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Local global leader shares heart and soul with community

By Sophie Braccini



Cliff Dochterman Photo Carol Irwin

Cliff Dochterman was honored July 27 in Moraga for 60 years of service to Rotary. The former University of California administrator spent the afternoon in celebration of friendship and of the club's motto: Service Above Self. The man who served as Rotary International President from 1992-93 did not dwell so much on his many accomplishments while being a part of the organization's leadership, but emphasized the importance of the friendships he and his family had formed, as exemplified by the hundreds of people who came to the luncheon from all over the country.

The speakers and people in attendance recalled how Dochterman made his mark on the service organization. John Blount - former director of Rotary international hailed his developing of the PolioPlus program that immunized over 2.5 billion children around the world - an achievement Dochterman has always been very careful to credit to several Rotary leaders who made it happen over several years. Bob Werner, past Rotary governor from Arkansas, noted how Dochterman was able to raise millions of dollars for the refugees when the Yugoslav wars erupted in the Balkans. The UN secretary general told Dochterman that what Rotary did at this crucial time saved 100,000 lives.

Dochterman who was a higher education top administrator and fundraiser reached Rotary's top level at a time when the club needed that kind of professional nonprofit management. Vice President John Matthews recalled that there had been troubled years at the head

of Rotary and that Dochterman's joyful disposition coupled with great diplomacy allowed for peaceful reorganization. As Brad Howard, Director, Rotary International said, Dochterman combines humanity and leadership and brought real happiness to Rotary.

Dochterman was a young UC Berkeley administrator and assistant to UC President Clark Kerr when a friend of his presented his candidacy to the Rotary three times before it was accepted. Once in, Dochterman rose to the presidency of that Berkeley club five years later, taking his young children along on his local, regional, and later international Rotary adventures. Dochterman's son and daughter shared stories of their "Rotary childhood." Son, Cliff Jr., said that for many years he thought that the blue and gold colors of Rotary were fashioned after Cal's blue and gold. His daughter told about all the small California towns where they spent their weekends when their father became the district governor. When he became president of Rotary International, she took a sabbatical from her teaching job to help organize his foreign visits with heads of states everywhere.

Those who have heard Dochterman talk know that he is a master at crafting speeches that interlace jokes and moments of deep emotion. Honoring him, the speakers had to be up to par and the presentations were also a friendly battle of wits. There were also moments of emotion, when Dochterman or guests recalled the difficult moments - he has lost both his first and second wife to cancer - but the former president chose to illustrate the power of friendships that helped him and his family to get through these hardships.

The afternoon concluded with the auction of many treasures that had been given to Dochterman by people he met while in the Rotary leadership.

Dochterman, who is now going on 94 years, lives at Moraga Royale, what he calls the next phase of his life. There too he is making friendships while staying active in the Moraga Rotary; he never misses a weekly meeting and was very active during the club's last campaign to build an all access playground at the Moraga Commons Park. Dochterman has published several books, such as "As I Was Saying - a Collection of Speeches and Articles" which is available on Amazon.

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