron and Jetta have asked me to extend their personal invitation to you to join them for the annual RI Convention, scheduled for June 1-4 in Sydney, Australia. Ron and Jetta thank each one of you who are registered to attend the convention.

It has been 11 years since the last RI Convention was held in Australia, in 2003 in Brisbane.

But then, of course, this convention sets the stage for the next Rotary International Convention, the 106th Rotary International Convention, to be held in June 2015, right here in Sao Paolo! I can only imagine the excitement each of you must be feeling as you look ahead to that event.

The last time Sao Paolo hosted the Rotary International Convention was in 1981. Under the leadership of Sao Paolo Convention Chairman Jose Alfredo Pretoni, and Convention Committee Member Jose Antonio Antiorio, the Rotary world looks forward to coming to Brazil next year.

I look forward to being back with you again in Brazil next year, for my 12th International Convention.

And hopefully many, more times in years to come.

As we begin this District 4420 Conference, hear these words, quoted from Rotarian David Forward, in the Introduction of the book he authored in 2005 called “A Century of Service: The Story of Rotary International”

QUOTE “Even the world’s mightiest rivers have humble beginnings. They start as tiny springs, bubbling to the surface, or as a single, melting snowdrop. As the rivulet trickles down, it brings new life to everything it touches. Soon, other tiny streams join its path and together they unite as a river, ever more confident and forceful.

Nearly one hundred years ago, the river called Rotary was born. A lonely lawyer named Paul P. Harris called together three business associates for an evening meeting. They shared similar backgrounds and missed the friendliness and trustworthiness of dealing with people they knew. Compared to the small communities of their boyhood, the frantic pace of life in America’s second largest city was depressing and lonesome. That night, they decided to form a club where they could meet and deal with one another in friendship and trust. It was the spring that started a mighty river.” END QUOTE

My dear Rotary friends, today is the first day of this District Conference. In some ways, today is the spring that starts the mighty river of our experiences together this weekend.

So, as we begin our time together, may we recall these words from President Ron Burton –

“The most important thing we can do for the future of Rotary is make sure that Rotarians are engaged and that each one of us is doing the most we can. If we really want to take Rotary service forward, then we must make sure that every single Rotarian has the same feeling about Rotary that each one of us here has today. We need to make sure that every Rotarian has a meaningful role to play, that they’re all making a contribution, and that their contributions are valued. Because when that happens, the members who come in the front door don’t go right out the back. They stay in Rotary, they become Rotarians, they bring in new members, and they make a difference. The job of membership isn’t done when we bring in a new member. It’s not done until that new member is engaged in Rotary, is inspired by Rotary, and uses the power of Rotary service to change lives.”

In closing today, I will admit to you that most of the “understanding of life” that Jill and I get these days is through the eyes of our children. To illustrate this, I’d like to read you a short children’s book called “The Crayon Box That Talked” by Shane DeRolf.

I ask you to think about your Rotary Club as I read these words.

I believe this story provides a beautifully illustrative summary of the collective spirit of Rotary International and The Rotary Foundation, and the results that are achieved...whether it is our 25-year efforts with Polio Eradication, a Shoes project, or any of the multitude of projects performed by your District 4420 clubs and Rotarians, during Governor Joaquim’s successful year this year.

“THE CRAYON BOX THAT TALKED” by Shane DeRolf

While walking into a toy store the day before today
I overhead a crayon box with many things to say

“I don’t like Red!” said Yellow, and Green said “Nor do I”
“And no one here like Orange but no one knows just why”

“We are a box of crayons that doesn’t get along
Said Blue to all the others, “Something here is wrong”

Well, I bought that box of crayons and took it home with me
And laid out all the colors so the crayons could all see

They watched me as I colored with Red and Blue and Green
And Black and White and Orange and every color in between

They watched as Green became the grass and Blue became the sky
The Yellow sun was shining bright on White clouds drifting by

Colors changing as they touched, becoming something new
They watched me as I colored – they watched until I was through

And when I finally finished I began to walk away
And as I did the crayon box had something more to say

“I do like Red!” said Yellow, and Green said, “so do I”
And Blue, you were terrific, so high up in the sky

“We are a box of crayons each one of us unique
But when we get together the picture is complete

As Past RI President Jonathan Majiyabge has so eloquently said, “Working together, there is no limit to what the helping hands of Rotary can accomplish”.

I trust that each one of you brings to this conference this weekend the same spirit as the crayon box, saying, “We are individual Rotarians, each one of us unique, but when we get together, the picture is complete”.

I look forward to the fun we will have with you this weekend, from the beautiful river called Rotary District 4420.

Thank you.