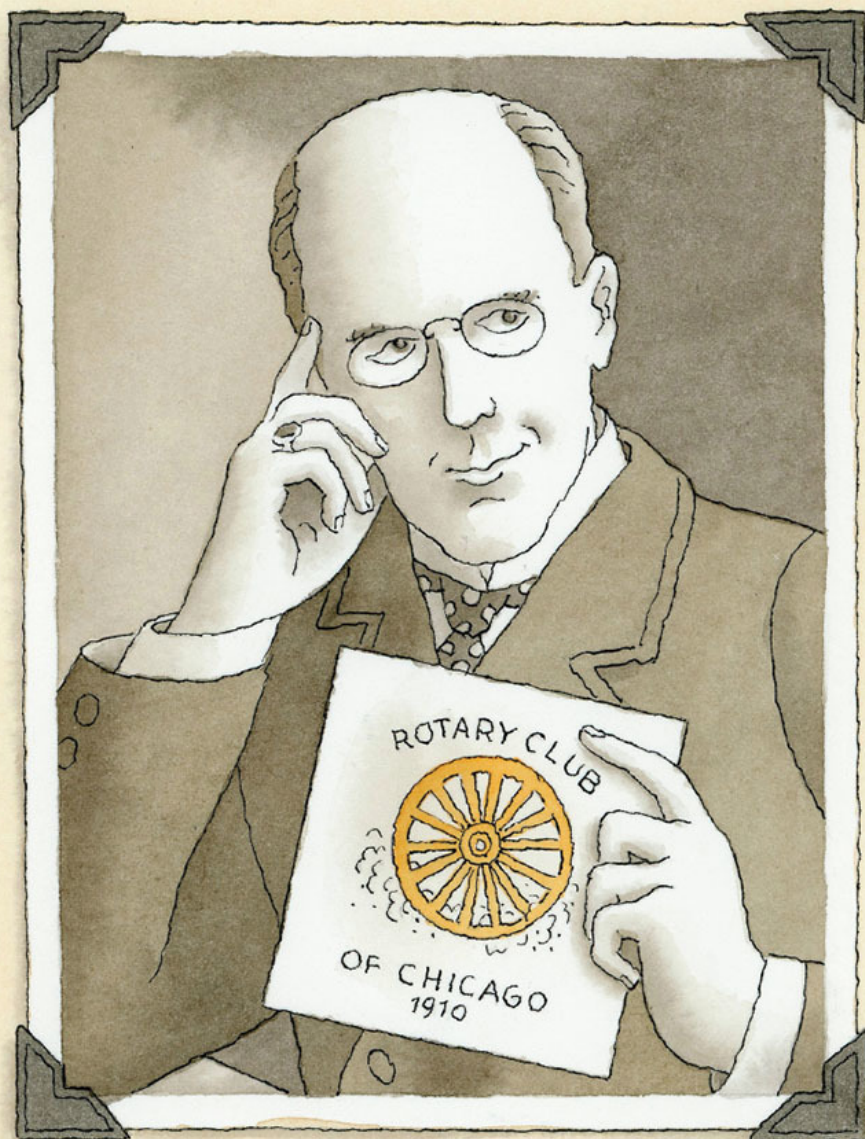


PROUD YOUR PARENTS WERE ROTARIANS?

A grand (and great-grand) tradition

Some Rotary families go back five generations

by KEVIN COOK | illustrations by GREG CLARKE



*Paul Harris
Rotary Club of Chicago*

Paul Harris and his wife, Jean, never had children. They saw Rotary as their extended family; he spoke of each nation as having a place in "the world's family." Since 1905, Rotarians have carried that message all over the globe, starting in their own homes.

"Growing up, I heard stories of two legendary men — my great-grandfather and Paul Harris," says Luanne Arredondo, whose great-grandfather Ezequiel Cabeza De Baca became the second governor of New Mexico in 1917. "He was a member of the Rotary Club of Albuquerque. Twenty years later, his son — my grandfather — joined. I remember our trips across the border to Juarez, where my family helped with an orphanage and built houses for the poor. My father, another proud Rotarian, used to tell me that Paul Harris would be proud of our family. He would say, 'Luanne, women are not allowed in Rotary, but someday they will be.'"

Today Mama Lu, as everyone calls her, is governor of District 5300 and a founder of California's newly chartered Rotary Club of Greater San Gabriel Valley. She's one of many third-, fourth-, and even fifth-generation Rotarians whose family stories are as old as Harris' Rotary pin and as fresh as this year's newly inducted members.

Fourth-generation Rotarian Craig Horrocks, governor-elect of District 9920 in Oceania, has a copy of Harris' 1928 autobiography, *The Founder of Rotary*, inscribed to his great-grandfather, Sir George Fowlds. After meeting Harris on a trip to the United States in 1920, Fowlds sailed home to Auckland, New Zealand, full of the spirit of service and fellowship and in the hopes of founding the first Rotary club in the Southern Hemisphere. The Australians beat him to the punch, chartering the Rotary Club of Melbourne in April 1921. Fowlds' consolation prize was a copy of Harris' book with a warm inscription: *To Honorable George, whose devotion to Rotary has been one of the highlights of the movement. Sincerely Yours, Paul, Apr 3 '28.*

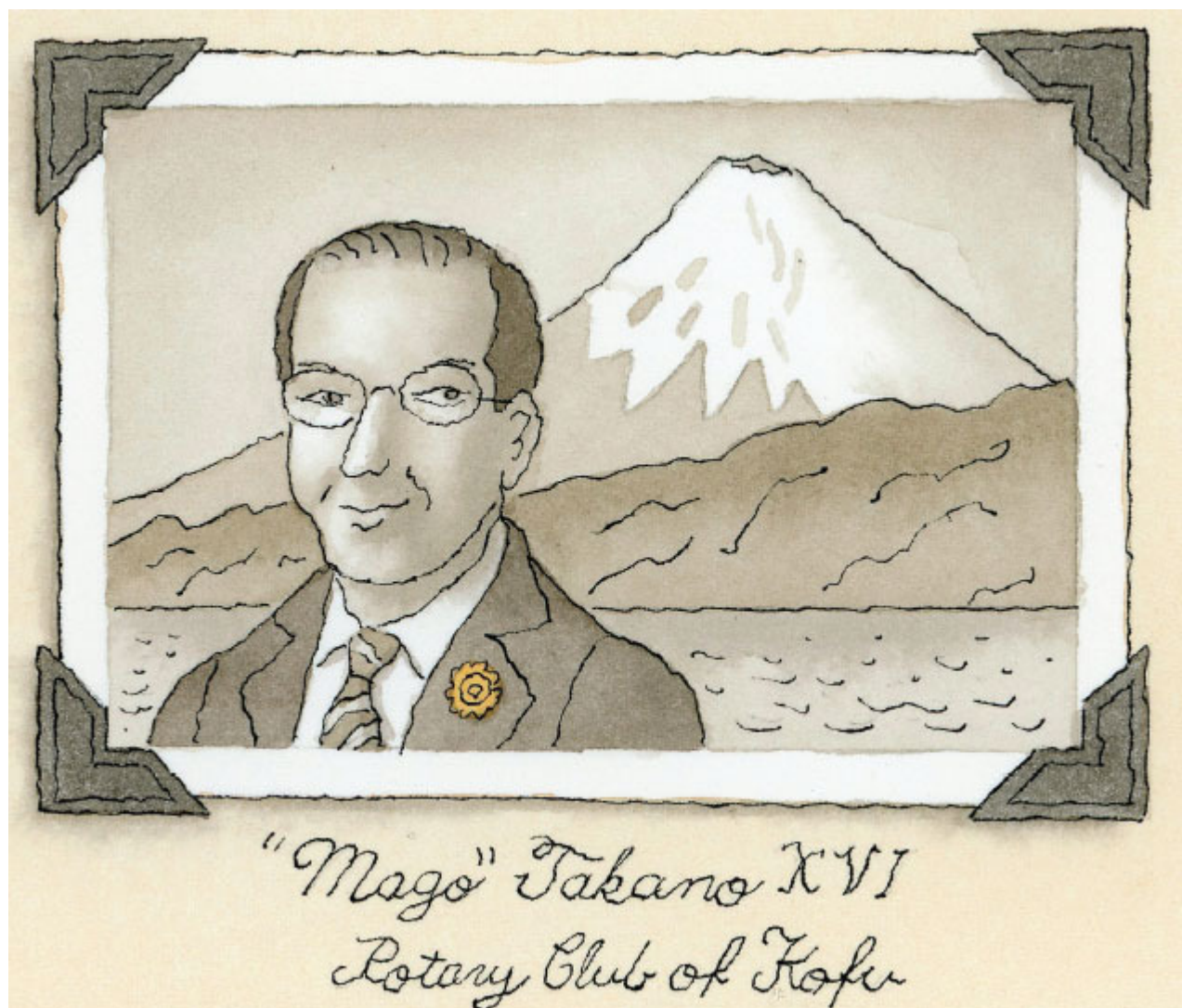


Dave Stillwagon of Ohio is a fourth-generation Rotarian — and the fourth in a line of Rotary Club of Youngstown presidents dating back to 1927. "My great-grandfather joined that year and later served as president," Stillwagon says. "My grandfather followed him into Rotary — he had no choice, really, since our patriarch wouldn't let him marry my grandmother unless he joined."

Today, Stillwagon brings Rotary principles to his work as CEO of Youngstown's Community Corrections Association, a nonprofit that helps people who have been convicted of crimes make the transition to productive lives in northeastern Ohio — a career he considers "an extension of Rotary. It's about changing the world for the better." His firm employs cognitive therapy to help those it serves "unlearn criminal behaviors, to see their lives as a chance to make better choices." And it's working: Less

than 23 percent of his clients wind up back in prison within three years, a rate that's significantly lower than the national average.

"I'm a firm believer that we're put on this earth for a reason," he says. "Service to others is part of that reason."



Like Stillwagon and countless others whose families have carried Rotary membership through multiple generations, Magozaemon "Mago" Takano XVIII believes his family's traditions and those of the organization make a good match. "My father taught me that the values of our business are similar to those of Rotary," says Takano, a past governor of Japan's District 2620 and a member of the Rotary Club of Kofu, a city of about 200,000 in the shadow of Mount Fuji. His family, which started out by selling salt, has helped drive growth in Kofu since 1568. (When the Kofu region ran out of salt in the 16th century, the first Magozaemon helped save the day.)

Takano remembers the first time he saw a faded black-and-white photo of a meeting of the Kofu Rotary club, where his grandfather was a charter member. "In the picture, my grandfather was wearing a Rotary pin, and I started thinking about why he chose to join," he says. Upon becoming a member himself, he found the answer in its combination of altruism and networking. "The Four-Way Test my father taught me drove home the core values of service, fellowship, diversity, integrity, and leadership," he says. "At the same time, a young professional like me got to interact with business and local leaders I might never meet otherwise."

Takano's son Yasuto recently followed his forefathers' example and became a fourth-generation member of the Kofu club, which celebrates its 70th anniversary in 2020. "The Four-Way Test will be just as important to his generation," Takano says. "One difference may be that my son has even more opportunities through the growing global network of Rotary. I hope he'll feel as proud to be a Rotarian as his ancestors have been."



Marta Knight grew up on the border between California and Mexico and is now governor of District 5340, which covers California's San Diego and Imperial counties. Her grandfather Adalberto Rojo was a Rotarian in Mazatlán, Mexico, but it was her father, also named Adalberto and a two-time district governor based in Tijuana, who she says was utterly devoted to Rotary. "I tell everyone that if they made Rotary diapers, I would have worn them," says Knight, a naturalized U.S. citizen who is the first Latina leader in her district's history. "Every memory of my childhood has Rotary in it."

She recalls a weekly assembly line in which she and her siblings helped their father prepare his newsletter, *El Chapulín Rotario* (literally the *Rotary Grasshopper*), for distribution: "We'd fold, staple, and label them, put a stamp on, and run them to the post office." Her dad's briefcase was covered with stickers from the cities he had visited for Rotary meetings, conferences, and international conventions. "My parents were so proud when I was crowned as queen of the Tijuana club, but my father didn't attend my high school graduation. He was representing the president of Rotary International at a district conference."



Knight was with her husband, Bill, at a real estate luncheon in 2003 when she found herself sitting next to a prominent real estate agent. "He was wearing a suit and his Rotary pin. I said he reminded me of my daddy. He asked if I knew about Rotary. I answered with a big yes, and he invited me to join. I couldn't wait to call my mother in Tijuana: *"Mamá, me invitaron a Rotary!"*

As a loan officer in San Diego — and president of the city's Hispanic Chamber of Commerce — Knight specialized in helping non-English-speaking families buy their first homes. As district governor, she promotes Mexican-U.S. cooperation and has reached across the border to strengthen ties with District 4100, which her father once governed. "I'm proud and honored to follow in my father's footsteps," she says. "I'll never forget when he said, 'Rotary gives ordinary people the opportunity to do the extraordinary: to change lives.' I love being an ordinary person trying to do that every day."

As Rotary enters the 2020s, more Rotarians are finding themselves part of a multigenerational demographic boomlet.

Ann Parker, a member of the Rotary Club of Iowa City, is a fifth-generation Rotarian — or ninth-generation, depending on how you figure it, with four Rotarians on one side of the family and five on the other. Fellow Midwesterner Mary Shackleton is a fourth-generation Rotarian who left Indiana for the Rotary Club of Metro New York City, where social events include concerts in Central Park and trips to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Her parents, "Shack" and Wilma, are past presidents of the Rotary Club of Attica-Williamsport, Indiana, and after serving as an assistant governor of District 7230 at the same time Wilma served in the same role in District 6560, Mary is now governorelect of her district.



Natalie Bailey of the Rotary Club of Coronado, California — whose mother, Suzanne Popp, was that club's first female president — is yet another fourth-generation Rotarian. And at 26, Bailey is also the founding president of the Rotaract Club of Coronado, chartered in February. "I've got photos of my first Rotary meeting, when I was five days

old," she says. "I was the newborn baby receiving my first Paul Harris Award, donated on my behalf by Paul Plumb, the same man who inducted me into Rotary last year." Rotarians her age, she says, "want to give back just as much as anyone else, but we don't have as much time" as older members, "or, more to the point, money. A lot of the service Rotarians provide is writing big checks, which is generous and very impactful, but the younger generation doesn't have so much money to contribute on top of expensive lunch meetings and annual dues. So the Rotaract club I started came up with fundraisers that were fun social and networking events — a trivia night and a bar crawl — and they were huge successes."





In 2013, Jamshyd Vazifdar joined the Rotary Club of Bombay, whose members are so tradition-minded they never changed their name to the Rotary Club of Mumbai. His great-grandfather Nowroji Vazifdar joined the Bombay club in 1950 and was followed by his son, Jamshed, and grandson (Jamshyd's father), Nowroze, who has been a member since 1994.

Then there's Nicholas Hafey, whose great-grandfather and grandfather were Rotarians in Australia, and whose father, Phil Hafey, is governor of District 9650. Nicholas was inducted as a member of the Rotary Club of Laurieton last year.

Eamon Wheeler followed his greatgrandfather, grandmother (Ingrid Brown, 2009-10 governor of District 7930), and mother into the Rotary Club of Rockport, Massachusetts, last year at age 17 because his friends were too busy to help him start an Interact club.

He proved his mettle by enduring his district's annual polar plunge to raise money for polio eradication in 2018; the plunge is held in February off the icy Atlantic coast near Boston.

Like our 114-year-old organization itself, multigenerational Rotary families combine new ideas with timetested tradition. There are few better examples of that phenomenon than California's Mama Lu Arredondo and her clan.

"I began to understand Rotary's impact when I was in the eighth grade," says Bryan Arredondo, her 19-year-old son. "My mom's club didn't have enough money to send two students to Teen Leadership Camp, but with the help of another club, I got to go. I learned about leadership and connections, and got involved with the Interact club as soon as I began high school." He and his brother Zachary Tadian, 30, were steeped in Rotary and impatient to take part. Last April they joined their mom in chartering the Rotary Club of Greater San Gabriel Valley.





"Mama Lu" Arredondo
Rotary Club of Greater
San Gabriel Valley



"Rotarians all over the world ask, 'How can we get young people involved?'" says Lu. "Our innovation was to put them in charge." The new club—which offers discounts on dues for younger members, flexible meeting schedules, and subgroups devoted to health and well-being and to Generation Z and millennials—expects to be up to 50 members by the end of the year.

"One of the big challenges of being a fifth-generation Rotarian," says Zachary, "is *being* a fifth-generation Rotarian. We found that the traditional club didn't work for us. It wasn't engaging enough. So Mom said we should follow in the footsteps of our great-great-grandfather and start a club that could help lead Rotary into the future."

"Not that it's been easy," adds Bryan, the new club's charter president. "When we go to district events, some other club presidents aren't happy to see someone my age in a leadership role, sitting at the same table with them. But we've got Mama Lu behind us, telling us to keep moving forward. She reminds us that Paul Harris was only 36 when

he started Rotary. He said it would have to evolve to stay relevant, and he might be glad to see us as part of that evolution."

Recalling those long-ago meetings she attended with her father, Lu says, "I can still smell the cigar smoke." But traditions change. "In those days, who predicted women would ever be accepted as members?" Lu's great-grandfather might be surprised to see her chairing meetings in smoke-free rooms, but it's still Rotary. One recent attendee was Lu's granddaughter, Joy, who has her own pin and a dress-up outfit for meetings. Now two years old, will Joy become Rotary's first sixth-generation member?

Kevin Cook's latest book is Ten Innings at Wrigley: The Wildest Ballgame Ever, with Baseball on the Brink.

Rotary President Mark Daniel Maloney encourages members to find an opportunity to introduce their families to Rotary. Share your family story on Maloney's **Family of Rotary** Facebook group at facebook.com/groups/rotaryfamily.

