

“Building Communities – Bridging Continents”

Installation Speech ~ Craig Gillis

Rotarians, partners and friends of Rotary, Honorary Rotarians, Interact students, guests, outgoing president Dave and wife Julia, and Assistant Governor Dale Before my speech begins, however, a heartfelt thank you for your presence here tonight and an enormous thank you to my friend and fellow Rotarian, Glen, for his remarkable organizational efforts in putting this memorable evening together.

It is daunting to stand before you on the threshold of a year as president, president of a club that is bursting with leadership, talent, and true Rotarian dedication to service above self. It is such an honour to know that I follow in the footsteps of Rotarians like past Governor Gordon Lang who infused the club with a sense of possibility and charter members such as Phil Asplin, Ted Martin, Pat Martin, Jim Harris, and our first President –Elect Dan Wickham. This group along with 22 other charter members had the courage to create the first vision for Campbell River Daybreak, *Club 24508* back in 1986. Just recently 24 members of our club continued that process ... crafting a vision for the next five years daring to think of who we are now and who we will become as a service club in our community and in our world.

The 2010 2011 International Theme could well have been scripted for us “Building Communities and Bridging Continents” for it is our work with the Campbell River Rotary (Noon) Club, with other district 5020 Clubs and with our world partners that helps us and others see and feel the presence of Rotary. Whether it is the 1.2 million business and professional leaders worldwide or the 63 we now count as Daybreak Rotarians Whether it is the 32 000 world clubs attempting to eradicate polio or our two local clubs joining forces to raise funds each Christmas for the Hospital Foundation’s fetal heart monitor we all believe we can make a difference under the collective banner of Rotary.

The more I have learned about the organization of Rotary during this past year in my training as a President Elect, the more I am humbled by the great work that has forged a pathway for all of us to acknowledge and to admire. One of the first lessons I learned occurred several years ago when I was nervously selling my “Duck Race tickets at the entrance to Zellers, carrying this onerous pressure that I couldn’t let the club down by returning with full books of unsold tickets. Allen DeHaan a former student –Class of 1978-- who I hadn’t see for 20 plus years happened along we chatted caught up... and he was on his way. Half an hour later he emerged from the store and look quizzically at me, asking why I was still there. When I explained I was selling tickets—duck tickets--he responded not

unkindly, “*Mr. Gillis as a ticket seller, you’re pathetic. Give me that book --- I’ll buy a bunch.*” Why do I tell you this story? Well there are two reasons. The first is simple: I learned the tickets sell themselves. Rotary is our public face that welcomes and encourages anyone to contribute --- the community knows we are an organization worthy of their trust and confidence because we will always “pay it forward”. Whether Don Jesse is helping our carpentry team to craft another shed for the Handyman Challenge, Hansi is encouraging us to dance with the Tapas, Inge and Jurgen are taking “date night” to a whole new level by having us perform a breakfast marriage for visiting tourists, Carolyn is transforming our Newsletter to a work of art that helps us plan, organize, and communicate as a club, or Mike and Glen are quite literally “serving others” (forgive the pun) by rolling in the barbecues for yet another culinary spectacular we are all using our ‘helping hands’, our time, and our collective resources to enrich our community and our world. The second reason – *you may think I’d forgotten there is a second* – the Duck Race in so many ways symbolizes who we are as a club. It is our hours of selling tickets *together as* fellow Rotarians that helps us to explore our personal stories by sharing bits of our lives, and to truly develop our fellowship. It is what bonds our club and creates that shared spirit of doing something together!

Three weeks ago I attended the District Conference in Longview with my presidential mentor, Ron Fisher. Little did I know Longview was located in the southern extremity of District 5020 Yes, that means a 12 hour drive there and *do the math*, a 12 hour drive back to fully share the minute details of our lives ... in fact, we almost covered the pre-conception days we went back so far. But I digress.... We were surrounded by like minded Rotarians steeped in the spirit of generosity, fellowship, and purpose. And we were inspired by speakers who shared their stories or journeys and left us with an even greater sense of our connection and our responsibility to Rotary. For me though, there was one speaker who synthesized why it is so important for each of us sitting here this evening to recognize the enormity of our commitment as Rotarians.

Kollin Minn, a young dynamic leader representing the Gates Foundation reminded us of the \$300,000,000 that has been devoted by Bill and Melinda Gates to the eradication of polio. He then reminded us that we.... as Americans and as Canadians in essence have won the ovarian lottery. Quite simply by being born in or moving to Canada we have grown to know privilege and opportunity. He reminded us if that if we were to ‘re-draw’ our lottery ball, our destiny.... there would be a 17% we would have no access to clean water, a 24% chance that we would live without electricity, and 53% of us would live on less that \$2 a day. I believe we have won the ultimate lottery by being able to live in this remarkable community of Campbell River and having the privilege of serving our community and world as Rotarians.

Yes, the theme of *Building Communities and Bridging Continents* will help us to continue to fulfill dreams. What greater metaphor for *Building Communities* is there than this very building in which we are hosting this evening's installation – the Maritime Heritage Centre – envisioned by two men who sat with a napkin and an idea two men who were supported by an *entire Rotary Club* that was able to breathe life into their napkin dream! The examples of turning ideas into realities seem endless. Youth Helping Seniors ..OR.. cooking gourmet hot dogs for the Relay for Life.. OR... spending a year with a Rotary Youth Exchange student like our Taiwanese treasure Sara .. OR.. sharing the heartwarming stories of our Students of the Month.

On an international scale we are *Bridging Continents* by providing water and sanitation for six schools in Naivasha, Kenya .. OR... contributing a dozen Shelter boxes to Haiti ... OR... delivering another 280 wheelchairs --this time to Columbia and soon to the Phillipines... OR... by exceeding our goals for the Foundation or Polio Plus. Yes, these are only examples of the power of Rotary in *Building Communities and Bridging Continents*.

And that is where I come to my final thought of the evening.... and the promise you can hold me to as your president of Daybreak Rotary. The question I ask you, the question I ask myself is.... **“How Can I Help You Fulfill your Commitments to Rotary?”** because I think that is what should be the commitment of leaders. At the July 13th meeting, I will be sharing a list of goals *call them Craig's List if you wish* but I want to be clear about the commitment I hope to make in supporting the remarkable membership of this club. I want to make this a public commitment so that I can be accountable for it. So whether you are a brand new Rotarian or one of our founding charter members someone with 5 years or 15 in our club, I pledge to do my best to help you fulfill your commitment to Rotary.

In closing, I wish to thank each of you for being here this evening ... and I especially want to thank John Hayes for giving his best to trying to train me for this coming year, the year I've often been told will be the best year of my Rotary life..... and to Dave Free for being such a stellar example as a leader and President. I know he probably worries he will have too much time on his hands as Past President so I begin tonight by helping him fulfill his commitment to Rotary ~~ I'm letting take on my shifts as Fining Sergeant in the coming year! Dave, it's been a great year and you have been a great leader.

We're going to have an incredible year. Thank You!