President’s Valedictory Address

I looked up the word Valedictory in the Oxford Dictionary. It means “serving as a farewell”.

So valedictory address means a farewell speech, which I thought it meant in the first place.

Nearly three years ago I agreed to be Junior Vice President. I don’t think I was drunk so I must have had a very serious senior moment. I just can’t remember.

I became Senior Vice President because someone resigned before I was even Junior Vice President. I really didn’t want the job so soon as I was still on chemotherapy after a Bowel Cancer operation and wouldn’t finish the course until the end of July. I’d be a fool if I said I wasn’t concerned about my future health. It’s been a bit like being told that you were chosen to make love to the Queen. I knew it was an honour but I’d rather not have done it.

Don’t worry if you don’t know what a President is for Rotary give a huge amount of information on what the duties of a President are and when one reads it, it seems that the whole of the clubs activities are centred on him. I didn’t agree and have always thought and still think, of the President as an Ambassador of the Club; he chairs the meetings; looks after the guest speakers; goes to numerous Charters; maybe go to the District Conference; attends District Council Meetings; Trent Area meetings and the odd Civic function and make the odd speech here and there. (In my case, very odd)

I think that life is somewhat more difficult for the President Elect as Alan has found out as Senior Vice President, he is the one who has to choose or cajole members of the Club to be the officers during his year as President and also has had to contend with the New Club Leadership Plan which is a different committee structure from what we have been used to.

Then he has had to decide who will be on the various committees and with this Club which is not large, that can be difficult as we soon run out of members. Perhaps the most important officer to appoint and get elected is the junior vice president for this assures the future of the Club. He has to decide what charities the Club will support during his
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year of office. Of course he has to choose what venue is to be used for his Charter and deciding whom our guest speaker will be.

Not a nightmare - just a bad dream but that is what the president elect is doing amongst other things like supporting the incumbent President and inviting the guests (I was going to say getting an audience) for the presidents’ Charter. And last but not least he is in charge of the Club Assembly when the Assistant Governor attends. He and his future Council have to work out what the Club will be doing during his year of office before the Club Assembly Day.

So the President Elect and his Council has already planned their work during the previous year and now all that has to be done is for him and the rest of the team is to work their plan during his year a President.

Life as President is so much easier

So what have we done this year? Our main Charities have been, Rainbow, When you wish upon a Star and the Water Aid Project with District 3150 in Southern India which was organised by Sherwood Sunrisers and is an example of joined up Rotary because they enlisted the help of many clubs in our District to contribute. Maybe this will be the way that Rotary will work in the future. I hope so as it makes life so much easier.

We have also raised money for Aqua boxes and I have to thank Rex Barnett and his team for their efforts especially members of Inner Wheel who provided us with the food for their Wine & Cheese type supper. Rex has also enlisted the aid of various organisations to fill the aqua boxes. We have supported this project for many years and Rex as International Chairman has done sterling work during his years in office including Tools for Africa. Rex will be taking over as Secretary of the Club next year and whoever takes over from him will have a hard furrow to plough just to emulate him.

Graham Lomax and his team as usual have organised another successful Young Musician Competition. He does it with such panache in spite of the fact he had to contend this year with the unpredictable English weather. It really pays to get to know the head teachers and judges’ etc. This is a service that we have provided for over 18 years and Graham has been involved using his organisational skills for many of
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those years.

It was unfortunate that Steve Beach the Link Teacher at Toot Hill School resigned, inappropriately at the beginning of the Autumn Team last year that we were unable to continue with Young Enterprise. Let’s hope that next year Mr. Thomasowicz will appoint a new Link Teacher so that we may continue to be involved with Young Enterprise again as we have done for at least twenty years.

“Rattle Bucket” Collections were organised again this year by Gerry Ross. We had three and they were highly successful, certainly at Morrisons and Sainsburys but Asda, I think we all agree was hard work. We raised over £1730 for “Rainbows” and £533 for “when you wish upon a Star”. I would like to thank him for continuing to organise these events during my year as well as involving himself as Foundation Chairman. I thank you Gerry and all the many members who did their two-hour stint at the bucket (so to speak) in making these collections such a success.

The Art Exhibition was again organised by Jim Gostick & the Community Service C’tee. The Art Exhibition is probably the best of all our P. R. exercises. We have been doing this again for many years. It allows local artists to exhibit their work and gives much pleasure to the public. It is somewhere for people to go over Easter. The Exhibition itself doesn’t raise much money but it is a vehicle for selling raffle tickets and to a lesser extent Art Exhibition Programmes which do very well. This year we have been hampered by one of the worst recessions in living memory but we still managed to raise over £2100 net. This was a really superb effort on everyone’s behalf. Thank you Jim and everyone that was involved especially Dave Fennelly and his computer.

Anthony Hall has done a good job as our Publicity Officer and was also responsible for raising nearly £1000 for adverts in our Charter Menu and Art Exhibition Programme. That was quite an achievement.

Pat Bosworth raised £140 this year when she provided our Frugal Lunch at Jason’s house. The meeting and the meal was a success and I not only thank her but Jason as well for lending us his house for the occasion.
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I really must thank John Thompson for being our Health & Safety Officer. I asked him to do this job knowing very little about the duties of a Health & Safety Officer. His job has been a learning curve for us all notwithstanding that we are all pissed off with the number of reports that some of us have had to do. But I think that no one is as pissed off as John because he has had to do so much research especially, for example, the sale of balloons. He has become quite the expert. Even the very hazardous sale of Raffle Tickets at the Flintham show. I think the powers that be wanted to know where the nearest Fire Brigade was and whether there was a St. Johns Brigade Ambulance on the site. Thank you John for your patience and hard work.

I would also like to thank Michael Bennett for arranging all the social activities which members of the club have benefited from. He was also our Protection Officer. (Maybe he was protecting us from the Health & Safety Officer) Thank you Michael.

Obviously I have to thank Mike Grimshaw for being our Treasurer this year. He didn’t really want to do the job so I doubly thank him for taking on this responsibility especially with Veronica being so ill during the early part of the Rotary Year. Also for many years he has been our 100 Club King. Mike regularly makes over £450 each year which is quite an achievement. Many thanks Mike for all your hard work.

Anni needs my thanks on behalf of us all for being not only the Club Secretary but also our J.V.P. I have been put in my place from time to time by this occasionally feisty lady. I console myself by thinking that common sense is sometimes lacking in us all generally and me in particular. We need to be told from time to time that the Emperor is in the all together but all together as naked as the day that he was born. (Danny Kay in Hans Christian Anderson’s Fairy Tales). I look forward to the time when she is our President.

Alan, our President Elect has been busy, as I have already mentioned. However his support was always there when it was needed. Our Charter was quite a success and I thank him for all his work and support in what, at times has been somewhat of a strange year.

Alan Haydock has obtained some good speakers this year but it was
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interesting to note that some of our better speakers were Rotarians especially from this Club.
But that often happens. Carry on the good work Alan and I personally would like to thank you for agreeing to be the principal speaker at our Charter last January.

Finally I would like to personally thank Dave Fennelly for being our assistant secretary and I.T. Officer.
Without Dave preparing the Agenda every week, I would literally be up the Creek with no paddle. He was my eyes & ears so to speak. Many thanks Dave for doing your job so conscientiously.

Not only have we have honoured our pledges to the three mentioned charities by presenting them each with at least £2000 (Rainbows £2255 which included Jim Gostick’s Sponsored Walk contribution) but also we have done 10 aqua boxes (£727) and donated to the following: Polio Plus £380, Foundation £727 and other donations approximately £350

We have increased our membership net by three new members and that is quite an achievement. We have done better than District.

We have had four meetings at Shelford Village Hall with the food being supplied and cooked by Inner Wheel. We all appreciated their effort and the meals were enjoyed by us all. It needs to be mentioned because they did put themselves out and it was so nice to be served by so many pleasant and attractive ladies.

We have also put into operation joint efforts between ourselves and the Vale of Belvoir, our daughter Club at the various Village Fetes where we jointly will do P.R. work and looking for new members as well as, possibly in the future, raising money for endeavours that we all, as Rotarians have to do - i.e. Foundation and Polio Plus. Maybe this is a beginning of a dialog about a future “joined up” Rotary scheme that District are talking about. I might mention that the Vale of Belvoir members are delighted for the two clubs to be working together.

I would like to say that during my year of office which sometimes hasn’t been all sweetness & light, for example - being violated by the District Governor. However the thing that struck me was that we all seemed to be a happy, friendly club and on the whole generally content
with ourselves. This is what I shall most remember. Not that we achieved this or that goal but how we were during my year as President. We are always welcoming not only to guests but potential new members. We are definitely not a bunch of grumpy old members. I was going to say grumpy old men but we have female members now and they are far too young to be grumpy.

I suppose the highlight of the Rotary year is the Charter, the anniversary of our inauguration. This year we celebrated ours at the Yeung Sing on a Sunday 18th January. It was not a “dinner jacket” job; our wives and partners were invited; it was at lunch time and we didn’t have the formalities always associated with a District Governor because our D.G. had to attend a District Governors Conference organised by the R.I.B.I.

Instead we were blessed with the presence of past D.G. Roy Parsons who came on his behalf. Our Master of Ceremonies was our own Mike Grimshaw who shall always be remembered when during the Roll Call, he was telling everyone to “stand up - sit down”. He got through this somewhat boring task in double quick time. Alan Haydock was our Guest Speaker so the three of them just made the day. It is difficult to judge personally whether the Charter was a success of not. But many people came up to me after the event saying how much they had enjoyed it. I’m pleased about that because many people worked hard to put it all together. It would be a crying shame if it was a failure. But it was a success and I’d like to thank everyone involved on behalf of us all.

I would like to thank Jason for the loan of his house for my shindig on Sunday 14th June last and also his merry band of helpers who provided the food which was really excellent. The weather was glorious and the atmosphere great. Thanks to all of you who came.

That’s about it, except to say that what we have achieved in any year is all down to the efforts of us all and not down really to any single individual. I wanted a reduced fund raising target of about £8000 this year because in the recent past we seemed to go “target mad”. Ann Keen and her fund raising committee did not have much new to do this year. However they did work out where the £8000.00 was to be raised. This amount was achieved by the various fund raising activities as anticipated and I would like to thank her for the necessary input. I felt
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that during the previous two years, in spite of superb efforts with splendid results, we really had overreached ourselves. We were getting tired and worn out. We have achieved this year what I wanted us to achieve and we also had some fun doing it.

It has been an honour to be your President but I am glad it was only for one year. I’ve enjoyed it; learned from the experience. Thank you for putting up with me.