

EARLY BIRD WEEKLY



NewbergRotaryEarlybirds.org

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Last week was another Prior Presidents Panel featuring Tom Tesmer, Tom Irwin, Bill Rogers, and Rod Federwisch.

By the way, President Mark really is a great guy and is not actually throttling his predecessor in effigy.



Karen Hall was our emcee and led with questions about family, upbringing, etc.

Tom Tesmer: Tom comes from the Great Lakes area where his dad was a speakeasy musician and his mom was a flapper.

He moved to Oregon around '94 and worked for Evergreen Aviation for a few years before buying a company in southern Cal. So for the first 15 years he was hardly ever here.

He and Terry Emery are engaged and have a dog and a cat, Max and Grace.

Irwin asked how Tesmer was introduced to Rotary.

"I was on an airplane going to San Diego sitting next to a guy named Dennis Nicola, kind of a chatty fellow." He was also one of our more cultured members.



By the time they got to San Diego Tom knew everything there was to know about Rotary. Since he didn't really know anyone in town he reached out to Dennis. Got invited, showed up ... no Dennis so he introduce himself ... twice. And Tom's been here ever since.

Tom Irwin: Born in Portland and raised in Pendleton under a Catholic upbringing.

He has three children and five grandchildren, the youngest being 8th and 9th grades.

One of his first jobs was selling papers, worked in the harvest, but then got in to working a pharmacy after school. Not a bad gig compared to farm labor.

He joined Rotary while working a store in Tanasbourne before taking a district manager job for Payless making it harder to make meetings. He met Mark Wendt (pres '99-00)



when Early Birds had just started and that day time was a great fit.

Bill Rogers: Was born in Richland, WA before his family moved to the Alaska Territory then San Diego where he started kindergarten.

He met and married Maureen there and started their family. They moved to Newberg in '90 where they had their fifth of five kids, each of them still live nearby.

Bill and Maureen own Chapters Books and Coffee. Tesmer introduced him to Rotary while visiting Chapters and having helped at Bill's high school history class on Vietnam War from Tom's time as a helicopter pilot.

He wanted to join but, as a high school principal, didn't think he could set aside time. Until he did.

Rod Federwisch: Was born and raised in Glendale, AZ graduating Grand Canyon College (University now) the same year Robin Baker started college.

Got married out of college and had two sons before moving to Southern Cal, the "land of milk and honey," which turned out not true.

Rod and Joyce have been married for 20 years now. She has two kids and two grandkids close by.

His youngest son and wife live in Sarasota with their two kids.

Rod joined Rotary in SoCal because, as a principal, you're always trying to bring money into your school. Someone told him, you know that Rotary, those guys have deep pockets. You need money for your school they'll figure out how to get it to you.

So he joined the Rancho Del Chino morning club. He learned that their hearts were as big as their pockets.

Karen Hall: What years were you president and where did we meet?

RF: Pres of Rancho Del Chino club in '95-96. He doesn't remember a lot about it because his life was a whirlwind of raising sons, being principal, and trying to be Rotary president (even though the club mostly ran itself).

He whined about it once to his mentor who calmly replied that your life is a series of seasons. This is not your season to be 100% Rotary.

He moved to Newberg, joined us a month later, and three months after that Ron Wolfe mentioned Rod should be president. As a retiree, this was his season, so he did it.

BR: '20-21

TI: '05-06, went to Chicago for PETS on Rotary's 100th anniversary year.

TT: Tom Irwin was pres when Tesmer joined in 2005 and meeting at what is now GFU's Roberts Center (Newberg's hospital when it was built).

For his first 5 years, the club grew each year. We were invited to District Conference for how to thrive and grow a club. Then Tom came and we shrank.

We teased Tom relentlessly about anticipating frequent missed meetings so Nate Travers had me sneak a picture of Tom that we could use as a stand-in. "I only missed 11 meetings. There was a \$200 pot for the person who guessed how many meetings I would miss."

Jay Ouellette filled in most of those absences so, by the time Jay became president, he had it down pretty pat.

Now, what do you do with a life-sized image of oneself. You can't just throw it away or burn it! So he hid it behind the couch where it would be removed by a grandson or housekeeper and

put it somewhere so you'd walk around a corner and see ... that.

Now he puts it in the upstairs picture window facing the driveway. It's the most cost-effective security system!

Karen Hall: Now, share something memorable about your year.

TI: John Bridges had commented that the centennial was coming up and we needed a project. Tom worked with Noon Club's Jim McMaster on Rotary Centennial Park at Chehalem Cultural Center.

Tom teased that the Noon Club built the swing set and set the footings too deep. So when the set was erected the swing seats scraped the ground.



We (by we, we mean Rick) have since built a splash pad then a shelter.

BR: I had the unique distinction of being the COVID President. We were just moving in to pandemic posture the months before he took office. So we couldn't meet in person and breakfast buffet went away.

Like most businesses Bill's role was to survive the pandemic in strong enough financial health that we could resume our resource hungry projects our club has such passion for.

We canceled our arrangement with the Cultural Center and reduced dues from \$800/year to \$400 since we weren't paying for meals anymore.

RF: "Bill, you weren't the COVID President. I was. It was a great year for events and fundraisers. Man, we were flyin' like crazy. And then ... March."

"I didn't know how to do Zoom. If it hadn't been for Casey, we would have

been dead. I had no idea how to maintain a sense of fellowship when we can't shake hands and hug each other."

Attendance plummeted. He really stressed about how the rolls would look when the world opened up again.

TT: Our ongoing problem is attracting the next generation of Rotarians. We have Rotaract and Interact and Babyact (that last one's just a Tom-ism).

He connected with Kristen and Young Pros, building a relationship that is still going. Free breakfast doesn't mean the same as it did then but not on purpose. Some new Young Pro members have come/gone/returned.

Karen Hall: Leadership? Duty or aspiration?

BR: Was asked while running Catalyst but accepted after he retired. He did it because he could and because it was his turn.

RF: Ditto. Ron Wolfe assured him his club would be supportive and not let him burn out.

Rod also praised predecessor Kari for leaving him a well oiled machine.

TI: His native club wasn't tight knit like ours. He took our challenge when offered and hasn't regretted it.

TT: Had been an Early Bird for six years. And it did feel like an obligation. Like he had been enjoying the club and needed to step up and fill a need. He also wanted to learn more about the club. That involvement did that.

Karen Hall: What you learned about yourself during your term. Professionally or personally.

BR: I'm having trouble thinking of anything.

KH: That's why I sent you a list.

BR: There was an implicit assumption I would read and prepare for it.

Moving on to the OTHER principal.

RF: Rod learned connection to some of Newberg's finest people. People that nurture, work hard, and encourage.

BR: What he appreciated is that the system is already in place with future and former presidents and the formal Rotary structure.

He came to realize and appreciate how easy it is to lead people who are motivated and passionate. You only have to ask and hands go up.

That's big for someone that would rather do than ask.

TI: He and Dr. Krier used a discovery grant to visit an old colonial town of Arequipa, Peru, that had seven Rotary clubs to see what they needed.

What stood out to Tom from that trip was his exposure to those clubs' Exchange Students. We have them as well but it sinks in differently when you yourself are a foreigner associating with kids in this far away land from their own far away lands and languages and cultures.

For this he really appreciates Michelle and Kari. He also praised the Noon Club for their financial support of the program.

TT: After many years in management, "I learned how to lead from behind." Yes, many will jump out to help but you still have to make everything happen.

Most memorable was Lisbon, Spain and the international conference. Walking around the House of Friendship and came upon a booth from Manchester.

His club supported an orphanage in Rwanda. He showed a picture of this guy, a big, black man. He said, "He's a doctor in Manchester and he got us connected [with this orphanage]."

Tom nodded, that's cool.

The guys said, for years and years, we would write checks and send money. The doctor said, "Now I want someone to go with me."

If you've ever traveled to Africa you know you fly here, then fly there, then fly further in a smaller plane, the a car on dirt road for 6 or 7 hours.

When the man got to the end, to the scrum of kids waiting, they were holding on to each other. Because that's all they had.

The impact was transformative. Now most of the club goes down there.

That's what we're doing with La Plata. We can show slides and tell stories but it's not the same as being there.