

The Weekly Newsletter of the
Only Normal Rotary Club in the World
Chartered June 17, 1949



The Normal Spoke

SERVICE ABOVE SELF

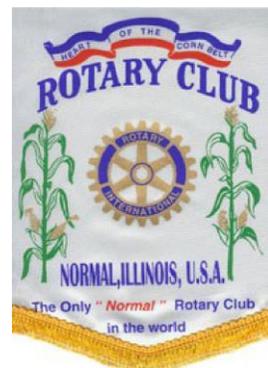
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Link to Rotary International <http://www.rotary.org/>

Normal Rotary Website: <http://www.normalrotary.org/>

District 6490 Website: <http://rotarydistrict6490.org/> (The District Newsletter is on the left side of the main page)



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This day in history:

- 1766 1st fire escape patented, wicker basket on a pulley & chain
- 1820 The famous ancient Greek statue, Venus de Milo is discovered on the Aegean island of Milos
- 1862 John D Lynde patents aerosol dispenser
- 1879 Milk sold in glass bottles for 1st time
- 1935 Works Progress Administration approved by Congress
- 1943 U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt, in an attempt to check inflation, freezes wages and prices, prohibits workers from changing jobs unless the war effort would be aided thereby, and bars rate increases to common carriers and public utilities.

Announcements:

- The Applebee's fundraiser set for May 2nd has been cancelled. We will reschedule for a later date.
- The recent poll of membership saw an excellent percentage of club members respond.

Results are as follows:

- Question 1: *I would be interested in attending meetings online should the Area 1 Clubs choose to set up virtual meetings.* 66.7% of respondents answered yes. We are currently working on coordinating with the other clubs on setting up a shared Zoom account and working on coordinating a first meeting, possibly for as soon as next Wednesday. This account should also be available for virtual committee meetings.
- Question 2: *I believe that the Club should provide a donation to the COVID Relief Fund.* We are currently working on identifying the allocating funds from the catering

expenses that have been reduced due to the cancellation of meetings and allocating funds.

- It is with deep sorrow that I announce that Gordon Ropp passed away on Tuesday, April 14, 2020. Gordon first became a member of the Rotary in 1973. His father Clarence was a charter member of the club, which started on June 17, 1949. Gordon served for many years as the auctioneer for our birthday auction and was the purveyor of many a joke, laugh and smile. As a reminder of Gordon's contributions, here the write-up for from the McLean County History Museum 2016 History Makers Recognition, reprinted in full:



It is impossible to study the history of agriculture and rural life in McLean County without examining the career of Gordon Ropp. His dedication to the advancement of agriculture and enrichment of rural life has played an instrumental role in shaping McLean County.

Gordon Ropp was born on April 5, 1933 and grew up on his family's dairy grain farm, where he continues to live today. He has many fond memories of growing up on the farm, such as watching his father milk cows in his earliest years.

By the time Gordon was 6 years old, he himself was helping to milk the cows before his father bought a milking machine a few years later.

Gordon joined 4-H at the age of 10. While his first heifer did not develop correctly, his second heifer, a Jersey cow named Corianda, helped kick start his 4-H career. "She was the perfect show cow," Gordon says. "She got a little bit better every year until she was finally the champion of all the Jerseys, at the junior show and the open show." The two went on to win many 1st, 2nd and 3rd place awards together, even winning five purple (Grand Champion) ribbons in one day. That experience kicked off a lifelong dedication to 4-H. To this day he's an active participant, currently in his 61st year as a 4-H leader.

Gordon graduated from Normal Community High School as Valedictorian of his class and went on to the University of Illinois, graduating in 1955. During college Gordon received his commission as a 2nd Lieutenant in the ROTC program and was a member of the Farm House Fraternity. He returned to the family farm, raising anywhere from 40-100 Jersey cattle at a time. He and his family also raised grain crops for cow feed.

In addition to working the family farm, Gordon was employed by Funk Seed Company as a young man. He remained active in the agricultural community, getting selected as a delegate to the Illinois Agricultural Association Convention by the McLean County Farm Bureau in 1960, at the age of 27. Around this time, Gordon was also state director of the American Dairy Association of Illinois, secretary-treasurer of the Illinois Jersey Cattle Club Association, president of the Dairy Herd Improvement Association of McLean County, served on the executive committee of the American Dairy Association, and Captain in the National Guard.

It was no surprise that in 1968 he got a call asking if he'd be interested in interviewing for the Assistant Director of Agriculture position. At first, Gordon was unsure—his brother Ray had just returned from military service in Korea. The entire family sat down to discuss how the farm would be run now that Ray had returned and Gordon would be pulled away from

the farm to address state business. Gordon's family encouraged him to go to the interview and accept the position while Ray focused on running the family farm. In 1969, Gordon accepted the position.

Gordon was the Assistant Director for one year under Director John Lewis, promoting Illinois agricultural products throughout the state, assisting in budget development and speaking on behalf of the Director throughout the state. In 1970, Secretary of State Paul Powell died and John Lewis was appointed to take his place. With Lewis's appointment to Secretary, Gordon was appointed Director of the Department of Agriculture.

The position was a big one to fill, because the work of the department includes weights and measures, animal health, meat and grain inspection and more, which affects the lives of every Illinois resident. In his time as Director, Gordon implemented many new programs and practices while continuing to promote Illinois agriculture across the globe. One of the achievements Gordon is particularly proud of was the eradication of hog cholera, a highly contagious swine disease. "To the pork industry, that was a major plus because if your farm had cholera you had to depopulate all the hogs on that farm," says Gordon. "We had a great event when we finally got certified; the Assistant Secretary of the USDA came to Springfield. While pictures were taken I was cradling this little baby pig wrapped in a towel."

While in office, Gordon oversaw the implementation of the Centennial Farm Sign program which recognizes Illinois farms that have been in a single family for 100 years. "Farmers are proud people," Gordon says, and appreciated the recognition of the work of generations that has gone into these family farms. Today, there is also a sesquicentennial farm program.

Gordon tackled many projects as Director: promoting Illinois agriculture globally, even traveling to Russia, Japan and Hong Kong; working with USDA Grain Standards; initiating the development of an infrared soybean tester to measure protein and oil; and supervising 600 employees throughout the department.

At the end of his tenure as Director of the Department of Agriculture, Gordon returned to the Ropp Dairy Grain Farm. He remained actively involved in a variety of associations, committees, and volunteer programs for a few years before deciding to run for the Illinois House of Representatives. "I felt I had as good of qualifications as anyone else. Being a dairy farmer, I took a milk bucket with me everywhere because I was collecting ideas and thoughts from my constituents to go to Springfield," he says with a laugh. "Everyone had to have some kind of a gimmick, and that's how they'd remember me—'Oh, that's the guy with the milk bucket!'"

Gordon won the House seat and had a long, active career as State Representative to District 88 from 1979 to 1993. His efforts in this position covered a wide array of projects—from introducing a bill to get Drummer Silty Clay Loam declared state soil, to introducing the Pledge of Allegiance as a regular part of every Illinois House session, to improving and promoting the State Fair. He also served on many House Committees, including Appropriations, Higher Education, Agriculture, Executive and Public Utilities.

After his time as a State Representative, Gordon served as the Rural Affairs Liaison to the Secretary of State. It was in this position that he spent his last 10 years before retirement, connecting rural organizations and businesses with the Secretary of State's Office and speaking before civic groups.

Retiring in 2002, Gordon is still very active in the community. He has worked as a Unit 5 substitute teacher and volunteers his time with a variety of organizations and clubs including: 4-H, The Shriners, Masons, the David Davis Mansion Foundation, Normal Rotary, Timeless Clovers and local Barn Quilters. Additional recognitions include being a member of the Clarence Ropp 4H Family Spirit Award in 2003, 4H Volunteer of the year in 2005 and Illinoisan of the Day at the Illinois State Fair in 2010.

Despite his long and busy career, Gordon was also a family man. In 1955, the day following his graduation from the University of Illinois, he married Roberta L. Cutter, a lifelong grade school teacher. Together they had three children, Diana, Darren and David. Roberta passed away in 1997. These days, Gordon is grandfather to eight grandchildren and great-grandfather to three.

Judge fines: from Judge Bruce

- March 12 seems like such a long time ago, doesn't it? On that Thursday, the Pantagraph published a picture of Alan Chapman at a Coffee With the Newsroom event. He was shaking hands (!) with Exec Editor Chris Coates. And not wearing a Rotary pin!
- I'm pretty sure Becky Goeckner would have paid a happy fine for the picture of her daughter-in-law Susan with several coworkers from Ivy Lane Bakery. It appeared in the April 5 edition of the Pantagraph under the heading "A round of applause ... to the workers who are helping all of us cope while we shelter at home."
- Art Drake has written several thoughtful letters to the members of the Club, suggesting ways in which we can continue to put service above self in these unprecedented times. One of his recommendations was to give to United Way's COVID-19 Community Care Fund, which is helping to provide meals to thousands of families impacted by the pandemic. There was a nice article about the Fund, with a picture of Normal Rotarian and UWMC CEO David Taylor, in the April 11 edition of the Pantagraph. No fine on this one, just a big thanks to David and his team for stepping up!
- Not quite sure how we're going to collect happy fines going forward, but if there's something that has made you happy or proud while sheltering safely, please email it to me at fiddlebruce@gmail.com, and we'll be happy to share in a future edition of the Spoke.



Thought for Today:

"The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much, it is whether we provide enough for those who have little." - Franklin D. Roosevelt



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