



Glenn E. Estess Sr.
2004-05 Rotary International President



Keynote Address (Final Plenary Session)

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My Dear Rotary Friends,

This is a great honor for me and my family — Rotary has been an important part of the Estess family for many, many years. I am so grateful to have my wife Mary, my children, their spouses, and my grandchildren — all here with me today.

We are also grateful to have so many of my friends here — Rotarians from my home district 6860 and from the Rotary Club of Shades Valley. I'm glad you and your families were able to come all the way to Osaka to share this moment. It means a lot to both of us; because I know that we wouldn't be here without you.

I'm not going to get much further without you, either.

I would also like to acknowledge two gentlemen who given me a great deal of support — President Jonathan and Past President Bhichai. They have both found so many ways to *Lend a Hand* and *Sow the Seeds of Love* since the time I was first named the president-nominee. Although the three of us are from very different parts of the world, we are closely united by the bonds of friendship and service and by our abiding belief that Rotary is a powerful force for good in our world.

For the last year, I have been preparing to take office in June - and it has been a great honor to work so closely with President Jonathan during this time. He is a great leader who has brought us all closer as the Family of Rotary — a special connection that will benefit us all as we prepare to celebrate the first 100 years of Rotary service and begin a new century of success.

Clubs and districts are already making preparations for the great worldwide celebration of our Centennial Anniversary. For example, Rotary Centennial Bells are ringing their way on a journey to the first Rotary clubs in every country — symbolizing both Rotary's history and its internationality.

The Twin Club program is also underway. By partnering with clubs in other countries, we are nurturing international understanding, creating new opportunities and — most importantly — making new friends.

Through their Centennial Community Projects, clubs are carrying out special projects to benefit their communities — as well as raise awareness of Rotary all over the world.

We also have some ambitious Centennial goals to meet: Eradicating polio, increasing our membership, and raising contributions to The Rotary Foundation to US\$100 through the Every Rotarian, Every Year initiative.

With these efforts already underway, the excitement is building because one hundred years is an important milestone — one that few organizations reach. The very fact that we have reached this milestone says that Rotary is doing something right - and it says that the need for Rotary service remains strong.

That is why the Family of Rotary will mark our Centennial Anniversary by working to Celebrate Rotary as we Lend a Hand — performing acts of service and strengthening our worldwide fellowship.

Part of strengthening our fellowship has to do with membership growth. After the polio eradication effort, I consider Rotary's number one priority to be membership development.

Rotary has developed measurable and successful recruitment programs and we are working toward creating retention programs that will be just as effective. New members are coming into Rotary, but a large number are leaving within two or three years. Thus, net growth is minimal.

To ensure a healthy net growth that will enable Rotary to continue its proud tradition of service, our membership strategy should include:

retention
extension, and
recruitment

— in that order.

Recruitment of new members and extension are both important, but to my thinking, our top priority is retention. Rotary will grow only if we make significant improvements in our retention of current members.

The Family of Rotary Committees will remain an essential part of our efforts to retain members next year. We do not want Rotary to feel like an obligation that pulls members away from their families. When clubs promote an atmosphere of love and support where all family members are welcome, where all generations can share in social and service events, then Rotary becomes a satisfying and viable way for members to enrich their lives.

A strong, committed membership will help us make the most of our Centennial anniversary - because the coming year will be filled with many opportunities for Rotary service and fellowship. Whatever we do in 2004-2005 will be indelibly etched into the history of our organization.

In the year ahead, I am counting on Rotarians to focus their efforts in four key areas.

You will notice that three of these areas are familiar — the Family of Rotary, Health Concerns and Literacy. Under the leadership of President Jonathan, Rotarians are already hard at work on these important issues.

First — the Family of Rotary — which I mentioned already in terms of its importance in our retention efforts. The Family of Rotary includes our personal families and their involvement in Rotary activities - plus our extended family-Youth Exchange students, RYLarians, Interactors, Rotaractors, Scholars, Group Study Exchange team members and others. There will be a Family of Rotary Task Force to help our clubs in this important area.

Our second area of service will be health concerns — which will also have a Task Force.

During a recent visit to the United Nations, I was told that:

- 42 million people have the HIV Virus and this number is growing at a phenomenal rate each day.

- Malaria is a major problem throughout the developing world.
- Hunger is a significant issue in many parts of the world.
- Avoidable blindness is an effective program — but the need in this area is so great that we could be doing even more.
- Population development is a concern to many people in our world and in our own communities.
- Diabetes affects large numbers of people — and that number is growing.

Many other diseases cause suffering and death throughout our world — and there is more to do in terms of prevention, treatment and research.

All of these are concerns that Rotarians can address through service projects in their communities and internationally. And, of course, our primary goal in terms of health remains the achievement of a polio-free world in 2004-05.

Our third area of emphasis will be literacy. While at the United Nations, I also learned that two billion people in this world cannot read.

During my time as a Trustee of your Rotary Foundation, I visited Rotary project sites all over the world. If I had to pick just one project that made the greatest impact on me — it would have to be the Lighthouse for Literacy program in Thailand. As you may know, this project was started by Australian Rotarians in just one school district in Thailand. The program was so successful that it spread from school to school and was ultimately adopted by the Thai Ministry of Education. Rotary clubs in other countries adapted the program for use in schools, for adult education, and for street children.

This is only one of many ways that Rotarians have literally changed people's lives by teaching them to read. I believe we also have to reach out to adults and children who are struggling with functional illiteracy, which is defined as having literacy skills that are too low to perform most daily activities. I encourage you to look right in your own communities — because I believe that every single community in our world — in developed countries as well as developing countries - there are individuals who cannot read a help wanted ad or the label on a prescription bottle and need some help to live a better life. Next year, a Literacy Task Force will help clubs and districts carry out their own successful literacy projects.

Our fourth area of emphasis is new for next year. Not a new program, but a new emphasis and that is water management.

Recently, the Programs Director for UNICEF told me that 1.2 billion people in this world do not have safe, clean water to drink. It was reported that 6000 people die every day for the lack of clean water and proper sanitation and most of them are children. Scientists at the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention tell me that the vast majority of infectious diseases are transmitted through unclean water.

In developed countries, the problems are different and no less critical. Pollution, lack of awareness about the importance of conservation, poor irrigation practices put precious water resources at risk all over the world.

Water is critical in each of our communities. I have heard it said that water could eventually be more valuable than gold. If we address water stewardship today — we will have fewer water safety and health concerns to address tomorrow.

With a strong commitment to these four areas of emphasis, we will have many excellent reasons to *Celebrate Rotary* and our centennial anniversary.

There are few organizations that last 100 years. The fact that Rotary has reached this important milestone is a sign that there is tremendous need for Rotary service. As we look forward, it is appropriate to reflect

upon our achievements — but not to simply congratulate ourselves for a job well done. Instead, we must draw inspiration from past success to help us achieve the goals of a new century of service.

One of those challenges is to raise per-capita giving to the Rotary Foundation's Annual Programs fund to US\$100. This kind of active participation and support by all Rotarians will strengthen the resources of our great Foundation and ensure that Rotary clubs and districts can continue to carry out urgently needed humanitarian actions throughout the world and promote greater understanding among the peoples of the world. That is why I am asking each of you to be an instrument for peace and take the "Every Rotarian, Every Year" message to your heart and to your Rotary clubs. By supporting our Foundation every year, Rotarians are ensuring that its vital work will continue.

Like so much in Rotary, "Every Rotarian, Every Year" is based on the idea of individuals taking a positive action.

Like the positive action taken by a man in Virginia, USA, named Ken Frantz who was inspired by a photograph of a man trying to cross the Portuguese Bridge in Ethiopia — using nothing but a rope. This bridge had been damaged in World War II and previous attempts to repair it had failed. So villagers who needed to travel from provinces on either side of the 4,000 foot gorge had to risk their lives, perhaps even every day. Over the years, at least five people died each year trying to cross to the other side.

Ken Frantz owned a construction company and knew that he had the expertise to help. He also enlisted Rotary clubs in Gloucester, Virginia, and Addis Adaba, Ethiopia, and formed an organization he called "Bridges to Prosperity."

Here's what it ultimately took to repair that bridge: Ken Frantz, seven more volunteers from the United States, 250 local residents in Ethiopia, 25,000 pounds of steel, cement and equipment, and 350 donkeys to carry all of that steel, cement and equipment.

You can see for yourself that the project was a success. All of this came from one person — one person who saw a photograph and decided to do something.

A story like this reminds us that while we can imagine the positive effect our actions will have — we can't predict their full impact. We do not always know exactly where our actions will lead, and we may never learn just how many lives we touched.

Ask your children sometime - "What do you remember most from your childhood?" Their answers are so surprising — they remember events we have long forgotten - simple moments that just happen as part of normal life yet still create profound memories.

It is those simple moments that define who and what we are. We do not carry out our ideals by talking about them — we carry them out through our everyday actions. These everyday actions are the essence of fellowship - and the essence of service.

And our everyday actions are also the essence of high ethical standards. One of the most important things we can do in the coming year is to set an example of the highest ethical standards and inspire our fellow Rotarians to do the same.

To support that effort, I am very pleased to announce a new recognition program for next year — the Rotary Centennial Service Award for Professional Excellence. This award will recognize non-Rotarians in your communities for exceptional professional achievement consistent with the ideals of Rotary. I will be counting on the active participation of each district to use this new award program to recognize and promote exemplary professional conduct in communities throughout our world.

My friends, I am honored to be a part of this historic transition that awaits us. As we complete our First Century of Service, the worldwide Family of Rotary will Lend a Hand to Celebrate Rotary in the most meaningful ways —

- Helping the poor
- bringing water to the thirsty
- healing the sick, and
- educating the illiterate.

Together, as the family of Rotary, we will reach our Centennial Goals — to work toward a polio-free world, to strengthen our membership and to build our Foundation with the support of "Every Rotarian, Every Year."

Together, as the family of Rotary, we will uphold and promote ethical behavior both within our organization and in our communities and our world.

And together, as the family of Rotary, we will enter a new Century of Success — our hearts overflowing because we are proud to be a part of Rotary and because we have so many reasons to

Celebrate Rotary!