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95th International Convention

Osaka, Japan

23-26 May, 2004

CLOSING REMARKS

My Fellow Rotarians, Friends, and all of the Family of Rotary –

Our motif for today is spring – and here in Japan, spring is ushered in with *hanami* – viewing the cherry blossoms. All over this country people take time out of their schedules to appreciate the breathtaking beauty of the cherry blossoms – all the more precious because it does not last.

And our time together in Osaka cannot last forever, either. But there is a saying “there are no strangers under the cherry blossoms,” and indeed, today, as we gather for the last time we feel the glow of friendship that warms us all.

Spring is a time for new beginnings and fresh plans. That is why I would encourage all of you to ease the sorrow that comes from parting company by making plans to see each other again. Next year, President-Elect Glenn will be traveling all over the world for eight different Presidential Celebrations – including one next April in Tokyo. And of course, it is never too early to plan for the Centennial Convention next year.

And be assured that whenever Rotarians gather – whether for a club meeting, a Zone Institute, a Presidential Celebration or an International Convention – it is an opportunity to share our hopes and dreams. It is an opportunity to make friends and to serve. It is an opportunity to **Lend a Hand** as members of the worldwide Family of Rotary.

I am deeply grateful to so many people who have reached out to **Lend a Hand** to make this year and this Convention such a success – and I would like to acknowledge them.

I would like to thank the Convention Committee and the Host Committee. They have given selflessly of their time and talents so that all of us could benefit. Their devotion has given us so much: a rewarding convention, a rich variety of enjoyable activities in Osaka and a deeper appreciation of Japan’s beautiful culture. Chairman Genshitsu Sen and all of the devoted committee members: you have our esteem and our gratitude.

I would like to thank this year's Board of Directors – an outstanding international team of dedicated Rotarians. It has been a privilege to work with every one of you in service of Rotary and our shared ideals.

I would like to thank our incoming president, Glenn Estess, and his wife, Mary, for their support of me throughout this last year. We are all most fortunate to have President-Elect Glenn's excellent leadership during our Centennial Year, when we all ***Celebrate Rotary***.

I would like to thank Mark Maloney, and his wife, Gay, who served as aides to Ade and me since I became president-elect. It is not an easy job – and I am most appreciative of all they have done for me.

I would like to thank our dedicated and hardworking Secretariat staff – who do so much to support us in all of our endeavors.

It is important to take the time to acknowledge the people who support us in our work, because we must realize that none of us can accomplish our goals alone. We must also realize that along with the many responsibilities that each of us has to our clubs and our districts, we also have important responsibilities to the whole of Rotary International. As Rotarians it is our duty to ***Lend a Hand*** in support of Rotary International's long-term goals – goals that span the centuries.

Those long-term goals can be summed up as one all-encompassing objective, eloquently expressed by John F. Kennedy, who said that: "We must seek above all a world of peace in which peoples dwell together in mutual respect and work together in mutual regard."

We have been working together in mutual regard to eradicate polio, and next year we must run those final yards in the race to eradicate this disease – and those last steps will be uphill.

Rotary has been a key player in an unprecedented global health initiative – and we have played a major role in reducing polio cases by 99 percent since the start of the PolioPlus campaign. The remaining pockets of the disease harbor a cunning opportunist – the wild poliovirus that has the power to undo everything we have achieved.

We must not let down our guard, and we cannot cut corners. The most obvious reason, of course, is that we never want to see another child suffer from a devastating disease that is absolutely preventable. But there are other reasons, too.

In our fight against polio, we have gained knowledge that can be applied to future health concerns. We have created the tools and the strategies to get vaccine to children in isolated regions. We have formed public-private partnerships that

support the health programs of national governments. We have bolstered the worldwide laboratory network, a network that will support disease surveillance efforts in the future.

And perhaps most importantly, the PolioPlus campaign has inspired warring nations to lay down their arms so that their children can be immunized.

My friends, the PolioPlus campaign has given us a glimpse of that world in which the peoples dwell together in mutual respect and work together in mutual regard. And to further support our vision of that world – we must continue our unflinching support of the Rotary Centers for International Studies in peace and conflict resolution.

Our first class of scholars will complete their studies this year, and we will eagerly watch their progress as they assume their roles as the world's diplomats, international agency leaders, directors of humanitarian organizations and mediators. To ensure that classes continue to graduate, we must continue to support this important program of The Rotary Foundation.

My friends, yet another important and ongoing goal – critical for achieving all of our other goals – is increasing our membership. A strong and growing membership means greater outreach into our communities and throughout our world, where our humanitarian and educational projects are so urgently needed. It also means increased financial support for The Rotary Foundation.

I have emphasized retention of current members, because I do believe that retention is vital to our membership growth. But we must also continue to find new, qualified members. And I urge every one of you to find new members who are women because, even though women are now active in all the businesses and professions represented in Rotary, the number of women Rotarians is still only 10 percent of our total membership.

Another way in which I am certain we can attract and retain members is by a renewed commitment to our second avenue of service: Vocational Service.

It is a sad fact that while we have remained faithful to the other Avenues of Service – Club Service, Community Service and International Service – as an organization we have faltered in our commitment to Vocational Service. Sadder still is the fact that Vocational Service is one of the key elements that distinguishes Rotary from other service organizations! And upholding high ethical standards, the cornerstone of Vocational Service, has become increasingly important in today's climate of business corruption and scandals.

And although many of the scandals involve complicated accounting and legal proceedings, the root cause of these disasters is always the same: dishonesty and greed.

Paul Harris said it this way “Wealth is too high priced when its cost is honor, integrity or happiness.”

As Rotarians, we have always understood the wisdom of these words. It is time that we renewed our commitment to Vocational Service, and that includes sharing our wisdom with others.

As we prepare to finish our first century of service and enter into a new century of success, let us honor the rich traditions of our past, work toward achieving our goals in the present, and make our dreams of the future a reality.

In the words of Eleanor Roosevelt, that great American first lady who worked for peace and on behalf of needy people everywhere – “The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.”

Who has dreams more beautiful than those that we, as Rotarians, share?

My friends – Rotary’s first hundred years have been much like the cycle of the four seasons. The ideals of fellowship and service were planted and they grew into an organization of 1.2 million members worldwide – serving others through the many programs of Rotary International and The Rotary Foundation. We have reaped the rich rewards of that growth and we have taken the time for mature contemplation of our past successes and our future goals.

Now, an energetic new cycle begins. Now is a time of fresh inspiration. Now, we look at our world with wonder and with joy – because we know deep in our hearts that in this season of rebirth all things are possible.

And so, let, our work together begin anew. And though we must part company and the miles may separate us, we are always together in our hearts – working toward a shared vision.

Until we meet again – and I hope it is soon – I wish you all a safe journey home and offer to you this Gaelic blessing:

May the road rise to meet you.
May the wind be always at your back.
May the sun shine warm on your face;
May the rain fall softly on your fields
And, until we meet again,
May God hold you in the palm of His hand.

Thank you.