



## A Speech to Rotary/One

Joe Kagle

Introduction: I thought that it might be interesting and helpful to share my thoughts on creating a speech with a challenging theme, but one that must be accomplished in a given time frame. I was asked, as Chairman/President of Rotary Global History Fellowship, a post that I have held since 2007, to represent our Fellowship at an evening dinner in Chicago. I started the process, took ill, and then completed it later. Here is that process and the final speech:

Since getting out of the hospital, I have spent a great amount of time on making a short talk (it started 27 minutes after several weeks of research) to be shorter (finally arrived at 4:30 minutes) to fit the program of the Rotary/One 105<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration in Chicago last week (February 23, 2010). As one gets older, an individual finds that through the years a method of attacking difficult bodies of information is unconsciously created (sometimes it is impossible to know, and not necessary to know, all that has been collected outside of yourself). Therefore when one starts an impossible chore, like summing up the major accomplishments of Rotary/One's 105 years of existence in a short talk, you start with a known system for attacking the job.

When one has more yesterdays than tomorrows, a thoughtful person builds simple systems to attack complex situations.

- 1) You start with self, not the external information. Review the systems that you have built through the years and find those that seem to fit.
- 2) Review systems that you have discovered that seem to work to take vast bodies of information and break them down into simpler forms.
- 3) Have no ego about the situation. Ask for help from those outside that fit your chore and who have information for the system within which you are working.
- 4) Find something unique that will pull in an audience, make it yours (even when it is not) and spin some magic around it so that what you say or write is interesting.
- 5) Use all the tools of communication in writing and in speaking that you have honed over the years.
- 6) Finally, forget the process that created the work and concentrate on the message created.

That is how I crafted the short speech that I gave after being given the opportunity to present Rotary Global History Fellowship's assessment of Rotary/One's influence and gift to today's Rotary International. As Chairman/President the last three years, helping the Fellowship grow (not alone but with great support and help) from less than 100 members to over 500 members, and moving the organization from a one-man band (its founder, Jack Selway, then founders, four others) to an organization that now spans the globe with 43 zone representations, I was the logical one to go to Chicago and deliver our tribute/assessment.

How did I begin? It always starts with a question: "What can I compare to this situation that I have tackled in the past?" With 105 years of history behind the organization, it was impossible to start mentioning all the leaders that have emerged from this "starting institution" so that is out. It was impossible to chronicle all the accomplishments of this beginning Rotary club, so that is not attempted. Who are the few leaders to mention? What are the major accomplishments of global Rotary that I wished to tie to this club? What unique award could I present to an organization that has been given all the awards that Rotary can bestow?

The answer to the first question was another question: Who do I know who knows an answer to the first question? I went to the Founder of our Rotary Global History Fellowship, Jack Selway, and asked for help. He narrowed my focus to three or four leaders, and I finally choose two of them. He helped on answering the second question by narrowing my research to two major challenges on our Rotary Global History website (only 100 pages of the more than 4000 pages with many points of view-which he had recorded from self and others over the last ten years), which I read and simplified.

I now reached inside myself: What had I done with history to make it understandable to my students and fellow art historians over the years? I had taken the back of a U.S. one-dollar bill and used that to represent a democratic system (which it already was) of 'power and freedom'. So the first job was to tie Rotary/One to the American dream. Second, find examples of the use of 'power and freedom' within Rotary/One and tie them to how Rotary International has grown and achieved worldwide acceptance. Lastly, find the one thing that Rotary/One has that no other club in the world has or ever will accomplish. That was the simplest to see and use: 'Rotary/One had the courage to be first.' This insight, which

was obvious, lead to Professor [Randy Pausch's Last Lecture](#) and his award to his students, "The First Penguin Award" (for those who attempt something where they might fail but the attempt is grand and not mediocre). Once all that was done it was time to fit the material to my 'own self' (my style of presenting a message) and then give all the credit for this discovery to the Rotary Global Fellowship, tie us to Rotary/One as brothers and sisters (which was true), as being 'first penguins' and then leave the stage, smiling with 'thank you'.

It was difficult. I am best when I overreach and overwrite. Less is more has never been my first instinct. I truly believe that 'less is more' is only a last resort when 'more is not better' (a philosophy of Frank Lloyd Wright). But what I also agree with, and have advised others: "when you are in the middle of the tracks (starting something that seems impossible to accomplish), get off the tracks when the Big Train is coming." The 'big train' can be a person or group of individuals, a system that has power, or a time dimension that constrains your natural instincts. In this case, it is an organization that is looked upon as starting something that is "almost a religion to some members." It felt that I was given a time restraint that cut into my own way of expressing my self. It is what Lincoln once told a lady who asked him to give a speech and how long he needed for preparation: "If I have all the time I want to give it, I can give it now; cutting it to your time restraints will take a little longer to compose."

It has taken me a month to find the right words for four and a half minutes of greetings, thanks, summing up historical accomplishments, and finding the keys to open the uniqueness of this special organization, Rotary/One. Here is the historical tribute that I gave for Rotary/One on

February 23<sup>rd</sup> at Chicago's Hyatt Regency Crystal Ballroom on a gala program that includes the Reverend Jesse Jackson and other dignitaries:

**"Happy 105th Anniversary" Rotary/One,  
the First Penguin of Rotary**

It gives me great pleasure to be here tonight, representing the 500 members of Rotary Global History Fellowship. Our Executive Board wishes me to say a few words about Rotary/One's contribution to Rotary today. It is impossible to relate all that this special club has done for Rotary worldwide. Anyone who does their research from our website, [www.1905timeline.org](http://www.1905timeline.org), and other sites would find an enormous body of accomplishments and leaders who went on to lead Rotary International. Therefore, as an artist and art historian, I tried to find a key to the essence of all American history, and I found it on the back of a U.S. one dollar bill. There you find an image of the eagle (representing freedom and Western culture's democracy) juxtaposed with a pyramid with the eye of Ra (Egypt's ancient supreme god at its pinnacle and representing power). It is our democratic reminder of the separation of state and church.

Using this way of looking at history, power and freedom, I saw Rotary/One as created in a similar fashion. Where was the power in the early 20th century? Businessmen, with some other important individuals, held that power. Paul Harris recognized this and had the idea of getting some business leaders together in 1900, but it took until 1905 to surround himself with other unique leaders. Even at the beginning, there was power in the 180 categories of leadership (created by a member of Rotary/One, a teacher of business, Arthur "Fred" Sheldon). It is still one of the powerful ingredients of global Rotary. He

also set Rotary on a course of "freedom" with "He Profits Most Who Serves Best" (modified by Rotary International in 2004 to "They Profit Most Who Serve Best"). Power and freedom (service) were the beginning gifts that Rotary/One gave to all Rotarians on a global scale but there was one other essential gift, the courage to be first.

A colleague of mine, Professor Randy Pausch, who taught at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh (my hometown), (who gave his Last Lecture before he died last year) advocated that it is: "Better to fail spectacularly than do something mediocre." Each year he gave out the First Penguin Award. He gave it for the greatest attempt at something grand but never mediocre.

The service of Rotary/One members of freeing business leaders to give back to the community (which eventually was the world) set a standard for all of Rotary. Rotary/One deserves a First Penguin Award. First penguins are those that lead other young penguins off the cliffs in Antarctica to learn to swim, into extremely cold waters where predators wait.

I see our quest for Peace and to end Polio coming from that bold beginning. Now, Rotarians have the courage to bet on the end being what they set out to do. It all started with Rotary/One in 1905. Forty years later, Rotary was asked to join hands with the United Nations in the pursuit of Peace. Eighty years later, Polio Plus was started (and now the submarine marked "Zero Polio" may be about to surface). It all starts when Rotary/One became 'the first penguin', daring to try something new, something that could fail, something that exposes vulnerability.

First penguins have the courage to be first and different with quality. And Rotary/One is still being first with quality. In the summer of 2009, one of your members and one of our founding members, Dick McKay, told our board that Rotary/One was considering becoming the first 100% Rotary Club to join Rotary Global History Fellowship. With this beginning initiative from Rotary/One, the entire membership (72 strong) of the Rotary Club of Nicosia-Lefkothea, (on Cyprus), became that first club with 100% membership in RGHF on November 16, 2009. It is not over. You will be helping us celebrate ten years of service to Rotarians here at your club on 10-10-10, October 10, 2010. We too are 'first penguins,' you see, and live by Fred Sheldon's maxim: "He profits most who serves best". Our mission is, "Seeking to serve Rotarians, present and future, by preserving the Global History of Rotary." We invite you to join us in our celebration here, this October.

I know that being 'first' is a risky adventure but Rotary has grown since 1905 because of that 'daring first' by you. I know that being called Rotary/One is an honor and a constant challenge to strive to be 'first' in quality, service, fellowship, goodwill and peace. Our Fellowship would not exist without you being 'first'. As Chairman and President of Rotary Global History Fellowship, I am here tonight to thank Rotary/One, our 'first penguin' of Rotary.

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Rushton's comments:

It struck me reading this that I hadn't fully understood the nature of the anniversary celebration last Tuesday. I went to Rotary's website and found the following, which it seems appropriate to share here (see

below) with Joe's wonderful talk. Apparently Joe also received the Ches Perry Award at the end of his short speech. Way to go, Joe!

I asked him a bit about the experience of being there, and he sent the following:

There are only four countries left in which they are having to target polio: "Afganistan, Pakistan, India and Nigeria. The 'Zero Polio' submarine is really about to surface. Also what happened at the very end of the evening was the gift of \$20,000 to RI, accepted by Ed Futa from Rotary/One, to go with the money that has already been raised by all Rotarians and their Clubs (roughly \$107 million) toward the \$200 million that is needed to match the \$355 million promised by the Gates Foundation to end polio and keep it ended. It was a grand evening, the food was global on many buffet tables and the spirits were high (but that is what is expected when you light the Wrigley Building with 'Stop Polio Now' and simultaneously eight other world architectural landmarks, like the Great Pyramid and the Sydney Opera House. Wow."

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### [Rotary Club of Chicago marks 105 years](#)

By Ryan Hyland

Rotary International News -- 24 February 2010

As members of the Rotary Club of Chicago celebrated Rotary's 105th anniversary at a downtown hotel on 23 February, the city's historic Wrigley Building was illuminated in the background with an urgent message: End Polio Now.



The Wrigley Building joined several other iconic landmarks worldwide, each lit with an anniversary message or the three words representing Rotary's commitment to rid the world of the crippling childhood disease.

Joining Chicago Rotarians at the lighting ceremony were Illinois Governor Pat Quinn; the Reverend Jesse Jackson, president of the Rainbow PUSH Coalition; Dr. Ciro de Quadros, executive vice president of the Sabin Vaccine Institute; James Galloway, U.S. assistant surgeon general; and RI General Secretary Ed Futa.

Before the lighting, Rotarians handed out End Polio Now postcards at the Wrigley Building.

"This is a very significant event," says Angelo Loumbas, president of the Chicago club. "Rotary's end polio campaign is the initiative I want my

club to sponsor as much as they can this year. The fact that we were able to promote End Polio Now and at the same time celebrate Rotary's 105th anniversary really turned out to be a big advantage for us."

Joined by Rotarians from districts 6440 and 6450, the Chicago club, the first Rotary club, commemorated its own 105th anniversary. At the celebration, Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley congratulated Rotarians for their achievement and thanked them for their ongoing commitment to literacy, promoting peace, improving health, and eradicating polio.

"I'm very grateful for Rotary's commitment to service, not only here in America but all over the world," said Daley. "In the spirit of volunteerism, Rotary carries the torch. Each and every one of you stands alone in leading the way to eradicate polio."

Within reach

"I'm honored to participate in the End Polio Now campaign in Chicago, where Rotary was founded 105 years ago," said Illinois Governor Pat Quinn. "The eradication of one of the world's most terrible diseases is finally within reach due to Rotary International's extraordinary efforts."

The club awarded de Quadros its Chesley Perry Award for Distinguished Humanitarian Service for global polio eradication. He led a team responsible for developing a surveillance and response strategy to eliminate polio from the Americas.

The landmark displays coincide with a mass mailing of End Polio Now postcards to heads of state in more than 40 countries, encouraging

governments to continue or increase their commitment to polio eradication.

Below, the Great Pyramid of Giza



In addition to the Wrigley Building, other landmarks illuminated during the week of 23 February include the Pyramid of Khafre in Egypt; the Taipei Arena in Taiwan; the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Galicia,

Spain; the Old Port Captain's Office on the V&A Waterfront in Cape Town, South Africa; the Obelisk of Buenos Aires, Argentina; and the Royal Palace at Caserta in Italy.

Below, the Taipei Arena in Taipei, Taiwan

"By lighting these historic landmarks with Rotary's pledge to end polio, Rotary is saying to the world that we will fight this disease to the end," said Rotary Foundation Trustee Chair



Glenn E. Estess Sr. "People around the world will see these words and

join Rotary and its partners in the historic effort to eradicate polio from the face of the earth."

See many more pictures from around the world on [Rotary's web site](#).