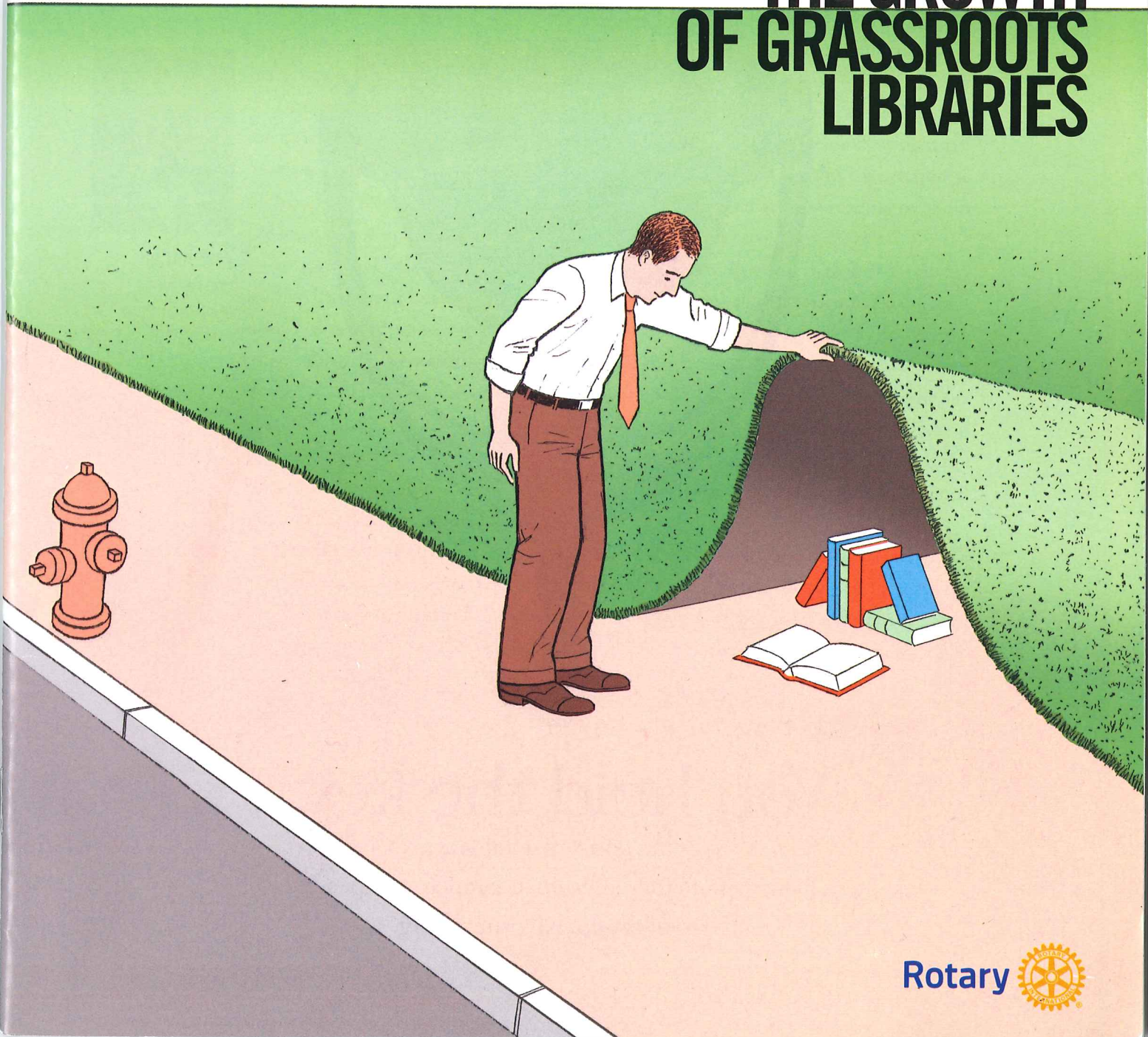


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ALYCE HENSON

|| FOR THE RECORD ||

GARY C.K. HUANG

As he looks ahead to his presidential year, he plans ways to make Rotary bigger and brighter

Rotary's president-elect wants to increase membership so we can match our resources to the world's needs.

Gary C.K. Huang, who begins his term as president on 1 July, has been a Rotarian since 1976. A member of the Rotary Club of Taipei, Taiwan, he has served Rotary in a number of roles, including RI vice president and director, Rotary Foundation trustee, International Assembly group discussion leader, task force coordinator, and committee chair.

In his business career, Huang has served as president of Malayan Overseas Insurance Co. and charter secretary-general of the Council for Industrial and Commercial Development in Taiwan. He is an adviser for Wah Lee Industrial Corp. and Bank of Panhsin, a supervisor for Wah Hong Industrial Corp., and a director of Federal Corporation and Sunty Development Co. Ltd.

Huang has written about his experiences in business and Rotary in his book, *Finding Solutions, Not Excuses*. His work for Rotary has earned him the RI Service Above Self Award, a Presidential Citation, and The Rotary Foundation's Citation for Meritorious Service and Distinguished Service Award.

He and his wife, Corinna Yao, have three children.

Rotary speechwriter Abby Breitstein interviewed Huang in November in Jerusalem, at the Rotary institute for zones 14, 19, and 20.

THE ROTARIAN: How does membership figure into your presidential plans?

HUANG: Our membership has declined. My goal is to increase membership by 50,000. I know that my team can make that happen. I see an opportunity to extend into China. If Russia can have 1,300 Rotarians, then why not China? Chinese officials have told me they think Rotary is doing good things. But China's NGO law is restrictive, and the RI Board

has approved clubs only in Beijing and Shanghai. We should open more provinces to start provisional clubs. Then, if their local laws change, we can easily turn these clubs into officially registered clubs. I have the impression that Americans don't want China open, but I don't know why that would be. Most of the Asian countries do want it.

TR: Is there a specific group of potential members Rotary should be targeting?

HUANG: We should focus on alumni – people who were in Group Study Exchange and former Rotaractors. We currently see former Rotaractors who are over 30 as graduates. They should become Rotarians. Rotaractors already have the basic knowledge and experience of Rotary. Many of them go overseas or into military service, or study, and they forget about Rotary or become too busy. We should keep track of these people. If we can sponsor clubs with short meetings and no big meals, that will help keep them. We've been doing this successfully in Taiwan. Past Rotaractor presidents and representatives become good Rotarians.

TR: What do you tell people about Rotary to encourage them to join?

HUANG: I tell them that Rotary is special. It's people helping people, and they are having fun, like good friends. Some qualified people say they are too busy to attend weekly meetings. We should tell them that they don't have to attend all the meetings, that they can participate in service whenever they can. And they have to eat anyway, and it is only one meal. I tell them that, when they travel abroad, they can eat well and cheaply at Rotary make-up meetings and be among friendly people who know the local language and customs.

TR: What are the obstacles to recruiting new members?

HUANG: So many people still think this is only a men's club. And some Rotarians think it should be. I ask them, "Are you sure your wife is not qualified? If

you don't want your wife in your own club, that's OK. But don't say she is not qualified to be a Rotarian. She can join a different club." These people are too conservative. This is one of the reasons that Japan is losing membership. But Korea, Taiwan, India – it's all changing, now we have more female members. It's the same with younger people. We have to give them the opportunity. They are our future. In a few years, they may be wealthier and more successful than we are.

TR: How confident are you that Rotary can attract new members? Do you have a strategy to make that happen?

HUANG: This coming year, we are going to emphasize that Rotarians should

HUANG: When I decide I want to do something, I want to do it well, no matter how difficult. I use all of my energy, all of my connections, every tool I have. I will ask people for advice, but I also have my own thinking to consider. I will combine the ideas, and if something or someone persuades me, I will change my view. I am stubborn, but not that stubborn. I work hard in Rotary because I have this opportunity to serve, and that is an honor. I can be patient, and I'm willing to learn. I think I am easy to get along with. I think I can inspire Rotarians – that may be what you would call my strength.

TR: Tell us about what attracted you to Rotary.

we have to make sure that good clubs sponsor new clubs. Latin America has lovely countries, very warm people. The convention for my year will be in São Paulo, Brazil, so I will have a chance to be there a few times. I am pleased to see that every time I go to that region, they have organized new clubs.

TR: Are there places you won't go?

HUANG: No. All the places I go, I meet good Rotarians. I like trying new food, seeing new places, making new friends. There is no place I don't want to go. My wife points out that I always say, "If you charter a new club, I will come back next year." I've said that too many places already. My wife reminds me, "Don't promise that! It's far away, and

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invite their spouses and other family members to join Rotary. If you can't do that, don't tell me you're going to invite somebody else! It is not that difficult to invite people who interact with Rotary. In Australia, at the Canberra institute, I invited two of the speakers. They both joined. One of them was the female CEO of a major bank. When I invited her, she said she wasn't sure if she was qualified. The CEO of a major bank? That's ridiculous. I gave her my pin. I took it right off my jacket, and I inducted her that night.

That's something we should all try – something I have done with success. I invite speakers, or sometimes even guests of honor, at meetings to join Rotary. Many Rotarians think those people are too busy, or too important, that they don't have time for Rotary. But it's wrong to assume that.

TR: Which of your strengths will you rely on to be an effective president?

HUANG: When I was in high school, I won a prize from Rotary and thought, "Wow, so many important people belong to this organization, it must be good." I was rejected for membership three times because I was too young, but that was good for me, because I learned that being a Rotarian is a special opportunity.

TR: During your term, you will be traveling much of the time. Which areas do you think need your special attention?

HUANG: Africa is the place that needs the most attention. There's so much interest in getting involved, and there's so much work that needs to be done. After that, India. The country is growing so fast, but there is such a disparity between rich and poor. And I really want to help Japan. The membership is in trouble there, and that needs to change. The Japanese have been very good Rotarians. And, of course, there is China. If one day China opens up, that will solve half of our membership problem. But

you probably can't go back." She's more practical than I am. I just want to encourage them.

TR: How did you come up with the theme *Light Up Rotary*, and what do you hope it will mean to Rotarians?

HUANG: I started thinking about a theme when I became vice president of Rotary. That was such a difficult year, 2001, because of September 11. I thought then, "If someday I become president, what theme should I use?" I thought about using the title of my book, *Finding Solutions, Not Excuses*. And I consulted with a few of my good friends, past governors in Taiwan. We had a few brainstorming meetings. I decided on *Light Up Rotary* because we have not done enough to show Rotary to the public. Rotary has been doing so many good things in so many communities all over the world. We should be proud of what we have done. Twenty or 30 years ago, we kept a low profile, we



were humble, we felt we shouldn't say, "I help people, I donate money." That is old thinking. Today is different. We're doing something good, we should tell people about it, and that will help get more people to join in and help those who need help.

TR: Some presidents are traditionalists, some are iconoclasts. Which are you? Do you think Rotary needs to be shaken up or merely fine-tuned?

HUANG: I want to do something that people will remember. But the job lasts only one year. There's not enough time to make big changes, and you shouldn't change things just for the sake of change. But I am not afraid of a challenge, and when I see something that is definitely wrong, I will try to make sure things go in the right direction. It's not the job of president to change everything. There are lots of things we can improve, but we need time and patience. My job is to make sure the organization runs smoothly. People selected me to serve this organization, and I will do my best, because I know it is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. I will pave the way for my successor.

TR: What would you like your legacy to be?

HUANG: I am the first Chinese who has had the opportunity to serve in this capacity, so I have a heavy burden. If I do well, other Chinese or Asians will have a better chance. If I don't, that may hurt their future chances in Rotary. I want people to be able to look back and think they chose the right person. I would like to be someone who made Rotarians get more involved, and made the experience more fun – that, and persuaded more families to become involved. Rotary helps so many people, but we are still a small minority. If we can create more public attention, more people would join. We can make the world better. ■