

## **TRF Chairman James L. Lacy Keynote Speech**

Rotary International Convention  
Osaka, Japan

My Rotary friends, my Rotary family:

You have all seen this marvelous photograph of the earth taken from space: a blue jewel shining against the infinite darkness. This is our home.

Ours is a world of majestic mountains and awe-inspiring oceans, of great forests and vast deserts, of mighty rivers and tiny streams.

We make our homes in big cities and small towns . . . In remote villages and on distant farms.

This is our world today in the year 2004. But because it is changing so quickly, we can only wonder: *what will this world be like for our children...and our children's children?*

And why is it that you and I, as Rotarians, must ask ourselves this question - one that we cannot possibly answer with any degree of certainty?

We must ask it because *we care*.

We *care* about other *people* ...whether we know them personally or simply as fellow human beings whom we may never meet.

We *care* about our *communities*...the community in which we live and all those many thousands of other communities that make up our global village.

We *care* about the *world* in which we live...its trees, its plants and animals, its lakes, rivers, and oceans, and its *people*, who, after all, are just like us. Like the rays of the beautiful rainbow, the world is comprised of caring people, just like us. We care about our world today and we care just as deeply about its future.

You and I care, and the Rotary foundation *cares*, and that is why I am so *proud* to be a Rotarian.

We care about promoting peace and goodwill.

We care about helping children who are starving, who are abused, who are on drugs, who can be saved from polio and other diseases, and who can grow up to be productive citizens, if given a chance.

We care about helping families obtain the bare essentials for a decent life.

We care. This is what makes Rotary so strong. And through the Rotary foundation, we can address all of these issues that we care about and make a profound difference in our world.

Today, many thousands of children can look forward to a better life because our foundation's humanitarian grants have provided food to eat, water to drink, and books to read.

Because Rotarians care, our foundation has provided impoverished families with a roof over their heads, access to health care, and an opportunity to earn a living. Because our foundation cares, people who are worlds apart come together in friendship and international goodwill.

In caring, we look at what *can be* and *will be* if *we dare to dream*, and then *do* what it takes to make those dreams come true.

In daring to dream and daring to realize our dreams, we accept the risks involved. And all dreams involve risks. Paul Harris, Rotary's founder, was a risk-taker and a dreamer. In fulfilling his initial dream of fellowship, he created new and bigger dreams that have brought us here today.

Look at our Rotary foundation. Was it not a risk to try to create an ongoing endowment for doing good in the world? I can assure you that it was. And it was a dream that could easily have died had Arch Klumph not followed it so *persistently* and *patiently*.

For 30 years, this Rotary past president dedicated his life to telling Rotarians what an endowment like our permanent fund could do for Rotary and the communities of the world. It was not until 1947, after Paul Harris died, that others gradually began to see the light of his vision.

We can only be thankful that Arch Klumph was not a man to give up on his dream. His perseverance gave us the Rotary foundation -- the greatest foundation on earth.

Another of our presidents, Carl Miller, in 1963-64, was also a dreamer. He dreamed of Rotarians all over the world communicating with each other through a program that matched districts and clubs worldwide.

Carl Miller's dream led to the creation of our world community service program, which by itself would have fulfilled his hope to "influence understanding and goodwill among peoples of the world."

Little did he know that his dream would also be the progenitor of even greater dreams—matching grants, the health, hunger and humanity program and Polioplus!

As we think about how to *lend a hand*, let's think for a minute about our own dreams and how we can fulfill them using the resources of our Rotary foundation.

Is it your Rotary dream to help foster literacy? Consider working with an international partner to develop a program teaching children and adults to read.

Is your Rotary dream to ensure security and respect for the elderly? Work with your district leadership and apply for a district simplified grant to deliver meals to the homebound.

Is your Rotary dream to break the cycle of poverty that besets the villagers in some small community? A matching grants micro-credit project may be the answer for helping those villagers find work and earn a living.

Is your Rotary dream to provide safe haven for street children? Then a matching grant can help start a community center where such children can be cared for -- a place they know they can go and be safe from the violence of the streets.

Is your Rotary dream to protect children from ravaging diseases? Then I ask you to volunteer your time to work for Polioplus; go to India, or Nigeria, or wherever you are needed, to give those precious drops of vaccine or offer your help through the Polioplus partners program.

Whatever our dreams may be, our foundation can help us to *lend a hand* and make them come true.

But let us return now to that earlier question: *what will this world be like for our children...and our children's children?* And, even more important: *what can we, as Rotarians, do today to prepare for this uncertain future?*

And how can we use the resources of our great foundation to ensure a better life for those being born today?

During our centennial year, there will be much discussion of our past, but even more, I hope, about our future.

We cannot talk about the future without talking about children. They *are* the future. All the great and grand acts of service by Rotarians throughout their first hundred years have, in the final count, focused on the children of their communities and the world. And all of our Rotary dreams for the future must encompass their dreams.

Let us dream, then, of a world in which all children can thrive.

—a world in which no child goes to bed with an empty stomach.

—a world in which every sick child gets medical attention.

—a world in which every child has the opportunity to learn how to read and write.

—a world in which all children have a roof over their heads, warm clothes to wear and shoes for their feet.

—a world in which every child knows the love and compassion of caring adults.

—a world in which fear and despair are foreign concepts; a world in which young lives are marked instead with hope and the chance for a better life.

How we can create this magnificent world?

Our foundation offers us so many ways. Just recently, the trustees agreed to establish a children's fund within the permanent fund. The earnings from this fund will be used to support projects that benefit children and offer them hope for a brighter future.

All of our humanitarian and educational programs are helping us to create the better world we dream about.

Many of our grants provide basic education for those who have never before had the opportunity to learn. We have seen the success of literacy programs in India, Thailand, and South Africa.

Other humanitarian grants support microenterprise projects that give people the help they need to escape a life of desperate poverty.

Foundation-supported projects are also bringing clean water to thousands of people, making their lives a little easier and preventing the spread of disease.

Through our Polioplus program, we are working to eradicate an entire disease and remove the threat of polio from the lives of millions of children. Rotarians are also using foundation grants to provide accessible health care in remote areas, develop nutrition programs, and equip clinics in some of the most deprived parts of the world.

We must continue all of these efforts and more if we are to realize our dreams for a safe and loving world.

Our success will depend in large part on a strong Rotary Foundation. The trustees have set a goal for every Rotarian to contribute to the annual programs fund every year. Every Rotarian, Every Year. This is a dream that must be realized if we are to fulfill so many of our other Rotary dreams.

I can assure you that every Rotarian, every year is about more than money. It's about Rotarians fully participating in the life of their foundation and taking responsibility for its fiscal strength.

Each year, the trustees must return many outstanding matching grant applications that we do not have the funds to support. These are very painful decisions because we realize how many people each one of these projects could have helped. And with the moratorium on the 3-H program, we are further constrained—no longer able to support large-scale projects that improve the quality of life for entire communities. We need these programs operating at full speed if we are to realize our many lofty dreams.

The every Rotarian, every year initiative is asking all Rotarians to contribute \$100 or more each year. In some parts of the world, this may not be feasible; in other areas, Rotarians have already exceeded this amount. Whatever their financial realities, I believe that all Rotarians can afford to make at least a

small annual investment in our foundation and to increase the contributions they already make. I assure you it is a worthwhile investment—one that will pay high returns of hope, understanding, and peace.

In the musical play, “The Man From La Mancha,” Don Quixote sets out on a quest to find good everywhere, but this is an impossible quest, an impossible dream. In spite of this, he went on

“to dream the impossible dream,

to fight the unbeatable foe,

to bear the unbearable sorrow,

To run where the brave dare not go.”

Let us go on

this is our quest,

to follow our dream,

no matter how hard,

no matter how far

and the world will be better for this,

that Rotarians all over the world,

still strive with their ultimate courage

to achieve their Rotary dream.

In Rotary, our quest is to *do* good everywhere. In Rotary, the impossible becomes possible.

The Rotary’s dreamers who looked at an “impossible dream,” and made it happen were not starry-eyed visionaries, but practical and persistent people of action. Rather than worrying about what they might not be able to accomplish, they concentrated on a goal that could be made a reality, even in the face of fierce opposition. And they kept following their dream because *they cared*.

As one Rotary club president said almost 90 years ago: “good Rotarians are dreamers, but with this qualification--they are *practical* in their dreaming...in their daily duties, they think of the other fellow. They pick up the broken glass in the street so their neighbor’s boy or girl may not cut their bare feet.” I’d like to think that no matter where our dreams may take us -- and whatever lofty goals we reach in this life -- Rotarians will always be there to pick up the glass and protect children from harm.

Next year, we will celebrate 100 years of fulfilled dreams, achievements both large and small on which to build for the future. Let each of us add our Rotary dreams to this long, impressive roster and *celebrate Rotary* by making them come true.

In the coming year, I am confident that each of you will have the inspiration and courage to unlock your potential, to dare to dream, to dare to take the risks, to dare to achieve. I know each of you can follow that dream, your Rotary dream. Working together, we can make those dreams come true.

Let us continue to *lend a hand* by supporting our foundation and using its resources to realize great dreams for all of humankind. And with service above self as our motto,

Let us have the love to share

Let us have the vision to see what is needed

Let us have the faith to believe

Let us have the wisdom to dream new dreams, and

Let us have the courage to do whatever it takes to make them come true.