



CONNECTIONS

January 2019

Kimberly Carroll, Editor (kycarroll@yahoo.com)

President's Corner

Sheila Hart

Call for Input

In an attempt to make our website (ithf.org) as user friendly as possible, we'd like to hear from you about how we could improve the site—such as making access easier, few clicks to get where you want, etc. and we need your help in identifying ways to accomplish that. Please contact Sheila Hart at e-mail: sheilahart@shaw.ca with your suggestions and we'll compile them and implement as many as possible, bearing in mind the intricacies of the internet. Thanks!

Annual General Meeting in Hamburg Scheduled

If you are coming to Hamburg, please plan to arrive by the first day of the Convention, Saturday, June 1!

Our ITHF Annual Meeting for 2019 has been scheduled for Saturday morning, from 10:30 am until noon, in the Shanghai Room in the Hamburg Messe (Conference) Hall. The room is on Level 2, accessible from the Central Entrance.

Because of the cost estimates received and the deadlines for committing a specific number of spaces, we decided this year NOT to serve breakfast at the AGM. You do not need to make a reservation! Just mark the date and time on your calendar and come! ALL members of the fellowship – old and brand-new – are welcome!

Board of Directors meeting to Follow AGM

The Fellowship's annual Board of Directors meeting will follow the AGM in the same location, from 12:30 pm until 2:00 pm. All Officers and Directors are requested to attend in the Shanghai Room.

Call for volunteers to help at the ITHF Buth in Hamburg

Still looking for volunteers! It's such a great way to meet fellow Rotarians and make new friends! Join us in the Buth! Contact Sheila at e-mail: sheilahart@shaw.ca

President's Friendship Dinner in Hamburg at VLET Koch Schule



The President's Friendship Dinner will be held on **Sunday June 2, 2019 from 6:30 pm-10:30 pm**. This *CULINARY PARTY LIVE COOKING BUFFET*, including beverage package, will be held at the VLET Culinary School, (VLet Koch Schule), Dammtorwall 15 Hamburg 20355, in the heart of Hamburg's Gansemarkt. The space, rented entirely for our group, will provide lots of room to mingle during cocktails and the meal. Watch the culinary team at work and get tips about German cooking that you can use at home. The cost will be \$70 including the buffet, beverage including ½ bottle of wine + beer+ water+ coffee or tea, 19% VAT, tips not included + applicable PayPal fees. Vegetarian and pescatarian items will be available. A link to PayPal will be sent to you so can pay for what will surely be a fabulous evening with your ITHF friends!

Sign up for the 2019 RI Convention—It Won't be the Same without YOU!

Make sure you register for the 2019 RI Convention in Hamburg....it promises to be amazing...and it's a fabulous opportunity to connect/reconnect with fellow ITHF members! Opportunities to visit Rotary Clubs in the area, ballet, concerts...it's all happening in Hamburg—don't miss out! Here's the link: [2019 RI Convention Hamburg](#)

ITHF Celebrates its 30th Anniversary!

First formed in 1989 by Rotarians who had been active in the Home Exchange Fellowship, but who wanted more personal contact, the ITHF has been building international connections for 30 years!

We will be celebrating the our Director of Promotions, has its first public appearance!



anniversary in Hamburg. Jennifer Cowan, developed an Anniversary Logo—this is

Hamburg ITHF Tours UPDATE

John Steven has notified us that reservations for the two tours are now closed—we're fully booked and ready to go! If you'd like to be placed on a waitlist in case someone can't go, please contact John Steven at johnsteven@bigpond.com

Travelers' Section

Editor's Note: please see the ITHF website for more interesting stories about ITHF travels!

Connecting in Norway

Michael & Jane Abraham, Rotary Club of Blacksburg VA



"We understand that you are motorcycle riders," Svein and Anne-Grethe Aanestad wrote to my wife Jane and me, accepting our Connection request last August, to be their guests at their home in Notodden, Norway, during our planned first visit to that scenic country. "I have BMW that I am planning to sell now that I've bought another, smaller BMW. But I'll wait to sell the old one until you get here so we can tour together." Here I am with our host's rides!

We've made ITHF Connections on our travels to New Zealand, Iceland, Hawaii, and now Norway, and were graciously welcomed in each of these places. There's a joke that borrowing and riding someone else's motorcycle is like borrowing their toothbrush! This was an amazing offer of kindness and generosity. Coincidentally Svein's bike was almost an identical model to one of my own, so I was intimately familiar with it.

On our longer tour together, Svein took my wife and me alongside Tinnsja Lake to the town of Rjukan, a fascinating community for several reasons. Snuggled in its tight east-west valley, the mountains to the south block the low winter sun, so the town has installed high on the mountain to the north three giant arrays of movable mirrors that reflect the sun to brighten the town square. Just up the valley is the Norsk Hydro Vermork Hydroelectric Plant, a large hydroelectric facility opened in 1911 to provide electrical power for the region, as well as for the synthetic production of nitrogen for fertilizer. At its opening, it was the world's largest power plant with a capacity of 108 MW, a significant financial commitment from what was in, at that time, one of Europe's poorest countries. It was the scene of a series of operations by Norwegian saboteurs during World War II to prevent the Nazis from acquiring the heavy water (deuterium oxide) needed to produce nuclear weapons.

The weather was cool with intermittent storms, and when we left Vermork, Svein said, *"Put on all your warmest gear; we're going up."* We ascended on our bikes several thousand feet on a wonderfully curvy road to the high country, where a brisk wind swept the treeless tundra, whipping us around. Back home in Notodden, we warmed to celebratory glasses of wine while

we looked over their collection of artwork and sculpture from their many trips around the world. Both Svein and Anne-Grethe were active in the Rotary Club of Notodden where both have served as president and Svein had been district governor (in 2006-2007) of District 2290. They lived and worked, staffing a dental clinic for Nordic nationals in Dar er Salaam, Tanzania for five years, along with 13 4-to-6 week service tours as Rotary volunteers in the Philippines, Hong Kong, Brazil, Jamaica, Guatemala, India, and Kenya, offering dentistry under challenging conditions in refugee camps or remote villages. They are truly gifts to the world. Anne-Grethe and Svein are also members of IFMR, the International Federation of Motorcycling Rotarians, in the Norway chapter.

Anne-Grethe cooked two wonderful dinners for us, one featuring reindeer and the other featuring moose, both we'd never had before, both delicious!

I don't wish to say this disparagingly about many of my fellow Rotarians, to whom Rotary is little more than an hour of fellowship at our weekly meetings and a few hours of service work annually. But for me, Rotary is indeed a world of friendships and experiences. Jane with Anne-Grethe & Svein.

Whenever we travel internationally, we shun the tourist traps, avoid tour groups, and instead immerse ourselves into the local people and culture. I cannot conceive any other effective way to arrive at stranger's homes, share libations and local food, explore and understand hidden but important sites, enjoy a warm bed, in this special case partake a fabulous, guided motorcycle tour, and depart as lifelong friends, as is provided by the ITHF.

Volunteer to Teach Communicative English in Dadu, Taiwan

Madu Bishnu, VP for Eastern India & Bangladesh



ITHF Past Administrator CP Uen Chao (Aircon) invited me in 2017 to volunteer to teach Communicative English and share Indian culture in Elementary schools in Dadu and I did it for 45 days. This year, too, I volunteered to teach Communicative English and sharing of Indian culture in three schools in Dadu between Nov 12-Dec 27, 2018. The first one was Chui Fien Elementary schools for 2 weeks and the students were from Grades 2-6. I taught the students to make traditional Indian dessert Rice Pudding, play 'Kabaddi' which is a national game of India. The students enjoyed a lot. I then taught in Dadu Elementary School for 3 weeks for Grades 3-6. I took part in their Annual Sports in 'Tug-of-War' and 'Relay Race'.



I concluded with Da-Dau Junior High School for students in Grades 7-9 for 2 weeks. The students loved interacting with me and though in general they are shy, but they enjoyed after initial hesitation. I was hosted by 5 five families and one family was most interesting as they knew not a word of English and we communicated through Google Translator and we did just fine. I am extremely thankful to Aircon for giving me this opportunity to volunteer.

Argentine Adventure

Steve Hample, Bozeman Sunrise Rotary Club, Montana, USA

If you learned that a nice Rotarian or two, perhaps from another country, were coming to your community, might you be willing to host them in your home and help them see the area for a few days? If you thought “*possibly yes,*” then you qualify for fellowship in a good Rotary related program in which I participated last year and recommend.

I was traveling through Argentina and did not know anyone in the capitol Buenos Aires where I had long layover. Before making final reservations I made contact with a Rotarian member of the *International Travel and Hosting Fellowship*. He invited me to stay in their apartment in the historic part of the city for three nights (their children were grown so they had space). He had business to do during the day, but provided me with city maps and several tickets for the subway/tram and walked me the four blocks to the station. In the evening I came back and reported on my visits to Museums and a boat tour of the bayou and islands of the river delta. One night we had local food in their apartment and the next I bought them dinner at a nice restaurant.

The understanding is if they, or another Rotarian, should come to Montana that I would return the favor. Simple as that. The advantages to me are having instant fellowship upon arrival, a way to really understand the area over dinner conversation etc. and a flexible way to explore unique local attractions without having to be part of a tour group. Plus it’s a cost saving and such money can be spent on a nice dinner treating the hosts. Sampling local wine was an added bonus.

Hosting in Canada

PDG Douglas & Grace Vincent, D7080 Ontario, Canada

Recently we enjoyed the opportunity to host our ITHF friend Tony Betts here in Canada, during his visit to this area from London, England. We have known Tony for a few years having met him originally at the RI Contention in Birmingham a few years ago. Later, at the Montreal Convention, we arranged for friends to drive him to Quebec City for sightseeing.



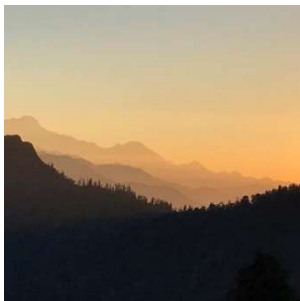
During his visit, in addition to some local sightseeing, Tony (pictured here) was able to attend the Launch Party of our new “*Rotary, Youth For Change*” initiative which is a Rotary supported project to help youth volunteer to make a difference in our community. You can see more about that on our Facebook page under the same name. As well as our Woodstock area, Tony met with friends in Toronto and did more sight seeing in addition to his RI Convention visit last June. He also got to enjoy the Christmas Light Festival at Niagara Falls and the quaint village of Niagara-on-the-Lake.



It is always great to welcome (or be welcomed by) Rotary friends while travelling. We enjoy the fellowship and friendships of ITHF and always look forward to this opportunity as a bonus to Rotary our membership.

Travels to the Top of the World—Nepal

Linda Frandsen



I had always wanted to see the grandest mountains in the world, so in November 2018, the opportunity arose. Our Rotary Club of Kelowna Sunrise, Kelowna, BC was applying for a Global grant to work with the Tharu people of Nepal and needed someone to do an assessment. We first connect with the Rotary club close to our project in Dang and were very impressed with their enthusiasm to take part. I had just joined ITHF in Toronto so decided to try it and discovered many Nepali Rotarians were involved. There are 41 Rotary clubs in Kathmandu alone and Bhairaje Panday invited me to his Mid-Town Club meeting.



I also went to New Road City Club with Sita Rupakheti but more importantly, she invited me to stay with her for the last 2 days of my trip. This lady is amazing for all the work she does with domestic violence awareness and she also has done a very good job of promoting ITHF in the District. Besides this, she can carry on fun conversations while cooking up delicious food. What a lovely experience and a wonderful way to leave Nepal.

I am looking forward to more ITHF encounters!

Myanmar – A Fascinating Country

Lesley Sparkes

In October a friend and I had 2 weeks in Sri Lanka then went to Myanmar for a further two weeks. We started our trip in Yangon, flew to Mandalay, did a boat trip to Bagan, went by car to Kalaw, did a train trip to Inle Lake then flew back to Yangon. We thought we'd very quickly get tired of visiting temples but we had fantastic guides in each location who only took us to a few and ensured they were all very different and interesting. We also went to a monastery and a



convent, which was a very moving experience. To see so many young boys and girls, novice monks and nuns, and to see how they live and to learn a bit about why they are there and how they live was fascinating and we felt privileged to be there. Shown here are young novice nuns lining up for their lunch, all of which is donated by locals every day. They won't eat again until the following morning.



Westerners are still a bit of a novelty to many Burmese people (Burma and Myanmar seem to be freely interchangeable terms). Particularly outside of Yangon we had numerous requests from strangers to have their photo taken with us, whilst others "secretly" snapped us. We were particularly delighted when a group of young monks asked for photos. Unfortunately we were at a pagoda high up on a mountain and it was very windy so my friend and I had hair blowing all over the place and we agreed those photos weren't for

publication! Photographed is a market at Inle Lake, with women wearing traditional skirts and head-dress of the Shan State.

We wanted to donate some items to a village and our guide in Yangon suggested that soaps, toothbrushes, toothpaste etc. were more in need than school supplies. We took his advice and our guide in Bagan advised us on a suitable village to distribute the items. Once again we felt privileged to be able to be amongst such delightful people with their big smiles and a fascination with our fair hair and skin.

Since I joined ITHF I seem to have travelled only to countries with no members, Myanmar being no exception. I travel to Vanuatu several times a year to visit a school I support, and there are no ITHF members there either. Maybe next year when I visit the UK for the Ashes Tour (Cricket Test Match, Australia vs England, for those who don't know what it is) I'll get to meet some ITHF members and enjoy the benefit of their local knowledge.

Around the World

Kazi Asma

I would like to tell some of the highlights of my whirlwind of Rotary networking which began on the 8th of May in Perth Australia, crossed through Russia and ended up at the big Toronto convention 2018. I enjoyed meetings while networking at many local clubs and often enjoyed the hospitality offered from Rotarian members from many lands.

After Perth, I flew into Singapore, then jetted over to the Capital city of the Philippines, Manila where I had hoped to meet up with the Rotary Club of Makati, but that club was taking a summer vacation. Without access to an International available internet and an inability to communicate, I missed a chance to attend Beijing Chinese Rotarians.

I traveled from Beijing to eventually get myself all the way to the beautiful city of St. Petersburg, Russia. Along the way, Rotary's "*International Hosting Fellowship*" helped me connect with our kind people. Eldrin is a border city linking China and Mongolia. I traveled to Gobi Desert for 5 days of trekking. I rode a camel and by horseback to stay with a nomad family.

The modern city of Ulon Bator is where I joined with Rotarians in local charity work; then I took train moving on to Irkutsk, Russia. On the way though, the train passed the World's deepest sweet water lake. Bakil's magnificent beauty could not be passed or only glanced at from a train window. I needed to take action to see, taste and touch that water from close up. I got off as soon as possible in Irkutsk which is nearby Lisvanka. I stayed one night, so that I could take a memorable boat trip on Bakil. Since I was stopped, I took advantage of the charming countryside and mountains for another horseback tour.

In Irkutsk City I met up with a beautiful Rotarian and that club's President for coffee. She kindly dropped me off at the train station to send me off to Siberia and the city of Novosibirsk. A new friend named Olga, the club president, dropped by my guest house to personally show me around her city's sights. She also came to my rescue because I needed help filing a Police claim for lost registration cards and expired passports. We were joined by another lovely woman. Her name is Nina we met for lunch and Olga insisted on treating us both as her guest. Olga was a lively story teller and knew so much about her city. We girls enjoyed taking photos and trying out different poses. Nina is model beautiful and taught us some stylish poses. We girls met up later with the E-President. Later, we went to the Russian Baniyas which was a lot of fun. I had so much fun and respect the amazing Olga. I will not forget her!

Early that next morning, I was on the train to catch Australia vs France, the eventual World Cup champions in their exciting match which was held in Kazan. The excitement and atmosphere reminded me of one of the happiest moments of my life. I met other football fans who were supporting my team 'Australia.' This felt like just 4 years earlier during the Brazil World Cup 2014, when I met an Australian named Andrew and other fun friends.

We fellow Rotarians had fun but once we got back to Kazan we got serious about the types of missions and community work that is our mission and purpose. After leaving Kazan, my train journey took me to Moscow where is my Rotarian friend, Irina lived. I had already met her at the 2017 Atlanta convention. I visited Rotary club of Moscow. After Moscow I continue to my journey by train to St.Petersburg. There I visited the Rotary International and met another wonderful president. It so happens her name is also Irina. Rotarian Sergey showed me around the city before dropping me off at the airport to catch the long flight to Toronto.

Toronto's Convention 2018 was a great together. 25,237 Rotarians gathered together in Toronto. Our own Dhaka club Rotarians Khawer, Robin and Sadia, and their families and myself joined at dinner in Khawer's. It was a truly great get together. I reunited with many old friends and met many new Rotarians. It was a special treat to enjoy a Rotary beer with Utah's governor Scott. I joined another formal dinner party in CN tower to be with my International Travel and Hosting Fellowship. It was another great opportunity to be with the lovely Saila. She is such a great organizer and a truly amazing lady! I hope to have more opportunities to learn from her in the future.

After my Belarus visit, I went back to Moscow and then flew to Tbilisi, Georgia where a very kind and nice Rotarian was waiting for my arrival. Irki picked up me from airport and got me to hotel. And he arranged for me to visit his Rotary club of Rosdavit and another Rotary of Tbilisi Ambassador. This club is very active with many different projects. We joined up with dynamic young Rtn. Nini, and Rtn. Bashir (Rotary club of Amman, Jordan) and were taken to into the Kazbegi Mountains for a daylong sightseeing trip.

My travels for Rotary has me constantly but happily on the run. I'm now in Baku, Azerbaijan. Here I've already visited Rotary Club of Baku in Hilton hotel. I went online to connect with the Rotary club of Kharar Baku, I visited a school along with Californian Rotarians, after Azerbaijan I traveled to Derbent, Republic of Dagestan, which is Khalib home, Mahskala. Then Chechnya, then by train to Vologard, I visited Vologard Rotary club. Then after 3 days by train to reach Astana, Kazakhstan and the Astana Rotary club, then on to Almaty and another Rotary club. Then I flew to India, Amritsar and visited Rotary Club South, then I went to Aligarh to visit my Rotarian friend Secot Lerman and his team of hernia surgeons where they worked with a local Rotary club. Wonderful adventures and visits with Rotarians around the world!

The Splendor of the Rockies Experience

Noko & Steve Yoshida

I had passed through the Rockies twice before. Once on a train across the country from Vancouver to Toronto to a NOAA assignment in DC in 1968. Again as guest of some Canadian Rotarians. I got fleeting glimpses of the mountains, but was preoccupied with a pending job assignment and Rotary projects.



Left is a photo of the “White Hat” group at the Calgary Stampede! What an honor!

Those trips were nothing like this. For the first time, we stayed in luxury hotels (Lake Louise Fairmont, Banff Springs Fairmont). It was not the fancy rooms and gourmet meals that impressed me. It was the awe-inspiring Canadian Rockies. Floating in the outdoor hot pool in Banff surrounded by jagged peaks of the mountain tops, I experienced a rare connection with nature. Seeing the work of millions of years of geologic time, laying down of the sedimentary limestone layers by sea creatures, uplifted by the Pacific plate into gigantic mountains, and scrapped by enormous glaciers during the ice age into jagged mountains, put me in a philosophic mood.

Back home on the Big Island of Hawaii, new land is created by lava flows coming from deep beneath the earth. Both forces, the atomic reactions deep in the earth formed by the gravity from space dust, and the drifting plates creating magnificent mountains, give evidence to a world beyond the crowded highways, tourist shops and the insignificance of humankind.

We are part of something bigger. Interconnected with all that matters. Constantly interrupted by our petty thoughts and daily living, we lose sight, but every once in a while, we get these glimpses of our place in the universe.

These are what the Canadian Rockies did for me.

Neiva, Colombia

Nick Constantino

Clarkstown Sunrise Rotarians Alexandra Duenas and Nick Constantino visited the Neiva, Colombia and were hosted by members of the Club Rotario Neiva Noches Platenas. The



humanitarian trip, including visiting terminally ill children in the Neiva hospital, where Rotarians were joined by volunteers from the Huellas Foundation, who provide entertainment to the children in the hospital, as well as final wishes to the children. The partnership between the two Rotary clubs, and the Huellas Foundation, will benefit the children visited, as well as many others. Seen are Rotarians and Huellas volunteers outside of the hospital.



But the trip was also about building friendships. Duenas and Constantino were hosted by the Melani family, including Diana Melani who is the club's President. Three of the five family members are Rotarians and the remaining two, both college students, are definitely future Rotarians. Lifetime friendships were made during the visit. Seen are Sebastian Melani (front); Duenas (l) and Rotarian Natalie Melani (r); Diana Melani (President), Rotarian Victor Hugo Melani; Alejandro Melani (l) and Constantino.