

MAKING ROTARY MEANINGFUL
Presentation to the Calgary Rotary Club
October 28, 2003
on [James Wheeler Davidson](#)
www.earlyleaders.org

Greetings: President Tony, Mount Davidson Summitters: Tom Keenan, Mike Smith,
Honorary Alpinist Marmie Hess (in absentia) and Calgary Rotary Club Members

Introduction

I accepted this opportunity to briefly speak to you with some temerity. To talk to you, about you, is a bit presumptive of me. That's in part because your club chartered ours in 1923. Red Deer then was the smallest town in the world to have a Rotary Club. The Chartering Governor was Jeff Lydiatt and the "Welcome to Rotary" speaker that night was James W. Davidson.

This is a Historic Occasion:

This is a historic year for your Club. It is the 75th Anniversary of the most significant event in your history. In 1928 or 75 years ago Jim Davidson departed from this (the Calgary Rotary) Club on his 2nd chartering voyage. Thirty-two months later he had chartered twenty-three Clubs in twelve different countries and completed the dream of Paul Harris; the circumnavigation of the International Association of Rotary Clubs.

The story begins in 1914 when Jeff Lydiatt invited Jim Davidson to join Rotary as a "loans officer".

Then in 1919 Lydiatt became the Governor of District 4 which extended from the Rocky Mountains to Thunder Bay. That year Jim Davidson became the Calgary Club

President. The same year Lydiatt was appointed Chairman of the Canadian Advisory Committee to the IARC (Rotary) Board. In 1920 that Committee sponsored two Rotarians to start Rotary Clubs in the British Empire outposts of Australia and New Zealand. The President of RI at that time who orchestrated these events was Crawford McCullough, MD from Thunder Bay, Ontario. Canadian Rotary Clubs and RI each contributed a quarter of the cost. Jim Davidson and Layton Ralston picked up the rest of the 1921 trip. Four Clubs were chartered in Melbourne, Sydney, Wellington, and Auckland. Now there are 1200 with 50,000 Rotarians "down under".

That same year (1921) Halifax Rotarian and Dalhousie Law Dean, Donald MacCrae wrote Object #4 under which Rotary promotes world peace, goodwill and fellowship.

Rotary Extension

That wasn't all Davidson did. In 1920 he was appointed to the RI Extension Committee. He stayed on it for five years before becoming the 3rd Vice-President of Rotary in 1926/7. At that time (1927) there were Rotary Clubs in thirty-nine countries. There were only two between Western Europe and Shanghai, in Lahore and Calcutta, India. Davidson offered to undertake another chartering trip. It was based on his strategy of interpreting fellowship as friendship and going out and creating friendships. And he did. From 1928-31 he interviewed 2200 businessmen and interested all but a dozen to join Rotary. By 1931 when he finished Rotary Clubs were in 68 countries.

When Lillian and Jim returned after thirty-two months abroad, Ches Perry of RI and Frank Freeze of the Calgary Club journeyed to Vancouver to join in the tumultuous welcome.

The Calgary Club Executive met Davidson at Field, B.C. to escort him back to Calgary, in the CPR Superintendent's private rail car.

Lillian serialized their trip in a series of Rotary articles which were printed in the book, Making New Friends in 1933. It was a Rotary bestseller.

Although health was limiting Jim Davidson's time, he wasn't done. In 1932 he convinced RI and the Calgary Club to send its longstanding secretary-treasurer Douglas Howland to Asia in his footsteps. Howland chartered another fifteen Clubs bringing their total to forty-seven stretching from Athens to Auckland including five in Canada. The Clubs were started in twenty different countries.

Conclusion

No Club in Rotary has a legacy like the Calgary Rotary Club: for number of Rotary flags planted that still fly; for number of countries introduced to Rotary; and for number of Clubs chartered. The Calgary Club is the Grandfather of thousands of Rotary Clubs (out of 30,000), who count as their members hundreds of thousands of Rotarians (out of 1,300,000).

Action Plan:

Now is the time to tell the Calgary Club story. 2005 is the Anniversary of both Rotary and Alberta. Mount Davidson has been climbed. The Canadian Rotary Museum at Heritage Park will happen. My commitment to the Abramson Family for a permanent

Davidson display is well on the way. That will secure intact the Davidson Rotary material they have. Glenbow has offered to provide curatorial support.

Buts:

The Museum needs a name; Davidson needs sharing; Making New Friends needs reprinting; and your history needs researching and writing. The Marco Polo of Rotary who answered the Paul Harris call, needs a major biography. What greater tribute could be paid to him than to complete those projects on the 75th Anniversary of his return in 2005/6.

Closure

May I close with my qualified thanks to Curly Galbraith who, damn it, started me down this trail.

Robert Lampard
October 28, 2003

Notes: Davidson/Hess Chair in Rotary History?