



NOW THERE'S AN E-CLUB????!!!

BY

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Podunk Pines Weekly News

I sit here at my Underwood typewriter in my little pine-paneled office in Quaking Aspens, Colorado, looking out at about three feet of snow in my front yard. The roads are impassable, and I know I can't get my Edsel out of my driveway. I have been wondering how I would ever get this week's society column the five miles across the river into Podunk Pines in time to make this week's edition. In all the 40-odd years I have served as the society editor of the Podunk Pines Weekly News, I don't think I have missed but one edition. That was the time the County Clerk and my best friend, Miss Ima Gossip, and I attended that Rotary District Conference in that big Southwestern desert city a few years back. I am sure you will all remember this event as I wrote it up for the paper. It was the highlight of my life, and Miss Ima still talks about it as if it were yesterday. She still speaks of the cheap thrill the handsome airport checker got when he ran his wand over her. (The money belt around her neck and her orthopedic shoes had set off the alarm.)

Since that time I have been faithfully covering local spelling bees, the annual tomato-canning contest, the spring planting festival and the fall harvest dance. To an outsider these activities might seem dull, but here in Quaking Aspens and Podunk Pines, I am here to tell you that in the past I have reported on some rather raucous barn dances and a pretty tawdry scene last spring. Judge Will Playfair and our librarian, Miss Alice Reade, were performing a particularly lively square dance do-se-do, and Miss Reade's unmentionables were glimpsed. This caused whirling couples to crash into one another, and before there was actual carnage the hired band was requested to render only staid waltzes for the rest of the evening. This was to the dismay of the male locals who had been enjoying the performance possibly more than they should have. It is not every week that I have an article as exciting as that one.

However, I have never again covered an event to compete with that Rotary conference.

As I was pondering this discouraging weather situation, my phone rang. It was the PRESIDENT of what he called the Rotary E-Club of the Southwest. I had never heard of such a thing. Now, you will all remember that I know quite a bit about Rotary after attending that conference. I learned all their acronyms that keep the Kiwanis and Lions from knowing what they are talking about. Some of these are PE, PP, DG, DGE, DGN, ADG, PDG, RYLA, GSE, TRF and YE. They talked a lot about RI, and since there were so many gray heads in the room at that conference, I assumed many of them had been bussed across the country from a retirement home in Rhode Island. For those of you who are unaware of my detailed report of that event and wish to learn what all these initials stand for, please see Miss Reade at the

library and she will provide you with back copies of the newspaper for complete coverage.

The caller reaffirmed that yes, there was such a thing, and that it was a Rotary club that meets on a computer. Now, I may come from a small town, but I am not completely gullible and unsophisticated. I wasn't born yesterday. After all, Podunk Pines now has a population of nearly 5,000. I wasn't going to swallow this story. We only have two computers in this whole area and they are at the library. Who ever heard tell of a meeting taking place on a computer? He called it "on-line" and I supposed that meant that no one is supposed to hang up – or whatever they do to get away from their computer.

He went on to say this club had 56 members in 16 countries on six continents. I could only roll my eyes in disbelief. How was this possible? He attempted in several ways to explain to me how this E-Club worked, but the more he talked, the more confused I became. The whole setup sounded to me like an old-fashioned party line where everyone talked at once except those who were listening in when they shouldn't be. How in the world could they all get on those computers at the exact same time when they lived on different continents? I began to think this was nothing more than a crank call.

I finally asked this gentleman the reason for his call, and he said it was to ask for my help. I couldn't help but smile and puff up a little, thinking he wanted me to cover another Rotary event. However, that was not the case. Apparently this E-Computer Online Club was experiencing some difficulty getting members to participate. Well, you'd think he would already know that, wouldn't you? I mean if you are having a Rotary meeting on the computer at 12:00 noon in Cincinnati, it is probably the

middle of the night in several of those six continents with members. When I questioned him further, he said members could "log on" and attend wherever they were at any time they wanted. Now I knew he was trifling with me. I know that when you want a fire in the fireplace is when you put a "log on." He said there was some computer program called Skype that allowed all the members to see one another! Across all those six continents! Imagine! This president has been reading some old Buck Rogers comic books.

He went on to say that he was having difficulty in getting volunteers in the club to track their hours. He would also like them to take more leadership roles to make what's not working for them work again. He wished more members would enter news and personal stories on the "home page" and participate in discussion forums.

My head was swimming by now. I think I might ask Miss Ima's 10-year-old grandson if he could tell me what a home page was, what Skype meant, and how people could have a discussion forum with an ocean between them. That little boy has something called an Eye-Phone, and I think he might be able to help me.

I finally agreed to write a paragraph for this bewildering young man on the phone and help him with this computer club. I had no idea how he thought I could help.

But here goes, for the record:

All you E-Club members, get busy and take part in your club. It will do you good, and you will soon know as much about Rotary as I do. You

can only get out of a project what you put into it. After all, don't you all want to know what all those acronyms stand for?

Now about that volunteering. If you help in a bake sale at church, or maybe serve a meal in a soup kitchen, let this nice club President know about it. It will make him so happy. Keep track of these volunteer hours and report them (however in the world you can do that, but I think you can if you are "logged on"). It is important to your E-Club to know about all the outside volunteer work you do. Maybe someone else in the club will get an idea from you, and it will lead to their also volunteering. I even do volunteer work – and I don't even know how to work a computer.

You members must have something interesting happening in your lives. I mean if there are 56 of you, surely a few of you lead stimulating lives. Have you traveled recently? Do you have a new grandchild? Are you building a new house? Has your wife run off with Robert Redford? Tell your fellow members about yourself. After all, if they are across the world on another continent, they can't very well take you out to dinner to get to know you, can they?

The last item the President wished me to mention is the discussion forums. I do not have a clue about how these could possibly work, but I will take his word for it that they do. You just go to that "home page" and I'll bet you'll find out how to join in.

I hope once again I have been of help to Rotary. It is always a pleasure to set all of you straight on what it's about. I just have one question: Who do you use for the Rotary police? I remember those frightening bell-ringers at that Rotary conference herding people around to where they

were supposed to be. I am wondering if perhaps you have a Rotarian policeman orbiting around in space to check up on all of you. After all, if you can Skype one another, I think anything is possible.

I hope this snow storm clears up soon. I have heard a rumor that our banker, Mr. Rob DeVault, has left town under mysterious circumstances. I want to be the one to get the scoop!

Happy Rotating! And remember: participate, volunteer and report your hours, take some leadership steps to improve your club, enter some news on the home page, and take part in some of those discussion forums. It will make life easier for your nice President. Perhaps one day I will try to visit your E-Club on the computer at the library.