



The Rotarygram



Rotary Club of Van Nuys

Volume 4, Issue 38

Club 724 — District 5260

March 30, 2005

Meeting Highlights



Leo O'Biecunas, Esq.

One of our own, Leo O'Biecunas, was introduced by Joe Di-Fatta. Leo's topic was the use of mediation in our Superior Court system and in other civil disputes.

As a trial attorney for the past 25 years, Leo has experienced the lengthy delays and costly procedures often encountered in our court system. An answer, according to Leo, lies in the further adoption of mediation as an alternative to taking a case to trial.

In mediation, the parties to a dispute, along with their attorneys, voluntarily meet under the guidance of a mediator to explore each party's position and determine whether there is a compromise solution to which they can agree. If an agreement is reached, it is written up and signed by the parties and their attorneys before leaving the mediation. If no agreement can be reached, the case is returned to the court for trial.

A mediator does not render a judgment; his or her function is to help the parties to bring out their concerns and to conduct an orderly procedure where an agreement, usually a compromise, can be reached. At any time in the process either party can elect to terminate the mediation.

Thanks, Leo, for your lucid explanation of mediation in dispute resolution!

Visitors

GUESTS:

- Victoria Castillo introduced her three sons

ROTARIANS:

- Lou Visco from the Sun Valley Club
- Ron Wolf from the North San Fernando Valley Club
- Steve McLeod from the Studio City/Sherman Oaks Club

**"What you praise you increase."
- Catherine Ponder**

Student Recognition

Our weekly program honoring outstanding young people was a double-header with students from Grant High School and a client from Tierra del Sol. This program honors those who have made great strides in personal development and service to the community. Each honoree is awarded a certificate of commendation from the Van Nuys Rotary Club and a \$50 US Savings Bond. The awards were made by Recognition Chair, Victoria Castillo, and President Carlos.



Julie Motomura, Area Manager-CIS for Tierra del Sol, left, introduced Brian Donnely and related his accomplishments and service to the community.



Bonnie Elbaz-Deckel, College Counselor at Grant High School, left, introduced Hateem Siddiqui, center, and Lilit Gevorgyan. Both are honor students and serve as college counselors for their fellow students.

Announcements

- Career Day at Fulton Preparatory School (Kester & Saticoy) — April 6; share your business and life with students — lunch at 94th Aero Squadron Restaurant.
- Pete Satuloff reported that Archie Kidwell is making an excellent recovery and hopes to get clearance from his doctors to be able to drive — and be back at meetings.
- April 16th — District Assembly at Pierce College Performing Arts Center — 8 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. There is NO charge to individual Rotarians.
- May 19-23 -- District Conference in Palm Springs at the luxurious Doral Resort Hotel. This will be an **outstanding** event in this Centennial year...rooms are going fast — you can call Sondra at 760/322-6824 to make your reservations. The Van Nuys Club will be vying for several District awards this year. Be there to support President Carlos and your club! See Barbara Baerg for registration forms.
- Track Meet, April 23...thanks to Flip Smith for arranging sponsorships from Galpin Ford and the Daily News.
- The Board has approved an application from Victoria Burke, former president of Calabasas Rotary, for membership. Members have 10 days to submit written concerns to Club Secretary, Ken Benson, regarding this candidate.

The Spotlight's on...



...GARY CUNIAL

Gary Cunial is an actor who has played many parts in his life – on stage and off. From professional roller derby skater in college, avid skier and pilot to aerospace engineer, lawyer and ensign in the U.S. Naval Sea Cadets, Gary has assumed many roles that have brought him success and satisfaction.

A native of Oakland, Gary majored in engineering at U.C. Berkeley and joined Aerojet-General in Sacramento

after graduation. "I worked on the Polaris Missile for the Navy and the Minuteman Missile for the Air Force," he recalls. He also conducted basic research on combustion phenomena, which eventually led him to Rocketdyne's Santa Susana field lab, where he helped develop F1 engines for the Apollo project. "Those were very exciting times," he adds.

By 1965, Gary was ready for something "more challenging" and decided to enroll in law school. He had a family at the time – including daughter Carolyn and son Christopher – and continued working in the aerospace industry until passing the bar and going directly into his own private practice. "I opted to become a lawyer because I wanted more freedom to do the work I wanted to do." Initially, he focused his efforts on construction defects litigation, he says, but began shifting his practice to workers' compensation cases about 15 years ago when he "needed to back away from the high stress in my life."

Gary joined Rotary in 1983 at the invitation of Larry Winnick. In the beginning, he attended meetings for the networking possibilities. As his practice changed, however, the friendships, fellowship and projects have become far more important to him. "Now that the financial interest has matured out of the relationship, I can relax, be myself and be purely altruistic."

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One of his greatest roles, Gary says, is husband to Sherri Cunial. The Cunials are avid skiers and love to travel. Both are pilots – they've had several planes, including a Mooney M20J and a Bonanza A36. When the family began to lose interest in flying after several years, Gary sold his plane and bought a 40-foot Hunter sailboat for the family to enjoy.

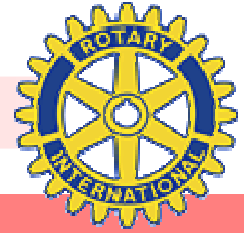
The Cunials are also "heavily involved" in the U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps. "Our daughter, Alyssa, joined the Corps," Gary says, "and then talked her mother into getting involved." Sherri is now an ensign in the Corps and Gary – also an ensign – is scheduled to be commanding officer sometime this year, he adds.

The Sea Cadet Corps works with at-risk youth, Gary says, to give them exposure to military life. "It's like being in a ROTC program and is pretty rigid. The kids train on a military base at Port Hueneme and have the use of military equipment – including aircraft and ships," he says. "We get to play with big toys," he adds. "If I were a kid again, I'd kill to get into this program."

Gary – who was one of five finalists for an international exchange program with Russia's Sea Cadet Corps – is trying to work out a service project with Rotary District 5260 and the Port Hueneme Sea Cadets. "It would be a synergistic relationship that would support the students and provide volunteers for Rotary projects," he says.

Gary also credits daughter Alyssa for drawing him back into acting about five years ago. Her interest in theater and a part in a play brought him back in touch with the world of acting which he had found in college. He started taking acting and singing classes and began performing again in live theater and some films. Currently, he is rehearsing for "The Pleasure of His Company," a play that is running from April 8 - May 26. "Acting is always a pleasure," he says, adding that he prefers live theater to film. "I need the audience to connect with. A play is a different piece of art every time you do it," he says, "because the synergy between the audience and the actors changes with each new audience."

Contributed by Andrea Reinken



"Service Above Self"

Rotary Club of Van Nuys

Upcoming Programs

- April 6 **Career Day** — Fulton Preparatory School (Kester & Saticoy) — 10 a.m. at the school followed by lunch at 94th Aero Squadron. Leo O’Bieunas and Ken Benson, co-chairs.
- April 13 **RI Foundation** — report from PDG Ken Banks — “Why and Where.” Chair: John Alexander.
- April 20 **Cuba, the Old and the New** — Speaker: Richard Treflick, member of NELA Rotary Club. Chair: Mike Quiroga.
- April 27 TBA

BIRTHDAYS

- April 9 Lauren Ross
- April 19 Sharma Sherbank
- April 26 Melva Schlick
- April 27 Jim Sullivan
- April 28 Pete Satuloff
- May 5 Magdalena Rivera
- May 17 Larry Sunderlind

HOT DATES

- April 16 **District Assembly** 8 a.m.—1:30 p.m. at the Pierce College Performing Arts Center.
- April 23 **25th Annual Van Nuys Invitational Track Meet** at Birmingham High School. Victory Blvd. at Balboa.
- May 11 **President’s Day** — mark your calendar to hear Dennis McCarthy, *Daily News* reporter.
- May 19-23 **District Conference**, Doral Resort Hotel in Palm Springs.
- June 9-12 **SF Valley Fair**, Rotary beer booth, see Flip Smith.
- June 18-22 **RI Centennial Convention**, Chicago, IL. Celebrating 100 years of Rotary!

We’re on the web! VanNuysRotary.org

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