

Putnam County Rotary

2001-2002

President: Nathan McBrayer

"The year Service Above Self took on new meaning"

I will start out by saying that I wasn't supposed to be President in 2001. The incoming president got cold feet in May of 2001 and as President Elect I was asked to jump into the roll sooner than later. I'd also been asked by incoming District Governor, Tommy Mullins, to act as one of his Assistant District Governor's; thus I was club President and Assistant District Governor in the same year.

Due to my unexpected presidency, I didn't have any time to prepare for the rotary year as I had wanted. I knew we would be able to invite several important speakers, but I really wanted our Rotary Club to make a mark in the community. Many of our past Presidents brought energy and focus to the chapter. Habitat homes were built, consolidated meetings with other clubs formed (for this we give thanks) and here I was beginning my year with a declining membership and little time to prepare.

Everything changed on what I thought was a typical Tuesday; a Tuesday that would have never been remembered as anything special on the calendars of history if it had not been Tuesday, September 11, 2001.

Smart phones didn't exist in 2001 and my office didn't have a television or a quick internet connection. I was on a conference call when one of my colleagues received a call from his daughter that a plane had crashed into the Twin Towers, and to turn on the television. He watched in horror with the rest of the world at what was happening in our country and relayed the information to me.

At that moment this Tuesday would change our lives and bring new meaning to "Service Above Self". Everyone began to call loved ones and to leave to pick up

their children from schools. Then I began getting calls about Rotary. Were we still going to have our meeting? How would we let everyone know if they should come or not? It was during these calls that I realized the purpose of Putnam County Rotary; it was to support each other so we could support our communities. I decided that we should absolutely have Rotary. Wasn't it this kind of society occurrence that defined Rotary?

Our speaker cancelled because he was a member of the WV State Police and had been called to duty given the morning events. I asked the staff at Sleepy Hollow if we could have one of the televisions put in the room which they quickly accommodated. After everyone arrived (which was about 15 members) I told everyone what I thought we should do.

Sometimes serving is a physical action, sometimes serving is thinking and praying for others. Because we couldn't be with our fellow citizens at ground zero we prayed. We prayed out loud and in silence, we compared information with each other about school closings, and we relayed information we were obtaining about what was going on across the country. Then we ate quietly and watched the unfolding story hoping that the acts of terror were over and that all of our friends and families were safe. After lunch there were a lot of hugs and we went our separate ways in reflective silence.

This Tuesday changed my focus for the rest of the year. We didn't focus on big grandiose projects. We decided to strengthen our group, to focus on creating strong relationships with each other, and our group had a small increase in membership in 2001. It was a year of fellowship, learning more about our members and our community. We finished the 2001-2002 year as a club that loved its members and understood just a little more what our motto meant... "Service Above Self"