

DAVID THOMPSON PRESIDENT 1971 - 1972



This introduction by David's son Stephen – now a very active member of the Rotary Club of Canterbury, will provide fond memories of David for those lucky enough to have known him and retrospective motivation for those who read it.

Barry Rice

Living in Elham in 1972 as a lad at school making a poor attempt at my A Levels, I knew very little of my father's year as President of the Rotary Club of Canterbury.

What I did know was that Rotary and the affairs of Rotary were a very important part of his life. Certainly conversations at meal times quite often referred to the "goings on" in the Canterbury Club.

What I have learned since is that he joined Rotary in 1965 following in my grandfather – JB Thompson's footsteps. In 1972 my father became President in time to celebrate the Rotary Club of Canterbury's Golden Jubilee 50th Anniversary, 25 years after my grandfather had celebrated the 25th Anniversary.

I thought that you might enjoy reading his New Year Message after he had been President for six months. Much of what he said then appears true today.

(I thought that it was just me that he was hard on, but you guys must have been really bad!)

Stephen Thompson

February 2010

NEW YEAR MESSAGE 1972

Fellow Rotarians,

Six months approximately from the date when Thompson first found himself in this hot seat and I am charged with the responsibility of delivering myself of a New Year message to you all. I've hardly got the first somewhat heavy and pontifical oration out of my system and here I am expected to perform again.

Well. I'll try to make this one a little lighter – not much – and a little shorter and the first thing, of course, is sincerely to wish every one of you – and I really mean this – a really wonderful year in 1972, both in Rotary and in your family lives. Good health, peace and great achievement.

This is about half time as far as our Rotary year is concerned, time for the oranges to be brought on. I am reminded of a rather nice little story of the Viking Ship and it's not the one you think it is! The oarsmen have been rowing magnificently all day, striking with great power and finesse. The coxswain gave the command 'easy oars' and announced, 'I have good news for you all. The captain has been so impressed with our progress today; he has ordered that you should receive a five course dinner and a flagon of wine.' There followed a chorus of grateful acknowledgement for the weary crew. Then again came the strident voice of the coxswain. 'Now I have some bad news for you. After dinner, the Captain and First Officer intend to go water ski-ing'.

The analogy with the Rotary Club is not too difficult to see. The first six months seem to me to have slid by fairly smoothly and with great rapidity. The 'oarsmen' and by that I would want to mention very specifically the Club Officers, the Club Council, Chairmen of Committees and those holding special responsibilities have given me such magnificent support that the job has not been difficult. To them I find it difficult to adequately express my gratitude. The only reason I have not ordered them a five course meal and a flagon of wine here at lunch today is that our club has a mighty fine 'crew of members' as well and if you were all thus to indulge yourselves at my expense, I would be financially embarrassed and you would by now be asleep – and that's no way to run a navy!!

Seeing that some eyelids are already looking a little droopy, I'll come quickly to the bad news. Fortunately, neither I nor Tom Barker can water ski, but to those who think they've worked hard from July to December, they are going to have to double their output for the next six months and a large number of crew members are going to be dragged in to help as well.

Fellow Rotarians, this is the beginning of a year we are all going to remember - our fiftieth anniversary, our very own Golden Jubilee. We shall be enjoying much social activity together and it is right that we should, because good fellowship plays a vital role in Rotary. We have our 12th Night Party on Thursday; we had a splendid port and wine party last night. On 18th January, we have our Golden Jubilee Banquet at which we shall be honoured by the presence of the President of RIBI, Howard Ensor; our District Governor, John Pain; Presidents of Clubs throughout District 122; our guests from St Quentin and amongst our Honorary Members, one of our Founder Members, Alfred Baynton. There follows a full Rotary programme until June when we will hold our

Jubilee Gala Ball and International weekend, which we hope will include a visit to the Trooping of the Colour Ceremony on the 10th June for our friends from St Quentin. Then - the culmination of our main project - the restoration of the Cloister Bay in the Cathedral and a service of dedication and Thanksgiving in September. Quite a programme!

But the New Year is a time for good resolutions and there is something in my view much more important in which each one of us should participate fully, starting now. It is to rededicate ourselves to ROTARY.

I absolutely refuse to accept that Rotary is for the most part a social club. What a derelict bereft affair it would be if it was. I must be frank and some may hate me for it. There are those who do sometimes give the impression that their interest is limited to TUESDAY lunch.

I have the express authority of Club Council to mention the embarrassment caused by the mass exodus that sometimes takes place BEFORE the speaker at our regular lunch meetings. You will have heard me say earlier to our new member, John Tilleard, that 'being busy does not excuse you, for all Rotarians are busy men'. Fellow Rotarians, we have to arrange our business and professional lives in such a way as to give full priority to Rotary on Tuesdays. Of course, there must be the occasional exception, but please ensure that it is occasional. It's pretty feeble if, as a committee member of Rotary, one cannot give 90 minutes of one's time most weeks and it is surprising how often a talk or subject, which sounds dull on paper, can become a source of deep interest and inspiration.

So what is Rotary and where do we look to extend our knowledge of it in 1972? I look upon it as a unique organisation. I believe it to be a spirit, a state of mind and a course of conduct and action within an individual, within each individual Rotarian. The ways of 'living' Rotary are boundless and innumerable, but for the most part, they originate within – within me and you. If one thinks hard enough, I believe one's own conscience; will provide adequate guidance and direction.

I often find that when one hears the objects of Rotary read out, that they are a little high and lofty, but when one cuts through the verbiage about 'ethical standards' etc, etc, it all boils down to 'me' and 'service' and what that means to 'others'. DO AS YOU WOULD BE DONE BY.

We have talked in the Vocational Service Committee and within the Club itself of 'bridging the generation gap' in the context of the rebellious teenagers and those of older years – yet, again I am going to be frank, I believe we have ignored, or at least failed to acknowledge. The 'generation gap' that is in our midst.

In this Club, as I suppose in many Rotary Clubs, we span perhaps fifty years of the human life cycle. I have often heard younger and more recently joined members of the Club expressing feelings of frustration or intense desire to effect changes of one sort or another. Perhaps in some cases (and I ask no one to take offence, because I am in no way being personal or critical) Rotary is looked upon by the younger members as being a sort of 'Senior Round Table'. How natural that it should be – our links with the Round table are so strong. Yet it positively is NOT, never has been NOR ever will be!!

I believe that some of our senior members from time to time may harbour feelings of resentment at the pressure being exerted, the desire for change by these 'whiz kids', after all in many cases they may have been the architects of the policies, the traditions now being so closely examined.

How difficult, how virtually impossible to equate the interests, the deep convictions often fervently held on both ends (and in the middle) of our 'Generation Gap'.

I think we would all agree that change is necessary, that it is inevitable and that, provided it comes as a consequence of free expression of opinion and democratic procedures, it is abundantly healthy.

Thus, regardless of age, seniority in the Club, experience in Rotary, I come back to the point that Rotary is quite unique. It demands tolerance, sympathy and understanding, no pettiness, no tittle tattle, no back chat. It is 'ME' in action as an individual first – 'US together' second – 'SERVING' wherever, whenever and for whoever, the need exists. I hope that this can perhaps be my message to you at this time.

Final thought for 1972. It takes 72 muscles to frown and only 14 muscles to smile. Make it easy for yourselves.

A Happy Golden Jubilee Year to you all and thank you for being so tolerant of me.

David Thompson