

ROTARY ACCEPTS eCLUBS
By
MISS TRULY CANDID, SOCIETY EDITOR
PODUNK PINES WEEKLY NEWS

Dear Reader:

You will simply not believe me when I tell you the latest news about that Rotary bunch. I had a letter from the **president** of the eClub of the Southwest requesting that I cover the story that this eClub plus several others around the world have been taken **officially** into Rotary by R.I. As many of you are aware, I have become quite an expert on Rotary and am often consulted when they need help. It seems that a large number of people at R.I. got together and voted to let them into the fold, and now these eClubs are considered Actual Clubs. Evidently up until now they had just been pretending to be real Rotarians. I'd say those people in Rhode Island deserve a great deal of credit for taking this step. At least that is what the incoming president said when he told me of R.I.'s action.

After I read the letter I immediately went to the garage and got in my Edsel and drove across the river to the Podunk Pines County Offices in the court house to tell my best friend and our county clerk, Miss Ima Gossip, this news. I needed to go into town for a new ribbon for my Underwood anyway. I must tell you these ribbons are becoming difficult to find. Have you ever noticed that when you find something you really like, they quit making it?

Fortunately, I had remembered my medicinal potion because I am sure you are all aware by now that Miss Ima becomes very excitable quite easily. It was fortuitous that I had thought to take my little silver flask because Miss Ima nearly fainted with rapture when I advised her that my column would now be read by people all over the world. She doesn't understand much about those computers like I do so I had to explain to her about how Rotarians can put a log on, get their boots up and have something on the line to be able to read my story. Now my column will be read on six different continents. I don't know how it all works, but I am taking the word of that president that it does.

It wasn't fifteen minutes before the two of us we had emptied my flask. I had to stop on the way home at the Mountaineer House of Spirits and get a refill. Miss Ima wanted to call Shirley Passiton from the donut shop and Willa Tell down at the drug store and tell them to join us, but I shushed her as I want to be the first to let people know about this wonderful Rotary event when they read the next edition of the Podunk Pines Weekly News.

Now, as I understand it, here is how it all began and how it works. About six years ago a couple of good Rotarians, Mel and Judy Taunt, had the bright idea that Rotary members could meet on their computers. They thought this would be very helpful to members who travel or cannot attend their own club meeting for some reason. Please don't ask me how this works, for I have no idea. I am completely satisfied with my manual Underwood. These Taunts believed that somehow Rotary members from all over the world could communicate with each other and have regular programs and pay dues and act just as if they were a *real* Rotary club. Actually, they weren't because those folks in Rhode Island hadn't blessed them yet. So they were really just play-acting.

The idea spread and several of these eClubs sprang into existence around the world. Soon they were gaining members faster than you can count. It caused a great uproar among some of the older Rotarians who wanted Rotary meetings to be exactly the way they always were. A few of them, red-faced with indignation at the thought of the indignity of an eClub, carried on as if they were personally attacked.

"It will ruin Rotary forever!" one exclaimed.

“I suppose they will let women into those eClubs, too, and they will just try to take over,” declared another.

“How will we know if they follow Rotary rules?” cried yet another.

“Rotary has been just fine the way it is for a hundred years. There is no reason to let some of these computer nerds worm their way into our organization,” said another.

“How will we know if they keep up their attendance?” another exclaimed. “Why, I have had perfect attendance for 43 years and five months, and once I even had to check myself out of the hospital and attend my club meeting on a gurney with an IV in my arm so as not to ruin my perfect attendance record.”

“How will we know what sort of programs they will have? Will they even have programs? Maybe they will just write back and forth about their gall bladder operation or their lumbago or their grandkids or how mean their boss is. Who will check up on them?”

“Will they say a pledge of allegiance to their own country? In England will they all toast the Queen?” queried one.

“I just plain don’t like change. I like everything to stay exactly the way it is. I think this entire idea is deplorable,” opined an elderly Rotarian in exasperation.

Well, Dear Reader, you likely get the drift of what those two Taunts were up against when they put together all the paperwork needed to begin the first eClub. It is probably a miracle that R.I. even let them pretend to be Rotarians.

You know, it reminds me of the time the Podunk Pines Town Council voted a few years back to put a stop light at Main and Spruce Street. Why, one would think the world was coming to an end. They complained that having to stop there all the time would ruin their schedule and waste their time. People around here seem to have quite a bit of time of their hands, but that was still one reason to vote against the stoplight. Old Farmer Tiller complained that once a year he drove his sheep across that corner to move them to the south meadow, and how did we expect his sheep to tell a red light from a green one. Folks accused the Council of trying to be “citified.” A few threatened to move out of town. Now that they are used to it, no one seems to be bothered by it anymore. Farmer Tiller now uses the street south of Main to move his sheep.

Maybe that is what happened with these eClubs? Old-time Rotarians discovered that nothing in their Rotary world would change. Then a few began to go into the site of the web of the eClub and enjoyed the programs. Now, that is not a typo. They really do call it a website. I just noticed that I have a website up in the corner of my little pine-paneled office. There may even be a spider in it. I’ll have to get my broom and take it down. I wonder if their web has a spider?

Now I have digressed and must get back to the history of these eClubs. The eClub of the Southwest is actually six years old now. It turns out they really do have a meeting every week. They even have Rotary Computer Police who check up on everyone to be sure that all the members have their logs on and something on their line during the week. I don’t know how they manage to keep them all in line because even if they had those bells and whistles Miss Ima and I saw at that district conference, how in the world could all the eClub members hear them if they are on six different continents? It’s a mystery to me, I confess.

That person is just a Sergeant. I don't think Rotary has any police captains. That sergeant keeps track of who checks in and attends the meeting and whether or not the members have paid their dues. It is his or her job to start off the meeting. Sometimes I understand there is even a joke to get everyone in the mood for the program. I don't know how they can tell if anyone is happy and fine them when they are on the computer though. It must mean that they don't have Happy Bucks. I think that is a good thing. I would not like to be fined just because I am happy. I don't think that is the American way.

Each week they have a different program on their computers. I just don't know what they will think of next. As near as I can tell, members all over the world can go in and look at that spider web and read that program and even write a note about whether or not they liked it. Not only that, but other Rotarians who are not even actual members of the eClub can go in and read the program and do what they call a make-up. I think this is akin to missing an exam in school and having to go later and take the test to get a make-up.

If you know anything at all about Rotary, you know that no one can ever miss a meeting for any reason whatsoever. Just think of that poor Rotarian who had to check himself out of the hospital on a gurney to attend. Now that gentleman can just go look at the eClub spider web, put his log on, type in his name, read their program, and get credit for going to a meeting even though he is just sitting at his desk having a tuna sandwich his wife made for him that morning. Isn't that something though? And if you are at home sick, or if you are traveling or on vacation and cannot get to your own Rotary club, you can put your log on and pull your boots up and go to the eClub spider website and voila! You can attend a meeting no matter where you are! It's just like those Buck Rogers stories! I suppose next folks will be able to take pictures with their phones or watch movies on them.

Do you think maybe that is what they do with their Eye-Phones? I would hate to think I might be walking down the street and my slip might be showing and some stranger would photograph me! Or how humiliated I would be if some busybody snapped my picture when I go out in the morning to pick up my Podunk Pines Weekly News in my robe with curlers in my hair. Surely it has not come to that.

I must insert here that we in Podunk Pines have rather rigid dress standards and feel we have a fine sense of style. The ladies never ever wear clothing that shows their knees. We find it unladylike to paint our toenails or appear in public with bare legs. We even have an unwritten code for our funerals. Spinster ladies are always buried in white, while married ladies are customarily put to rest in lavender. I, myself, being a maiden lady, have instructed our funeral director, Mr. Cyrus Ulysses Last (we just call him C.U. Last) to arrange that I be laid out in the traditional white – with just a touch of lavender. (Wink, wink.)

So you can surely see that it just wouldn't do to have someone take a picture of me in my robe or any other time when I am not fully dressed. I could never live it down.

And the idea that they might send a picture of me on their computer is not a pleasant thought. Do you suppose they can get those Eye-Phones into our personal private homes? I don't really want to be shown on a reality show flossing my teeth! Next thing you know those technical folks will want to implant those little electronic dog tags in all of us so they can keep track of where we are and find us if we get lost.

Now back to the history of that eClub. While it started with just a handful of Rotary folks, I hear tell they now have over 70 members from six continents. Imagine! Wait until I tell folks that my column will be read in darkest Africa, Down Under in Australia, in Rome and Paris and South America and

those other romantic places I'd like to see. I suppose that someone right here in Quaking Aspens could even join that eClub if they had a computer and knew how to use it.

I think it is a wonderful accomplishment for those Taunts and other Rotarians who thought about this eClub and worked so hard to get R.I. to vote to make all the eClubs a permanent part of Rhode Island. I am really thinking of going over to the Podunk Pines library and seeing if I can get a look at that eClub spider website.

You will be happy to hear that the last of our late spring snowstorm has melted, and the trees are budded and getting leaves and last week I saw the first columbine in my flower bed. Columbines, you know, are the Colorado state flower. Sadly, mine didn't last long as a deer came down off the mountain and ate it. I had to go out and chase him away with a tea towel. We are all looking forward to summer here in our little village and soon we will have our town picnic to celebrate the end of winter. I wish I could invite all you eClub Rotarians to the picnic so I could meet some of you. Come to think of it, I believe that incoming president told me there are pictures of the members on the spider web. Isn't that something though?

I seem to recall from the time Miss Ima and I attended that Rotary district conference in that Southwest city that in addition to regular Rotarians, there are young people who are a part of RYLA, which means Rotary Youths from Los Angeles, and YE, which means Youths from Elsewhere. I wonder how this eClub will deal with all those youths? I will have to ask the president next time I send a letter to him. Maybe the eClub has forgotten about them. It is a good thing I know so much about Rotary and can remind members of this sort of omission. I also don't understand how they will meet GSE folks. I remember seeing those foreigners at that conference. I think they are Good Samaritan Emigrants who go to another country and do good works. It seems as if they won't need those GSE people since they already have a lot of foreigners in their very own club if they are spread all over six continents.

I suppose many of us do not like change. It seems to happen all the time anyway, doesn't it? I am going to screw up my courage this very afternoon and pull my boots up and go down to the Podunk Pines City Library where they have a computer. I think I can get Miss Ima's 10-year-old nephew, Timmy, to go with me to help me get my log on and find the eClub spider web and see what is on their line. I surely would like to see what all this excitement is about! Should I be able to actually find out, trust me that I will tell you all about it in one of my future columns.

Until then, Dear Reader, I hope to see many of you this weekend at the fair and picnic in the city park. There will be lemonade, hot dogs, clowns, a merry-go-round, a wading pool for the wee ones, volleyball, a game of horseshoes, and a bake sale to raise funds for the Summer Festival Dance next month. You can read all about the picnic in the next issue of our very own Podunk Pines Weekly News.

I am always here for you to let you know what everyone in town is doing, who has been admitted and discharged from the hospital, who had a baby, who died, and to whom Sheriff Will Arrestem has given traffic tickets, as well as the latest in Rotary news. Nothing escapes my editorial eye. Until next week, Happy Trails to all of you from Quaking Aspens and Podunk Pines.