



The Weekly Westerner

Box 4572, Station C, Calgary, Alberta T2T 5N3
Holiday Inn, McLeod Trail, Fridays 12:15 pm

President: Grant Ritchie **President-Elect:** Don Bateman

Past President: Sa'adat Keshavjee **Secretary:** Brian Wintonyk

Treasurer: Des DeFreitas

Directors: Dick Brown, Frank Burns, Marnie Cardell, Mike Carlin,
Murray Hunter, Duncan Stanners

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It was the first meeting of the calendar year for 2012 and marked the half way point of **President Grant Ritchie's** reign. And he was at the meeting early and well prepared for the activity and chairing of the meeting for the day.

Duncan Stanners was on the cash table, with **Ron Jones** greeting members and guests as they arrived. **Marie Rickard** stepped in to fill the 50/50 ticket selling role. Absent was the gregarious and always thoroughly organized leader of the reception committee **Malcolm Harrison**. **President-elect Don Bateman** later in the meeting updated the club that Malcolm had had a heart attack with further complications late in December and was now back at home convalescing. All were encouraged to reach out and call Malcolm to cheer him up during his recovery.

The attendance seemed slow, though several folks were at the meeting early. Even with a few straggler latecomers (six, all of whom were fined by the stand-in sergeant-at-arms, yours truly, the scribe) the turnout was small. This was mainly due to our hosting of the Habitat for Humanity Casino the day before and this same day. Many of our club members were on shift at Sam's casino during our luncheon or were still recovering from the late night shift the evening before.

President Grant called the meeting to order at 12:13 PM and led the club himself in the national anthem, while this scribe's six year old daughter and frequent club visitor delivered the invocation, which she had heard delivered by our own **Clarence Buckley** a few years earlier at our Stampede luncheon. Then it was off to the buffet of chicken rice soup, cold sandwiches, salad and dessert.

Once all the bellies were satiated, guests were introduced and the announcements began.

At the head table were **Liz Jamieson**, who introduced our speakers, **Kurt Schurer**, who thanked them, President Grant and our guest speakers, polio survivor **Darlene Davis** and Rotary Club of Calgary North member, **Laverne Bissky**.



Past president and **District Governor Mike French** promoted the upcoming visit to Calgary of the RI President. He reminded members of the February 17 Million Dollar Dinner and how easy it was to get a free seat at this dinner. A simple pledge to commit \$10,000 to the RI Foundation, either in a lump sum, or over a giving period of 10 years, or through a bequest in your will or insurance policy, was all it would take. Mike provided all of us with a clear understanding of how easy it is to make such a pledge and how it can be structured so that it is not a financial burden. For more information on this amazing opportunity be sure to visit

<http://www.clubrunner.ca/portal/story/StoryDetail.aspx?accountid=50011&sid=14316&stid=District>.

Ted Valentine then had the opportunity to catch up on birthdays. Due to full weekly meetings Ted had not been given time to bring birthday greetings to members since August, so he played catch up brought greetings to those club members who had birthdays between September and through January who were at the meeting that day. As he said, to those not present to receive their accolades, their loss! He recognized in September **Brent Barootes** and **Chris Davis**, **Don Alexander** and Mike French in October, **Ron Staughton** and **Jim Willson** in November and **Bryden Horwood** for January 2. Ted also used this opportunity to wish and recognize all his children and grandchildren who had birthdays during this same time period. Now that list was LONG! As always, this was very entertaining, and thank you Ted for doing this.

Tim Anderson won the 50/50 pot and Sergeant at Arms Brent Barootes (also scribe) managed to fine just about every club member and guest, ensuring the club's President's Fund coffers were full for spending on worthy community projects.

Guest Speakers

Liz Jamieson then introduced our guest speakers, polio survivor Darlene Davis and Rotary Club of Calgary North member, Laverne Bissky. This tag-team presentation was a great story-telling production that delivered a comfort of delivery format with an abundance of information and education. Just so everyone knows, both Darlene and Laverne will be presenting a more in-depth presentation at the upcoming District Conference in Banff on May 25-27, and you are encouraged to register for the conference at <http://www.rotary5360.com/index.html>.

Laverne opened with some history and understanding of polio worldwide and specifically here in Canada. Darlene then told her story as a polio patient and survivor from a young age of 18 months through to today as a senior citizen. And then Laverne wrapped it up with the linkage to the Rotary Polio Plus program, and how important the eradication of polio is and how close we are to achieving it.



It was interesting to learn that 60% of the room could remember the polio epidemic when it hit Canada in the in the 40s. As all agreed, the big issue of the day was the fear of polio and its devastating results in Europe and also in Canada. By 1955, a vaccine was discovered and the spread of polio was contained. Polio tends to strike children under five, but can affect anyone. What once was an epidemic worldwide; polio today has been contained to just four countries. Today, polio only exists in Nigeria, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. But until it is completely eradicated, we are all susceptible. Like Darlene noted, she caught the virus from someone who had polio and rode on the same bus as her. Just as easily, an infected polio person could be on a plane and in Canada tomorrow and pass on the disease. This is why it is so important to eradicate.

As Laverne noted, in 1985, RI decided they would undertake a project to ensure that children all over the world had the chance to live a polio-free life by providing vaccinations to children worldwide. By 1988, the World Health Organization joined forces with Rotary to set a goal to eradicate polio from the face of the Earth. By the early 90s, the western hemisphere was polio-free and, as noted, today just four nations today have active polio virus. Over the past 20+ years, Rotarians have committed over one billion dollars to this project, and, most recently, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation challenged Rotary and Rotarians to push even harder and eliminate polio in these last four countries. They committed \$350 million and Rotary was to raise \$200 million (of which over \$190 million of our pledge is complete) to make the final push.

Laverne then illustrated the “why” eradicate polio very succinctly. First, it was the right thing to do. And second it makes economic sense. With this horrendous virus eliminated, those impoverished families that today are still stricken by it, dedicate hours and time to caring for the family members versus being productive members of the community. If all those people could be going to school, working jobs and participating in the community, these nations could also grow as could our global economy.

Darlene then enthralled all of us with her stories and real life experiences. Her recall from being a small child, and being separated from her mother for three months while in “hospital isolation”, to the situation of her and her mother being asked to leave the family home as her family did not want a polio person in their house; to the laying of scalding cloths on her arms to “rejuvenate” the muscles, was incredibly moving and emotional for all of us to hear. She spoke of the stigma side and how she had to wear those ugly black oxford shoes, while all the other girls got pretty black patent shoes. She talked about today, how few people that she meets in the younger generations even know what polio is, or that it was an epidemic here in Canada as well. Furthermore, people don’t even think about polio survivors. As she noted, those that overcome polio and survive are not fully off the hook. In many cases, including with Darlene, it comes back in many forms. Post Polio Syndrome affects walking and respiratory systems and, today, Darlene carries a fold up cane in her knapsack for when she needs it. But, as she pointed out, when she went to some rehabilitation classes, the other participants would



ask her; “What are you here for? Do you have MS or MD?” And when she would reply that she had polio they were shocked. It is the forgotten disease and, as she noted, until these “dinosaurs” are gone, it is a real scare still.

Darlene delivered an amazing message to us as a polio survivor. It was one of determination. She was determined not only to survive polio, but she persevered through life. Polio taught her to never accept "no". It taught her to know she could overcome anything, from sports to black oxfords, job opportunities to life in general. As a polio survivor, there was no obstacle that could ever stop her.

Kurt Schurer thanks our speakers and presented both with a Boltman.

Coming Events

January 13	Vince Caleffi, Key Player in the Start-up of Alberta Sheriff’s Department
January 20	Joy Johnson-Green, ED SonShine Community Services (Domestic Violence)
January 27	
February 3	Paul Miller, SVP Oil Pipelines, TransCan, Keystone
February 10	
February 17	Family Day Weekend
February 24	Din Ladak, CEO Catholic Immigrant Service
March 2	
March 9	Peter Menzies, CRTC Commissioner
March 16	Karl Herzog, Organiser of Rotary Everest Trek 2012
March 23	
March 30	Kimberly Cornish, Permaculture Project, Eastern Namibia/Botswana
April 6	Meeting Cancelled
April 13	
April 20	Assembly
April 27	