

HAROLD TAHANA THOMAS
President Rotary International, 1959-60
by Grattan O'Connell

Preface

With friendship in its rightful place
Transcending colour creed and race
Bridges of friendship could be built
Where in war men's blood was spilt;
Bridges of friendship more and more
Built man to man and shore to shore;
Bridges built in Rotary's way
Bridges built to speed the day
When peace and concord will hold sway
That man may reach his long-sought goal
Neighbours all from pole to pole;
One human race with ties that bind
One humane world.one humankind.

(From: Bridges of Friendship by H.T.Thomas)

These are the last lines of the poem "Bridges of Friendship" penned by Harold Thomas along with other short verses and writings that he called 'signposts', in two anthologies entitled After All and Thoughts and Afterthoughts. The former was published in 1978 and the latter in 1985. This poem focuses on the philosophy that Harold preached throughout his long life and on his firm belief in the power of human kindness. I have introduced each section of this biography with a few lines taken from a selection of his poems as they demonstrate yet another talent he possessed, a fact which is not universally known.

The writer of this biography has relied heavily on three books that Harold wrote – his two autobiographies It's All in a Lifetime, and Way up North published in 1968 and 1970 respectively, and Rotary Mosaic a review of the growth and development of the organisation that he had significantly helped to fashion, and published in 1974. The many hours spent in his company during the twilight years of his life, the opportunities both to talk to his family and friends, and read many other sources of information, have all been invaluable in creating this biography. Sadly the oppor-

tunity to discuss again with him the many pathways of life he travelled is no longer available as his remarkable life came to a close on August 5, 1992, when he was in his 102nd year.

Luther Hodges was the president of Rotary International in 1967-68 and wrote the introduction to *It's all in a Lifetime*. Luther concisely described Harold as "a vital, personal individual whose own bridges of friendship span continents and are as global as Rotary International. He is the complete man – husband, father, grandfather, successful business man, warm friend and companion, patriot and Rotarian."

He also describes this book as "the experience of a group of human beings in the pioneering days of land settlement in one of New Zealand's most remote areas. It is the story of the establishment and development of a thriving business during the period of a nation's transition from pioneer community to modern state. Most particularly, it traces the evolution of a Rotarian and the influence of Rotary on a man's personal life."

Luther concludes the introduction with this observation:

"The species that is Harold Thomas is, unfortunately, too seldom found in this world. From the time when he was born in a tent on a lonely frontier until now, he has gained what he has through honest toil. A most literate man, too, Harold has adapted himself to the conditions that surround him. He has done more than survive. He lives a full and rich life to the creed that we can each make our choice."

Let me now attempt to retrace the story of Harold's life as accurately and as completely as possible, and to present his opinions on some of the many topics he addressed.

The Beginnings

For man it's been an endless climb
Through evolution's mists of time
And still he gropes in search of light
Of comprehension and insight
To know himself, that he may then,
Understand his fellow men
That all may climb from primal strife
Toward a humane peaceful life.

(From: *The Climber* by H.T.Thomas.)

The journey of Harold Thomas through life began on July 22, 1891 in a tent. However it is necessary to turn time back almost a further 40 years to record when a member of the Thomas family first arrived in New Zealand. Harold's great-grandfather, the Reverend Edward Thomas, was the first member of the family to arrive; and he took over the Ministry of the first Baptist Church in New Zealand two years after its establishment in Nelson in 1854, and remained there for approximately 20 years. He was born in Cardiff, Wales, in 1804 and died in Wellington in 1884.

The Reverend Edward Thomas had six children, one being Jabez Edward Thomas – Harold's grandfather – who arrived in New Zealand with his wife and two sons in 1873 and settled in Auckland. One son was Joidah Edward Thomas – Harold's father – who was 18, and although born in Birmingham, he regarded himself as being Welsh. Harold's mother – Alice Helena Fenton – was born in Melbourne, Vic., Australia, in 1857. In 1887 Joidah and Alice with four of their five children moved from Auckland to take part in the new land settlement project in the virgin forest country at Herekino in the far north. Neither had any training or experience whatsoever to fit them for an undertaking which could easily be regarded as an act of madness. The deciding factor underlying this decision to join the movement towards the land was the personality, the temperament, and the general makeup of his father.

Four long hard years were spent trying to bring the virgin forest country into production, but, while this process was going on, the settlers

had no way of earning the wherewithal to buy food and other essential supplies. The birth of another son made the situation just that much more difficult and another move was inevitable.

The gum fields were the only practical source of income; but it was necessary to move to where a new block of gum-bearing land was being offered for settlement on the shores of the Houhora Harbour.

The journey was a major undertaking using horses and sea transport. On arriving at Houhora they landed by dinghy on the beach in front of their section, surmounted a sandstone cliff some 50 feet high, and proceeded to make themselves at home. A few days later, on 22nd July, 1891, before a house could be built, Harold was born in a tent.

A Maori woman had been called to assist at the birth, and it was decided there and then, at her request, to honour the baby with her husband's name. So the baby was baptised Harold Tahana. The family was finally to comprise eight boys and three girls.

The next twelve or so years were spent obtaining an elementary education. Four years after the family arrived in Houhora, Harold's father was instrumental in establishing the school. He arranged transfer of the land and, with the help of a neighbour, he built the simple one-room structure which was to become the local seat of learning. The teacher was part-time and was provided by the educational authorities provided not less than sixteen pupils were enrolled. Harold, aged 4 years, filled the sixteenth place on the roll, and the age of the pupils ranged from four to fifteen years.

In the three days of school each week the scholars made headway in learning to read and write and do 'sums' with a little history and geography thrown in – but some seeds of disillusionment were sown when he discovered variances in the recording of historical facts. Harold records this rather prophetic observation:

The effect of that disillusionment has stayed with me as one of the central factors in my thinking. All that I have learned from a long life has convinced me that the world's prime need is understanding, good will and good faith, in other words bridges of friendship between people and peoples. I am equally convinced that that need is still with us, in all its urgency, partly because of plain dishonesty in the teaching of history to school children world-wide. It is a sad situation for all of us, particularly the school children.

Perhaps the greatest amount of learning stemmed from just growing up in such spartan conditions and having to rely on parental experience, siblings and ingenuity for most things. Education in its broadest sense was achieved without either gas or electricity for lighting, heating, power or refrigeration. There was no telephone, washing machine, vac-

power or refrigeration. There was no telephone, washing machine, vacuum cleaner or sewing machine. In the field of entertainment there was no phonograph, radio, television or motion picture, and no motor car; not even a bicycle. Some of these aids were making their appearances elsewhere, but not in Houhora in the 1890's.

The visit of the Anglican minister on one occasion stayed in the forefront of Harold's early memories. It warrants repeating:

The minister spoke in simple terms about a simple theme. "As you sow, so shall you reap." And in doing so he sowed a seed in the mind of at least one member of the congregation for which I devoutly hope he has reaped an appropriate reward. That one simple message did more for me than all the complicated discussions I have heard or read about conflicting theories of theology, doctrine, dogma and creeds. Others may argue all such questions to their heart's content. One beacon has remained constant and steady for me in what would have otherwise have been a frustrating sea of doubt. I believe we shall each reap as we have sown. I neither ask for nor expect to receive fairer treatment than that.

At the age of twelve and a half years Harold's school days came to an end. He notes that he passed the final examination if not at the head of the class, at least very close to it, as there were only two in the class. The question of whether any further education could be afforded did not arise as there was no secondary school to go to. Similarly there was no question of learning a trade as nobody was working at any particular trade or calling on a full time basis. In those days in Houhora nobody talked about do-it-yourself. That was taken for granted and everything was done that way.

Entry into the Workforce

And, though our progress may be slow
 We'll not lose hope for this we know,
 Man has potential yet concealed,
 Reservoirs as yet untapped
 From mountain streams as yet unmapped,
 Latent powers in every field
 And as he climbs they'll be revealed

(From: The Climber by H.T.Thomas)

In the field of practical experience there have been all sorts of schools and all sorts of teachers, and it was from them that Harold learned the lessons that mattered most to him. His experiences in business, of relationships with competitors, with staff, with buyers and sellers, all made an important contribution to his life and his education.

His first job was with friends who had a general store and farming interests in Kaitaia, and his duties were many and varied – cleaning the store, unpacking and making up orders and then delivering them. He was recalled home before he was sixteen to help there for a year before heading for Auckland to work in a department store. He describes his involvement there as three long years of unhappy drudgery, but he learnt the trade of a salesman in carpet, linoleum and soft furnishings, and nurtured the idea of replacing wages with earnings that would be directly related to the results produced by his own efforts.

Harold succeeded in persuading his employers to agree to so revolutionary a suggestion and he returned to the north representing a city department store as a travelling salesman selling on commission instead of wages. He records this period of his life thus:

My territory was to be the whole of Northland north of Towai; and no other area of comparable size could have been more named the Roadless North. With a long-legged tough fibred horse as my trusty companion, I proceeded to stumble over and wade through the whole area in search

of business.

The hours were long. The days and weeks were even longer. It was hard going for both horse and rider. But I had proved something to my own satisfaction. By relating my earning power to my own efforts I had practically trebled the standard rate of pay for the job and apparently pleased my employers in the process. The new arrangement suited both employer and employee. For the first time I had the satisfaction of seeing a theory work out in practice. However the satisfaction was short lived. The First World War took over and in common with all the millions of individuals involved, friend and enemies alike, I was once again a creature of circumstances.

Changing Circumstances

Some age-old barriers have been breached
 Some midway plateaus have been reached
 And while no summit is in sight
 The climber sees new gleams of light
 New will to peace in heart and mind
 New sense of oneness in mankind
 New promise of full light of day
 New readiness to pave the way
 For man at last to gain release
 From primal strife in friendly peace
 And climb on to his destiny
 In one world-wide fraternity.

(From: The Climber by H.T.Thomas)

Harold found the war years of 1914-18 to be the most difficult to write about. He commented that they have always been the most difficult to talk about or even to think about, so he confined himself to the bare facts. His teenage sweetheart, and now his fiancée – May Matthews – and he had agreed that they should be married before he joined the army. This was not an easy decision to reach, but he noted that after celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of their marriage they agreed that they never had occasion to regret that decision – not for one minute.

He said goodbye to his wife hoping that they would meet again. He said goodbye to his mother feeling sure that he would not see her again, and his premonition proved to be correct. She died less than a year later, and although her health had been causing concern, there seemed to be little doubt that her end was hastened by the loss of two of her sons on active service.

Harold does not record in any detail his active service involvement, but his lasting impressions are of the mud and filth on the Western Front in France and Belgium.

Harold became a gas casualty and spent several months in hospital and convalescent camps, finally being included in a draft to be sent back to New

Zealand. While homeward bound in the mid Atlantic word came that the Armistice had been signed. The war was over. His personal experience merely confirmed his life-long feeling that war is the ultimate negation of all that is intelligent and decent in human behaviour.

In common with countless other families in all four corners of the world, their family circle had been completely shattered by the war. Happily he and May and their son Harold (Hal) were together for the first time, but the rejoicing was overshadowed by the fact that his mother had gone, two brothers did not survive the war, a third never fully recovered from a bullet wound, and a fourth was also invalided home.

Harold detested war and writes that there are some things which we hate more than war:

That the peace we were seeking during the First World War and the Second World War, and the peace we are still seeking today, must be a peace consistent with those things which we value more than peace. And so far, the sovereign states have found no way of reconciling conflicting ideas about the factors which are hated more than war or those that are valued more than peace. Therein lies our dilemma. We are all in the same boat; a boat with several captains, and no course so far agreed upon.

By 1919 Harold had a wife and son to provide for, no capital, a serious doubt in his mind as to whether his full health and strength would ever be recovered; an unshakable hatred of war built into the foundations of his thinking and a cast-iron determination to break free from surrounding circumstances. The will was there; the way had to be found.

Before he was out of uniform he secured a job as manager of the smallest furniture store he had ever seen either before or since that time. Harold records that the name on the window, The Maple Furnishing Company, was probably the biggest and most impressive part of the whole establishment; and that the office equipment was probably the least impressive.

In the years that followed Harold and his team developed The Maple Furnishing Company into a thriving and very respected business. It is not possible to relate all that has been written about the evolution of this enterprise, but while reading its history it is impossible not to be impressed by many of the observations Harold recorded about conditions at that time. The following are just two excerpts taken from his writings that illustrate his thoughts:

There are a few experiences more pleasing than to see young men thinking in terms of a better life in a better world. And I like to see them in a hurry to do something about it. Experience will teach them

that it is a waste of both time and effort to climb a tree to pick fruit before it is ripe, or before they are ready to make use of it. But it is better to learn that lesson by climbing the tree too soon, rather than too late, or not at all.

Having had no experience of management under 'normal' or any other conditions it was easier for me to adjust and adapt to prevailing conditions. It was out of that early experience that I came to establish a guide-line which is still in use. And that is to accept what appears to be abnormal in overall conditions as being normal in business, and to adjust and to adapt to those conditions as they are, rather than as we would like them to be.

It was about this time that Harold made what he refers to as a major discovery – he had reached another turning point, and he claimed that he was never just the same man since then. The discovery was Sheldon's School of Business Science. Sheldon's theory that "he profits most who serves best", with all its multifarious implications, was something entirely new and revolutionary in the world of business of that day. It opened up a whole new vista with new horizons just as definitely as if a shuttered window had been opened to the light of day.

It was a very important educational experience for Harold who said his interest never waned but continued to grow with the passing of the years. He elaborates on Sheldon's theory thus:

Sheldon's teaching was restricted to principles to an extent which would appear to be unrealistic to a student of business administration today, with his highly developed and specialised skills in the techniques of industrial production, distribution and merchandising, personnel and staff management, finance and credit control, and all the other factors which the business executive must understand and master. But 70 years ago when Sheldon's School was established his teaching was extremely realistic. The profession or art of business administration was not being taught, but was being learned in the process of practical application of the principles with which Sheldon was concerned.

At a time when business executives as such were all self taught, it was natural for Sheldon to say "It is the self-taught man who can accomplish things. It has been said that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Likewise it is better to teach than to learn, for to give is the best way to get, and to teach is the best way to learn. The man who teaches himself through the best means at his command, be they men, books or things, has a double advantage, he is both giver and receiver, the teacher and learner." These principles are precisely the same as

the teacher and learner." These principles are precisely the same as those that are being taught, or should be taught, today. The application changes from year to year, but the principles remain constant Harold pointed out that in the twenties people were operating in a business world which was different. Government controls affecting administration of a business were limited to taxation and tariffs to protect local industry. Company tax was in the same negligible category as the cost of lighting a retail store, whereas it now takes approximately half of the profit after all other expenses have been taken into account. Practically every member of the staff was not only skilled in a particular craft, trade or calling, but was willing to do, or to help with, any job that needed to be done in the course of the day's work. In the great majority of homes there was only one source of income – the man of the house was the breadwinner.

As the twenties progressed the Maple Furnishing Company grew. The benefit of practical experience was making itself felt. Some opinions had become convictions; some others had been modified, adapted or discarded. Objectives and policies had been tested and here again there had been confirmation, or modification, or reversal.

Harold had become a partner in the firm and his youngest brother Ernest joined the staff in 1928 and remained with the company for the rest of his working life and served for ten years in the position of managing director. The company developed and expanded into a chain of 11 stores operating in six cities. In 1949 it became a public company and was listed on the stock exchange.

By the late twenties the Thomas home was well established and a second son (Bruce) was born in 1921 and a daughter (Dorothy) in 1926. Harold's health problem probably was almost forgotten, as he pointed out, largely due to the fact that there was little if any time in which to remember it. Participation in various forms of trade association activities was taking up some of his time, and it soon became obvious that another developing interest – Rotary – had a key role to play in all such activities. But more, much more, of this other dimension to his life will be referred to in subsequent pages.

The days of "Let the buyer beware" and "There is no sentiment in business" were giving way to "He profits most who serves best". The atmosphere of personal enmity between competitors was being replaced by a new appreciation of the possibility of mutual benefits being found in a greater degree of friendly co-operation. Harold's younger son, Bruce, joined the company in 1940 and became the Managing Director after Ernie, and retiring in 1975.

Any biography of Harold must include at least a brief reference to his excursion to Central Africa to participate in big game hunting. From

boyhood onward he had read everything that came within his reach about this challenge. As he read, the idea grew and took shape in his mind that such a hunt would provide the ultimate as an experience of the wide open spaces and the great outdoors.

In the first place such an undertaking was not seriously thought of even as a possibility. It was just a pleasing idea to be toyed with; but as he found himself better able to afford and enjoy the hunting available in New Zealand, and more free to enjoy it, the idea of an African hunt began to take more definite form.

To better understand his decision to go, let Harold continue the story:

As I thought about it there seemed to be at least one hundred and one reasons why it was not a practical proposition. But against all that there seemed to be one overriding reason why I should go. This was exactly the sort of thing I had always wanted to do. To do it would be something in the nature of a symbol of my newly found independence. It would be more than that; it would be my personal declaration of independence. The decision was made; I was going on a big game hunt, or Ulendo, in Central Africa. That was the major decision. The minor decisions relating to the one hundred and one reasons why I should not be going would have to be made one at a time and fitted to the major decision. And forty years later I still do not know of a better formula for dealing with decisions which must be disposed of.

The venture provided Harold with what he describes as "one of the greatest disappointments of my life". He accepts all the blame because, with a full realisation of what he was doing, he broke one of the elementary rules — he followed a wounded black buffalo. He was outwitted by the animal and he admits that he probably should have been killed. With timely assistance he managed to secure his trophy but was badly gored and had to seek urgent medical attention.

Years later, when writing about this incident, Harold admitted that it was a costly lesson, but he realised that freedom to please oneself is not enough. There are other considerations of far greater importance.

When reading the chapter devoted to the African adventure it is obvious that Harold was influenced by what he saw and the impressions he gained. Although it was nearly forty years later, he noted that it was the incidents and impressions that have to do with people that come most readily to mind as memories are rekindled; not the game animals; not the excitement of hunting; but his relationship with and observations of the people of the area through which the Ulendo took them. The diary he kept provided many extracts for that chapter.

One factor that required a dramatic adjustment was in the field of human relationships. He became aware of a line sharply drawn between the two

relationships. He became aware of a line sharply drawn between the two races, one claiming and asserting superiority, the other accepting a position of inferiority. He found the most distressing aspect of the way of life of the native people in that part of Central Africa which he saw for himself in 1930, was "the dumb misery with which they accepted a position of inferiority and what I believed to be a consequent loss of self respect." He went on to say that he could not believe that such a situation could continue indefinitely, nor could he believe that anyone should wish to see it continue indefinitely.

For some months Harold had been at close quarters with the social and economic aspects of racism. He comments:

Since then, I have had ample opportunity of satisfying myself that while the problem may be more acute in Africa than it is in most other lands, it is to be seen in different forms, and in different guises, wherever our travels may take us in this world. In any form, and in any guise, it is one of the ugliest and most menacing problems which bedevil mankind, either nationally or internationally.

It does not make good sense to suggest, without qualification, that we are all born equal; not in any one race; not in any one family. But it is monstrous to suggest that a child is born either superior or inferior to other children because of the colour of its skin or racial origin. It is even more monstrous that in later life any individual should be expected to accept an inferior grade of citizenship for either or both of those two reasons. On the other hand there may well be other reasons that are valid.

Sweeping changes have already taken place. Further changes are inevitable. No one can foresee the final outcome of it all. But any one of us can see that mutual understanding, mutual good will and mutual respect are the essential ingredients in any possible solution of the problem of racialism, wherever and whenever it may be found.

With these ingredients present, a solution should be within reach. Without them, no acceptable solution will be found. Inevitably in those circumstances, one side will impose its will on the other, and the impersonal process of evolution will resume its course.

With such a background it is not surprising that "bridges of friendship" were the secret of Harold's success in dealing with anyone and everyone he came in contact with during the rest of his long life — friends, employees, customers, suppliers, competitors, the countless Rotary contacts, and his critics.

The first major discovery that Harold records was Sheldon's School, but

The Rotarian

If we allowed the daily news
To shape our thoughts and mould our views
We all seemed doomed to endless strife
With enmities and discords rife;
How pleasing then it is to know;
That as we journey to and fro
In Rotary where e'er we go'
Our memories are of pleasant lands
Of friendly folk with helpful hands,
With human kindness in their hearts
And eagerness to play their parts
In the vital urgent cause
Of fostering peace, outlawing wars.

(From: The Climber by H.T.Thomas)

Harold has described his introduction and early years in Rotary in two of his publications – It's All in a Lifetime and Rotary Mosaic as follows:

In May 1923 I accepted an invitation to join the Rotary Club of Auckland, then in its second year of operation. The club had been established by Jim Davidson of Calgary, Canada, acting as a special Commissioner appointed by the President of Rotary International. Jim Davidson had built on a firm foundation in selecting charter members from among those recognised leaders and senior citizens who were not too conservative to join up with such a new fangled movement.

In 1921 Auckland was a much smaller city than it is today. The community was smaller; and so it was that a great majority of the members were well known to each other before they came into Rotary. They were mostly members of well established Auckland families. In many cases they had attended school together and grown up together.

My own situation was entirely different. I was a newcomer to the city of Auckland. I was meeting just a few of the members of the Rotary club in the ordinary way of business, but by and large, I was a stranger in their midst. It was because Paul Harris had found himself to be in much the same situation, in a much larger and therefore a much lonelier city, that Rotary had been brought into being in Chicago in 1905. Paul was lonely and he decided to do something about it. He conceived the idea that life would be better for all concerned if each individual had more opportunities of building friendships; particularly if new friends came from callings other than his own. The idea, to organise friendship in the world of business and the professions was nothing short of revolutionary in that day and age. According to traditional thinking, there was a natural gap between business and friendship which had never been, and never would be, bridged. But Paul believed it should be done; and could be done. And Paul was right. The gap was bridged in Rotary and an infusion of fellowship and mutual helpfulness and thoughtfulness was seen as something new and different in business and professional relationships.

As I came to know something of the object and purpose of Rotary I also came to have a greater appreciation of Sheldon's teaching. One of the early members of the Rotary Club of Chicago and therefore an active associate of Paul Harris, Sheldon has obviously exercised a profound influence in the formative days of Rotary's development.

We need only remind ourselves that the phrase "he profits most who serves best" was originally used and copyrighted by Sheldon as the basis of his teaching in his School of Business Science. It was adopted and used by Rotary and is still being used, on account of Sheldon's express permission.

It must be confessed that although I enjoyed the fellowship and the many new friendships that came to me through Rotary, my interest in Rotary as such, was superficial. I was more or less a one-man band in a growing business in which the foundations were still being built while the business was growing. The job just naturally and necessarily absorbed everything that I had to put into it. Although, as is so often said, one had to eat somewhere, I found myself begrudging the time taken up by attendance at a meeting of the club.

By the end of the second year I decided that I was not pulling my weight as a member of the club and I could not be satisfied with being just a dues paying member. Fortunately I did the right thing and went to see my proposer, A.J. Hutchinson, known in Rotary throughout New Zealand as "Hutch". I told him the story underlying my intention to

resign.

Hutch was not only older but also a great deal wiser than I was. He persuaded me that what I needed was not less Rotary but more of it. He had something to say about the foolishness of the man who starts out to possess money and ends up in being possessed by money. Although I had never thought of myself as being even potentially in that category, my old friend made me see that, even at that early stage, the pursuit of financial success for its own sake could easily become a dominating factor. Elementary? Yes, to him. But not to me forty years ago.

The President arranged to have me added to the Reception and Fellowship Committee where I would automatically meet more members and meet them more often; a process which would hasten my assimilation into the life of the club. Taking his advice was perhaps the most far-reaching, most fateful and wisest decision of the sort I have ever taken in the course of a reasonably long and reasonably full life.

Harold was astute enough to realize that the Rotary Club of Auckland was fortunate in having a hard core of outstanding people included in the list of charter members. Two of them, George Fowlds and Charles Rhodes, soon emerged as natural leaders in Rotary. Together with some of their friends and associates they were quick to see beyond the wall of doubt and cynicism which Rotary had to overcome in its pioneering days. They saw the potential of such a movement. They were also wise enough to see that if, Rotary was to prosper, it must be understood at least by the Rotarians themselves.

They made an early start with a Rotary Education Committee and concerned themselves mainly with the development of fellowship and friendship on the one hand and better business methods on the other. Preoccupation with these two basic features of Rotary activity was soundly based. It was natural and inevitable. It was obvious that business world-wide was in need of an infusion of new thinking, a new code of ethics and a new sense of purpose and direction.

It was against that general background that Paul Harris and Fred Sheldon and that small band of pioneers in Chicago set out to bridge the gap which had always separated business and friendship. And the repercussions of their efforts were felt in far away Auckland. If only because Auckland was a small community compared with Chicago our problem was less acute. In any human undertaking bigness, as such, tends to breed an impersonal attitude of mind; and an impersonal attitude of mind is the antithesis of Rotary. But to say that the problem was less acute is not to say that there was no problem.

This was the situation encountered by Harold in the 1920's when he was invited to become a member of a Rotary Club and very soon to develop into an active Rotarian. Little did he know then what the future

develop into an active Rotarian. Little did he know then what the future would hold for him, or what influence he was destined to have on Rotary's development.

For nations, for governments and for individuals the decade of the 1930's was a period of stress and strain, of heart-searching and soul-searching; and Harold was just one of the many million who found it to be a period of almost revolutionary adjustment to some of the fundamentals of his thinking. Those who were carrying responsibility in business during this decade had no way of escaping preoccupation with national issues. It was at this stage that Harold found his interest in Rotary to be quickening.

In the ordinary course of business a day never passed without bringing to the surface some situation in which one would be reminded of those principles for which Rotary stood. Will this decision build good will and better friendship? Is this fair to all concerned? These were real questions that had to be faced in relation to real problems to be discussed with real people. As he became involved in discussion, in debates, and in negotiations of a business nature, or any other nature, there was a growing awareness of the key role Rotary was able to play in maintaining a sense of balance in and between opposing factions.

Rotary had no axe to grind. Rotary stood for a spirit of fellowship and mutual respect and good will in all phases of human relationships. Rotary stood for a conscious effort to understand opposing view points during debate; and was based on the idea that this approach was not only possible in business, it was highly desirable; it was practical. It could be and would be beneficial to all concerned.

About this time, in 1932 to be exact, an Australian district governor was returning home from the U.S.A. and visited the Rotary Club of Auckland. At that meeting Harold was introduced to Angus Mitchell and he writes about his association with Angus:

Meeting Angus was one of the main turning points in my Rotary life. It was the start of a friendship which lasted until he died in 1961. Rotary has brought me great riches in fine friendships; more friends and better friends than I could possibly claim to have deserved. Most of my other friends knew Angus and were equally well known to him. They would agree that in his capacity for friendship, Angus was unsurpassed.

From platforms around the world I have told of my conviction that in those things that matter most in Rotary, no individual other than Paul Harris ever made a greater contribution to Rotary than Angus Mitchell, with his quiet insistence on the paramount importance of spiritual values which he saw as being basic in Rotary as elsewhere.

After that meeting in 1932 I took Angus to my home and we started in on a discussion of Rotary which continued, as occasion offered, for almost thirty years. Angus had been spending a lot of time in U.S.A. with Paul Harris. They had travelled together and Angus had stayed in Paul's home. Inevitably they had talked about Rotary and all that Angus was telling me of his talks with Paul was Rotary direct from the original source of Rotary.

The leaven of Rotary was already at work in my mind, and the warmth of Angus' personality and his infectious enthusiasm was all that was required to start me on the road he was already following. I was profoundly impressed. In particular I was impressed by the fact that Angus had decided to transfer his main business interest to his partner to free himself for what he hoped and intended would be practically full-time activity in the cause of Rotary.

This was entirely a new angle of approach. This raised the question of the importance of Rotary. It was apparent to me then, after talking with Angus, and it is even more apparent to me now, that Rotary is a great deal more important in the lives of some Rotarians than it is in the case of some others.

Rotary Club President

Seek not to put the world aright
 But add maybe one ray of light;
 All wisdom tells and often sings
 Of miracles in little things,
 Eternal life within a seed,
 Blessings in a kindly deed,
 Comfort in one candle's light
 A special worth in widow's mite.

(from The Balanced Man by H.T.Thomas)

Harold's growing interest in Rotary and consequent participation in club activities was noticed by others and in 1937 he was invited to serve as president of his club. He appreciated the invitation and accepted it as being a signal honour. Interest in the program of Rotary, and even active participation in that program, were no longer enough. The responsibilities of leadership demanded a clarified understanding of what it was all about.

The more he studied this question the more he found himself convinced that it all boiled down to one simple essential fact. He was convinced that whatever the original intention had been, Paul Harris and his friends had succeeded in the first place in bridging the age-old gap between business and friendship. It was the bridging of this gap that really mattered. That was the single significant fact which made Rotary's contribution unique. The whole program of Rotary, covering the whole field of practical activities, in all four avenues of service, has stemmed from the success of that first project. The program of Rotary has evolved. It is still evolving, and in order to meet new needs and changing circumstances it must go on evolving. But the principles on which Rotary is founded will remain constant.

In a talk given to his Rotary club during his presidential year Harold said:

If we are ever going to develop the potential power of Rotary to even a

reasonable degree we must first of all have a better understanding of Rotary among Rotarians. And in order to develop that better understanding we must clarify and simplify our thinking in relation to Rotary. Understanding will come to us as we begin to see Rotary as friendship organised to build more friendship and better friendship. It really is very simple. We can make a start by making every club a friendly club. A club where visitors will remember the warmth of the welcome extended and the warmth of the friendships apparent among members long after they have forgotten the speaker, his subject and the food. Help to make yours a friendly club – that is club service.

A club where individual members are pulling their weight for the general betterment of the trade or profession to which they belong. Help to make yours a friendly trade or profession. This is vocational service.

A club where individual members are shouldering their responsibilities in the community, are known as good neighbours and good citizens. Help to make yours a friendly community. This is community service.

A club where individual members realise that Rotary is Rotary International. That while unquestioned loyalty within his own state or country is a prerequisite of membership in Rotary, a Rotarian must also see himself as a member of the wider family of mankind. Help to make this a friendly world. That is international service.

Harold wrote that he may or may not have convinced anyone else during his year as club president, but he had at least convinced himself that Rotary held an unlimited potential as a builder of bridges of friendship in all phases of human relationships; and that in view of what was happening in the world around him in 1937, Rotary's potential was of first-class importance.

Harold was convinced that if our relationships with other people within our own land fell naturally into two fields, one political and the other non-political, surely the same could be said with equal truth of our relationships with people of lands other than our own. Thus it became clear to him that for the development and maintenance of friendly and peaceful relations between nations, two separate fields of activity must be developed simultaneously. One such field has to do with the official relationships between governments as defined in treaties and other formal agreements. This is a governmental field of activity and cannot be handled at any other level.

The other field has to do with the development of a healthy atmosphere of mutual understanding and good will based upon a well informed public opinion in each of the countries concerned. This is a man to man activity; and this is where Rotary fits perfectly into a key position in the

whole jigsaw puzzle of world affairs. This is Rotary's natural and most fertile field of endeavour in international service.

Harold went on to say that Rotary cannot put the world right. But Rotary can make a contribution of first importance by helping to create an atmosphere of understanding, good will and mutual respect in which it may be possible for governments to make better progress towards a better world for us all to live in.

The war came in 1939 and New Zealand, as a self-governing sovereign state within the British Commonwealth of Nations, was already going it alone. The Welfare State was still in the first stages of pioneering. Traditional practices and procedures in business, including the disposal of our exports in overseas markets, were being disrupted if not reversed. Some of the responsibilities related to housing, medical care and the care of children, which had always been regarded as being the concern of the individual citizen, were coming to be regarded as being largely governmental responsibilities. In the same way community responsibilities which had always been handled by individual community workers, or by community organisations, were being taken over by state departments. Vital questions related to vocational service and community service in Rotary just naturally came to the surface.

During the next few years Harold was busily involved in the concept of Federal Union. He joined the Auckland group and assisted in the formation of Federal Union (N.Z.) Incorporated with branches throughout the country and affiliated with the organisations in Washington and London, and he was elected its first chairman. He was concerned with the development of the Welfare State and what role Rotary might or should play in these developments, and its relationship with government. As chairman Harold produced a carefully-worded statement, and he said a brief condensation would read somewhat along these lines:

We need an entirely new approach to the whole problem. Instead of helping to swell the chorus of destructive criticism and abuse of politicians generally, and of some politicians in particular, let us admit as sensible men, that most of our politicians are individually intelligent and well meaning citizens. And then let us offer to co-operate with them.

Our position, as I see it, can be made clear in a simple statement in simple words. The basic problem is that of adapting democracy and democratic Government to the generally recognised need of economic planning in a modern state. Nowhere in the world is it any longer a question of whether we are to have government controls, but what sort of controls, and how many of them. Are we to have the maximum num-

ber possible, as some of the planners appear to favour? Or are we to have the minimum necessary to achieve our objectives? Personally, I favour the minimum necessary, and I would hope to see even those controls administered by people who do not find enjoyment in exercising control over other people.

We should make it clear that when we speak of freedom, we do not mean a rugged individualism which excludes social organisation, economic planning, or consideration for the well-being of the community. That we do not see the theories of capitalism and socialism as being mutually destructive. On the contrary, each can, with advantage, be modified by the other. My own belief is that common sense will eventually prevail along these lines.

Rotarians had been scrupulously careful to see that Rotary, as such, was not involved in political controversy. But Harold became aware that he was becoming personally involved to a far greater extent than he had ever intended to be. The situation was brought into focus by a formal request that he should agree to his name being submitted to the local branch of a political party as a candidate for Parliament. The nomination appeared to be assured, and the seat was one of the safest in New Zealand. Harold records that he considered he was not equipped by nature for active participation in party politics, and mainly for that reason he declined the invitation.

Harold wrote that he had developed a conviction that Rotary's potential in all phases of human relationships is beyond calculation, if not beyond comprehension. But within its own field Rotary is limited by its complete dependence upon active participation by individual Rotarians in the development and utilisation of that potential. In other words, the limiting factor is the individual Rotarian.

It was at just about this time that Harold chanced upon a quotation which has been basic in his thinking and in the construction of addresses for all sorts of occasions ever since. Here it is:

I am only one, but I am one.
I cannot do everything, but I can do something,
And by the grace of God, what I can do, I will do.

District Governor

And so it is, we may be sure
Though others lead and go before
He plays his part by any test
Whose purpose is to do his best
To live his life a four square man
A helpful thoughtful friendly man
In other words a balanced man.

(From The Balanced Man by H.T.Thomas)

In 1944 Harold was being pressed by his friends, not for the first time, to accept office as district governor. There were many new factors to be considered. Wartime conditions of travel would mean some long absences from home, but their daughter had reached an age when she was a real companion for her mother. It was now possible for the business to be left in competent hands. He decided to accept the nomination after talking it over with his wife and family, his business associates, his friends in Federal Union and others.

In writing about this decision Harold has this to say:

As individuals, we have certain aptitudes. We have certain preferences. I believed, rightly or wrongly, that such aptitudes as I possessed would enable me to make my most useful contribution by playing my personal role within the Rotary role. I also believed that I would be happiest in that role.

Fortunately for me, there was no way of knowing that the office of district governor would be the forerunner of more than twenty years of more or less continuous activity in Rotary at the international level; a program which has involved me in more than a million miles of travel alone, and taken up at least half of my time in several years, and the whole of my time in one period of sixteen months. Never for one moment has there been reason to regret the original decision. I can say with complete sincerity, that those twenty years have been the happiest,

most gratifying and, I believe, the most useful years of my life.

Because of wartime restrictions on travel there had been little personal contact for some years between Rotary International Headquarters and the clubs and districts outside of North America. Harold was urged to make every possible effort to attend the international convention in Chicago in May, 1944. Eventually a passage was available on a troopship taking casualties and convalescents to U.S.A. Since that time he has attended many conventions but none quite like this one. Time was restricted. The attendance was small (403) with one from Australia, one from South Africa and two from New Zealand, and none from Great Britain and Ireland.

Every phase of Harold's year of office as district governor was complicated by wartime restrictions on travel. The difficulty experienced in travelling to and from Chicago was only a beginning. Long distance travel by car was ruled out by petrol rationing, and air services were reserved for governmental or military use. Itineraries had to be arranged for official visits to 43 clubs, for two district assemblies, one in each island, and for the organisation of nine new clubs.

Arranging for such a program by train and bus was only made possible through the ready co-operation of the clubs in changing their meeting days. Even with that co-operation it was not easy. In one period of two weeks ten clubs were visited. To this add some inter-club meetings as well as some public meetings sponsored by Rotary clubs.

Harold records the realisation of new horizons that exist for the district governor. A new dimension is added to his thinking and his understanding of Rotary. His theme was a continuation of the appeal made to the members of the Auckland club during his term as president seven years earlier:

"We must simplify and clarify our individual thinking about Rotary. Rotary is based on the simple fact that a man needs friends. That he works best, plays best, and lives best in an atmosphere of fellowship and good will.

"The peace structure of the future, if it is to succeed, must be based on the fact that every nation in the world, however powerful it may be individually, will need friends."

In 1959 when Harold attended the international assembly as the incoming President of Rotary International he tried to pass on to the incoming district governors some of the more important lessons learned during his own year in that office in these words:

We cannot possibly administer an organisation with the ramifications of Rotary International, or even a Rotary club, without mechanics and techniques. If, then, we are to have mechanics, let us have the best possible. But it is also important for us to realise that the machinery of

Rotary is not an end in itself – it is a means to an end. We merely make use of the machinery so that we may have better Rotary and better Rotarians.

Each one of us, whatever place we may hold in the team during the year, will naturally wish to do a competent and efficient job. But it is important to realise that however competent we may be, however efficient we may be, there is far more to Rotary than that. As officers of Rotary International it will be our job to promote and advance the program of Rotary; and the program of Rotary is primarily concerned with human relations – all phases of human relations. Efficiency is one such phase, but it is only one.

One of the most important lessons that we have to learn is to have a healthy respect for the calibre of the men who make up the Rotary audience, at any time. I suggest to you that we should never speak to any such audience without reminding ourselves, as I am reminding myself at this moment, that every person present knows more about something than does the one who happens to be the leader of the moment. Many will know a great deal more than I do about a great many things. My one and only hope is that I may know a little more about Rotary, and one cannot always be sure of that by any means.

It is important that we should remember that Rotarians are all mature men. They are more accustomed to giving instructions than to receiving them. They are all volunteers and will respond to leadership but not to drivership.

During my own year as district governor I developed a technique which I believe may be useful to some of you during your year. You will find that your job is just about 98 percent privilege and pleasure and two percent plain duty. I venture to predict that not one of you will get through your year without finding some situation in some club in your district that will need to be faced up to under the heading of that two percent duty. You will finish your year very much happier if you face up to any such situation. All that is necessary is to explain to the club concerned that you are not prepared to accept privilege and pleasure to the extent of 98 percent and not to face up to the two percent duty. Your fellow Rotarians are reasonable men. They will never let you down.

Rotary at its best is a judicious mixture of good work and good clean fun. Let us see to it that we keep the fun clean. We should have a wholesome respect for the dignity of Rotary and do what we can to set that standard in the clubs where we have personal influence.

I have deliberately avoided the use of the word "challenge". I do not like being challenged from morning to night; and I don't believe you do.

Please, fellows, do your best this year to have bridges of friendship built and see to it that they are built to carry two way traffic in the years ahead.

These then, were some of the lessons that Harold learnt from his year as district governor. There were also a lot of satisfactions, including those coming from the formation of nine new clubs during his year. Commenting that it was possibly an element of surprise which made such a deep impression, he went on to say that one only needs to think for one minute about the contribution made by nine Rotary clubs in nine different communities; and what membership in each one of those clubs has meant in the lives of some hundreds of individual Rotarians in some hundreds of different ways; and surprise must give way to understanding.

There was also a new understanding of how Rotary is intended to work, how Rotary is organised to work, and where and when it is possible for Rotary to work most effectively. There was a new ability to recognise Rotary as he saw it at work in a hundred different guises. In other words there was a newer and deeper understanding of Rotary itself.

Harold continued that, with knowledge and understanding, we see Rotarians in action all around us; in the offices they hold and in the influence they exert in trade and professional associations, in community and national organisations, in the local branches and world councils of international organisations, and so on and so on. What we often fail to see is the fact that so many of them received their initial inspiration in Rotary.

After his term as district governor was completed Harold was aware that a new type of thinking was in evidence among leaders of world stature. The war was over but the aftermath had only begun. It was being said that while treaties of friendship and mutual aid came from the heads of statesmen, the will to abide by those treaties could come only from the hearts and minds of the people these statesmen represented. The world's prime need was for friendship and understanding; and that was Rotary's natural field of endeavour. There were, in actual fact, as many opportunities for international service as there were individual Rotarians. Harold's own convictions regarding the importance of the role Rotary was destined to play became deepened from day to day. In an address to the Auckland club in October, 1947, he said his theme was double-barrelled. It was an appeal to his fellow members to face up to their responsibilities as such. It was also an appeal to the club itself to face up to its responsibilities as a member club of Rotary International. Here is the kernel of the address:

The basic idea underlying the statement of policy of Rotary International in international service is set out as follows:

"Rotary clubs in international service should bend their energies to the

stimulation of thought and to the training of the individual Rotarian in a proper attitude of mind, rather than in an attempt to influence government, world affairs, and international policies, by corporate action by Rotary International or by Rotary clubs."

The hope is, of course, that this right attitude of mind working as a leaven in our homes, in our vocation, in the community generally, will help in developing a sound public opinion which in turn will influence and perhaps even control governments and the policy of governments.

The idea is perfectly sound but the whole program depends upon one factor: the soundness of the thinking of the individual Rotarian; and just how sound is our individual thinking?

You will know that Rotary International has adopted what is called a four-way test in vocational service. My suggestion is that we should each apply a similar test to ourselves in relation to our attitude of mind in international service.

My test would read as follows: In furtherance of the policy of Rotary International in international service, i.e. the stimulation of thought and the training of the individual Rotarian in the right attitude of mind -

- a. Do I look beyond national patriotism, which is naturally and rightly common to all men, and see myself as a citizen of the world?
- b. Do I resist any tendency to think in terms of national or racial superiority?
- c. Do I consciously seek areas of common ground and agreement with peoples of other lands?
- d. Do I believe that peace on earth can come only to men of good will? And do I think and act accordingly?

My hope is that this club will make an effort to get that test, or an improved version of it, embodied in the international service literature of Rotary International.

In 1948 Angus Mitchell was the president of Rotary International and he was convinced that the spirit of Rotary was still alive in the hearts and minds of a substantial majority of former members of clubs in those countries where Rotary had been banned by the Axis powers during the war. Angus believed that the re-establishment of Rotary would be an important step towards the re-establishment of friendly and peaceful relations with the people of those countries. He was well aware that he

would be faced with strong opposition from some quarters, but he was determined to do something about it.

Harold was invited to accept office as Chairman of the International Affairs Committee and, as such, to serve as a member of the Aims and Objects Committee. The terms of reference of the former required the committee, inter alia, to "Ascertain and endeavour to resolve divergent viewpoints concerning economic, political and social problems." The Aims and Objects Committee was the forerunner of the later Planning Committee. Questions dealing with the policy of Rotary International in relation to the United Nations were among the most important matters the committee had to deal with.

Rotary had already been granted consultative status in connection with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations which referred to Rotary as being "An organisation concerned primarily with the development of public opinion and the dissemination of information". The idea underlying Harold's four-way test was adopted by the committee but it was realised that study, research and discussion would all be necessary before there could be any agreement on a recommendation likely to be acceptable to the Board of Rotary International or to Rotarians world-wide.

Harold reached the conclusion that international affairs are essentially matters for discussion and action by governments at the level of practical international politics. There was a general acceptance of the central fact that Rotary could only be concerned with people, not politics, with personal relationships between man and man and not between government and government, with the conscience of mankind and the will to peace in the hearts and minds of people, not with the mechanics or politics of peace. He was to make this point again and again, not only when he was president, but also on other suitable occasions.

The members of the International Affairs Committee were unanimous in the opinion that the concept of such a committee in Rotary International was basically unsound as it brought Rotary International dangerously close to the international political arena. It caused confusion in the clubs and in the minds of individual Rotarians. Too often there appeared to be a clash between an active interest in international affairs as citizens of their own lands and active participation in international service in Rotary. The recommendation was made that the committee be discontinued, but it had been for Harold a good illustration of how policy is made in Rotary International. He writes that any statement of policy is never more than a beginning. It is designed to supply a sense of purpose and direction; to point to an objective and to suggest to Rotarians world-wide ways and means of reaching that objective. The degree of success to be achieved will be in direct ratio to the degree of our success in capturing the imagination of the individual Rotarian for the practical application of the program envisaged. And that can only be done through the

application of the program envisaged. And that can only be done through the hearts and the minds and the hands of those Rotarians themselves working both individually and collectively. No committee of Rotary International can do that for them.

Harold was becoming a significant influence on the future development of Rotary and the next level of involvement was inevitable.

Member of the Board of Rotary International

We know there's much to be undone,
 And even more to do,
 For peace and concord to be won
 From conflicts old and problems new;
 But all the problems are man made
 If we just call a spade a spade,
 And this we know is also true
 That we can be the answer too.

(From: Bridges of Friendship by H.T Thomas)

In 1950 Harold Thomas was elected to the Board of Directors of Rotary International – one of the five from the membership of clubs outside U.S.A., Canada, and Great Britain and Ireland. Like most new members of the board he found it necessary to make a conscious effort to adjust and orient his thinking to his new responsibilities.

At that time it was a one year term; but two members of the board were being elected to serve for two years in order to ensure some degree of continuity from year to year. One of the two was elected from one of the five zones within U.S.A. The other was chosen from an area outside of U.S.A. and Harold was the one from outside.

During his second year Harold was elected First Vice-President of R.I. Among the many decisions that had to be made was the question of the headquarters building. This matter had been under serious discussion for several years, but as the lease for the current premises was due for renewal, and they were clearly unsuitable, a decision had to be made. The board decided to recommend to the convention that a piece of land in Evanston, near Chicago, should be purchased and a building, designed for Rotary's purpose, should be erected on the site by Rotary International. Opposition to the proposal was immediately evident in some areas.

The board also initiated three other proposals – an increase in the per capita dues from US\$4.50 to \$6.00; changes to the Nominating Committee for President of Rotary International; and to provide for a two year term for all Rotary International Directors. After prolonged debate all the

items were adopted, but Harold felt that what had been achieved was at best an uneasy truce – progress had been made but further progress was pending.

Harold's two year term on the board ended in June 1952. He records that, apart from that brief period some twenty-five years earlier, during which he managed to establish a home and a business, these two years spent as a director were without question the most stimulating and the most gratifying years of his life up to that time.

Following his term on the board Harold was invited to serve on an ad hoc committee known as the Committee for Clarifying and Improving Relationships between Member Clubs and the Board of Directors of Rotary International. The name explains the function of the committee. The chairman invited all the members of the committee to provide written statements embodying any ideas they already had so these could be circulated prior to the committee meeting.

Harold wrote saying that in his view a Rotary club exists to give encouragement and help to individual Rotarians so that all can be, individually and collectively, better Rotarians – the first Rotary club was brought into being by individuals for that purpose; that Rotary International exists to give help and encouragement to individual clubs so that through association with other clubs world-wide they will all be better Rotary clubs – Rotary International was brought into being by the clubs for that purpose; and therefore we should do everything possible to encourage Rotarians to think of Rotary International as belonging to the clubs rather than to think of the clubs belonging to Rotary International.

He suggested four guidelines for the committee:

- a. First in order of importance is the Object of Rotary.
- b. The administration of Rotary International is important only in so far as it advances the Object of Rotary through the application of the ideal of service by member clubs and individual Rotarians.
- c. A fundamental principle underlying the administration of Rotary International is the autonomy of the member Rotary club.
- d. The constitutional and procedural restrictions on administration should be kept to the minimum necessary to preserve the unique features of Rotary. Within that provision there should be the maximum of flexibility in interpretation and implementation of Rotary International policy especially at the local or indigenous level.

The committee adopted these principles as a foundation upon which all discussion would be based and all decisions would be reached. This demonstrates the theme of the evolution of Rotary thinking in Harold's mind.

Mention must also be made of the definite feelings Harold had on a proposal that had been put forward by the Rotary Club of London, England to the 1949 convention. It related to zonal advisory committees, area administration, and the territorial unit form of administration. The pur-

pose of the proposal was to stimulate interest in the question of area administration, which included decentralisation of the administration of Rotary International.

On being invited to speak during the debate Harold said:

The advancement of the ideal of international understanding, good will and peace requires general recognition of the utmost importance of preserving and promoting the international fellowship of member clubs throughout the world based, not upon the grouping of clubs in national or regional areas, but upon the direct relationship and common responsibility of the member clubs to the international organisation.

Harold expressed the opinion that in Rotary International we could see at least one successful example of democracy in action at international level. He was opposed to decentralisation of Rotary International, being in favour of one, not two or more. The proposal was withdrawn by the convention. This matter was addressed again in the R.I.O.P. report published in 1962.

For the next few years Harold was able to devote more time to his business which had been converted into a public company in 1949 with shares listed on the stockmarket. Progress, he reported, was healthy, sound and satisfactory. The spiral of inflation had become a world-wide trend and there was an increasing number of takeovers. Time was found for the garden – an interest always dear to his heart, and one that was the basis for these remarks which he made later at a convention in Miami, Florida, during his presidential year:

One of the most impressive examples I know of international co-operation is to be seen in one of those gardens wherein we find plants, shrubs and trees flourishing and flowering side by side in perfect harmony and beauty to create between them that atmosphere in which it is generally agreed that man comes nearest to his Maker.

There is much wisdom to be learned in a garden, and the very beginning of that wisdom is the realisation of the fact that all final results depend on proper preparation of the soil. Prepare the soil, sow the seed, reap the crop; and be sure that the harvest will be in keeping with the honesty of your ground work.

So it is with Rotary. The crop we envisage is world peace and stability, a friendly and more neighbourly world in which it would be possible to live as friends and neighbours. The seed to be sown, fellowship and friendship, understanding and, over and above all else, good faith. The soil, the minds and thinking processes of individual

fellowship and friendship, understanding and, over and above all else, good faith. The soil, the minds and thinking processes of individual Rotarians; and first in order of importance comes the preparation of the soil.

The next phase of Harold's life was certainly one of the most important in his more than a century of living.

President of Rotary International

Vitalize. Personalize.
Build Bridges of Friendship

The theme that Harold used repeatedly during his presidential year of 1959-60 was Vitalize, Personalize; Build Bridges of Friendship; and it reflected his life-time philosophy.

The election procedure for the President of Rotary International was very condensed at that time compared with that followed today. Towards the end of 1958 Harold was nominated by the Rotary Club of Tokyo and the nominating committee met on January 19, 1959. His nomination was successful and the deadline for any further nominations was March 20. There being none, Harold was elected at the Rotary International Convention in New York in June of the same year and he took office a few weeks later on July 1. It was hardly more than six months from nomination to being in office – a far cry from the twenty-one months that apply today. Thankfully Harold was the last president to take office at such short notice. It was all too short and there was much to be done.

Faced with responsibilities and opportunities beyond the wildest dreams of his earlier years, it was almost a revelation for Harold to find that there would be no change in the foundations of the policy and program he had advocated as Rotary Club of Auckland President more than twenty years earlier, and at differing levels of office during the intervening years.

There would be additions, adaptations in keeping with changing times, changing needs, and changing opportunities for service, but the basic thinking would remain unchanged.

The inaugural address that Harold delivered at the 50th Convention in New York when he was the incoming president is fully recorded in the proceedings of that 1959 convention. However, there are some particular passages that indicate his thinking and are worthy of special mention:

We have seen for ourselves that where it is possible to bring people of different races, different colours, creeds and cultures together in an atmosphere free from fear and suspicion – where the dominant wish is to give rather than to get – they will immediately and joyfully react in

a spirit of good will and good fellowship. We have seen the leaven of Rotary at work building bridges of friendship between peoples. Each one of those bridges will have some distinctive feature of its own, but all have been built from the same raw materials and for the same common purpose. I venture to predict that long after you have forgotten what has been said from this platform you will be cherishing those bridges of friendship and the happy memories of the pleasure and satisfaction you have had in building them here in New York.

The officers you have elected will have many responsibilities and many duties. They may not be aware of it, but they are going into session this afternoon as the Board of Directors of Rotary International – starting as quickly as that. They will be called upon to perform a great deal of plain hard work. But, believe it or not, the central and most important problem they will be trying to solve will be the same old problem that we try to solve in every Rotary club of the world – every year the problem of how to capture the imagination of the individual Rotarian – how to induce him to vitalize and personalize his interest in Rotary – how to make him realise that his contribution, however small it may appear to be, does affect the sum total – and while it may appear to be insignificant to him, there is great significance in the fact he makes his contribution.

If we could devise some way of giving to the Rotarians of the world a composite picture of what they themselves have already done over the years in Rotary, what they are doing and what they will do this year, and, in particular, what they could do if the latent manpower in half a million Rotarians could be vitalized and fully developed – if all of this could be seen in one place at one time, as we have seen here in New York what can be done by 16,000 people meeting together – our problem of capturing the imagination of the individual would be solved at that point.

If we could recess this meeting and stand still and be silent for ten minutes in a place I know in New Zealand, we would see a demonstration of unified individual effort that would convey more to you than I could hope to do by speaking to you for ten minutes or for ten hours.

Nature has been very kind to us in New Zealand – and particularly so in providing us with an extraordinary example of what can be done by individuals, each one seemingly utterly insignificant, when the sum total of their individual efforts can be focused in one place at one time.

The tiny glowworm's pinpoint of light is a familiar sight to those who

travel by night in some parts of New Zealand. One light, however small, is better than no light, and, despite its seeming insignificance, there is always something peculiarly arresting about that tiny beacon produced by the glowworm. But in itself as a source of light, it is immeasurably small.

Sensitive to noise or any other disturbance, the tiny creatures have extinguished their lights in silent protest. The visitors are requested to stand still and be silent. As tranquility is restored, the glowworms begin to light their lamps – at first one by one, but finally by millions – simultaneously. The transformation is astonishing. The stygian blackness is replaced by a miniature firmament reflected in the river below – by a lovely and glowing light in which it is claimed that some people are able to read the newspaper.

There should be no need to labour the point. The individual glowworm can only light one lamp. But that is all it needs. And that is all we need to deal with our own individual areas of darkness. No one can escape the thought that, in a world confused as it is by the clash and clamour of rival ideologies and propaganda, if we could stand still and be silent for just a brief period, we would perhaps see the light that could lead us on to higher levels of peace and progress.

Dramatically and suddenly, the world has been compressed into a neighbourhood – but a neighbourhood in desperate need of wisdom and human warmth, and in equally desperate need of bridges of friendship so that good men can meet and become good neighbours. There is no other way for mankind to survive and move on to higher levels.

We have been taught from infancy that self-preservation is the first law of nature. We know now that collective preservation is the first essential for the survival of mankind and civilisation. We have been taught that love of his own land and loyal service to that land come first in the thinking of any worthwhile man. And that is so and, we believe, will always be so. But the new type of thinking will require us to look beyond national patriotisms and to see ourselves as sharing, in some degree, responsibility for the wellbeing of mankind as a whole. The new type of thinking will also require us too, while respecting each individual's rights to his own personal religious beliefs, to recognise outwardly what we all know inwardly – that the great religions have all grown from the same roots.

If we can agree that one of the world's prime needs is for bridges of friendship, we must also agree that Rotary has a vital role to play,

because building bridges of friendship is literally our business in Rotary.

From the beginning Rotary has been concerned with people, not with politics. Rotary has been concerned with personal relationships between man and man, not between government and government. Rotary has been concerned with the conscience of mankind and the will to peace in the hearts and minds of people, not with the mechanics and politics of peace.

We can each make our choice. We can be part of the problem. Or we can be part of the answer by going to work to vitalize and personalize Rotary – to build bridges of friendship for a more neighbourly world in the spirit of the individual who wrote these few simple words:

"I am only one, but I am one. I cannot do everything, but I can do something. And, by the Grace of God, what I can do I will do."

And so it was no surprise that after three months of concentrated work on plans and program, the keynote of his first official message as President of Rotary International read as follows:

To provide our team with a common objective for this year, and as a step toward adapting our thinking and our activities to a new era in which we are living, I suggest a concerted effort to vitalize and personalize our service in Rotary, to build bridges of friendship for a more neighbourly world.

Dramatically, suddenly, our world has been compressed into a neighbourhood; but a neighbourhood in desperate need of more, and ever more, bridges of friendship, so that good men can meet and become good neighbours. There is no other way for mankind to survive and to move on to higher levels of world-wide peace and progress. And building bridges of friendship is our business in Rotary.

When referring to his presidential year Harold said that it must surely be one of the happiest and most satisfying experiences that can come to any man. It is difficult to imagine any other capacity in which any individual could visit any one of 12,000 communities in over 130 different lands and be assured in advance of acceptance and support by a comprehensive cross-section of the people. Who else would be treated not only as an honoured guest by those representative groups of responsible people, not only as a friend, but as one of themselves? And all of this

irrespective of race, colour, creed or nationality. He went on to say that under such circumstances the picture gained of people as they are in their homes, in their association one with another, in daily life and in their treatment of a visitor from abroad is so utterly contrary to the picture presented in the daily news of the world that it is not easily believed.

During his presidential year the Board of Directors of Rotary International had its full share of important questions to deal with and some major decisions were taken. One such decision resulted in the appointment of the ad-hoc Rotary International Organisation and Procedures Committee (R.I.O.P.C.) to consider all phases of the organisation and procedures reflected in the functioning of Rotary world-wide through individual Rotarians, Rotary clubs, Rotary districts and Rotary International.

Under the widest possible terms of reference the committee was requested to consider ways and means of maintaining and strengthening the effectiveness of Rotary in the world of today as well as providing for its continuing effectiveness in the world of tomorrow.

As President of Rotary International, and also as a member of that committee, Harold prepared an outline of his own understanding of the reasons underlying the appointment of the committee and also of its purpose. The following excerpts from that statement cover the main points:

Ever since I served on the board in 1950-51 and 1951-52 it has been my firm belief that each year we have members leaving the board with a feeling of disappointment and frustration on account of the restrictive circumstances under which they have found themselves to be working as directors. There is a feeling, a conviction in some cases, that the board is so preoccupied with matters of current administration that there is little or no time for exploratory or reflective thinking. In my opinion exploratory and reflective thinking are essential if we are going to keep Rotary on an even keel as we go forward.

It can be argued that planning and reflective work for the benefit of Rotary world-wide is the duty of the board. This is true. But to be realistic we have to face the fact that the board, in the exercise of its varied and widespread responsibilities does not find either the time or the working climate in which to do the kind of thinking I have in mind.

Having said that, it should also be said that there should be no thought in our minds, as there is certainly none in mine, that the Directors of Rotary International should be relieved of any part of their responsibility for the administration of Rotary International. The committee

bility for the administration of Rotary International. The committee which has been appointed will report to the board of directors.

It will not be surprising to me if the committee during the course of its examinations of the fundamental characteristics of Rotary finds itself faced with the need of giving thought to the question of the objective of Rotary as distinct from the object of Rotary. In this same category the classification of membership, regular attendance at club meetings as a requisite for continued membership, and the hundred and one questions which stem from these basic characteristics will all call for consideration.

Basic policy in the administration of Rotary International will be a major consideration. I have always been in favour of keeping Rotary simple. I try to avoid preoccupation with mechanics, with techniques, and machinery. But if we are going to keep Rotary simple, the mechanics, the techniques and the machinery must be designed with that end in view, and an occasional overhaul may be necessary.

It is probably safe to generalise that The Rotary Foundation is looked upon with pride by Rotarians world-wide. But clarification is overdue as to the role of the Foundation in helping to implement the program of Rotary International. Clarification is overdue as to the distinct separate responsibilities of the trustees of The Rotary Foundation on the one hand and the Board of Directors of Rotary International on the other hand.

There are important questions that arise from our experience of the operation of the Foundation and of The Rotary Foundation Fellowship program in particular. Should that type of program be restricted to awards to University graduates? Or should it be widened to include potential future Rotarians who are not necessarily University graduates?

Rotary has been born and developed to its present state during the period in which we have changed from the horse as a major factor in transportation and communication and from the steam engine as a main source of power. What is now proposed is that the R.I.O.P.C. should report to the Board of Rotary International on any changes that appear to be desirable or necessary to ensure the continued well-being and further development of Rotary world-wide. What we are profoundly concerned about is the kind of organisation we should have and the kind of procedure we should have to keep Rotary both simple and effective.

The report of the R.I.O.P.C. is very complete and is referred to later in this biography as Harold was very involved in both its agenda and recommendations. Harold records that there was one item on the agenda for every meeting which took up more of the time of the board than any other, and possibly more than any other combination of items. That was the question of the liability of the Rotary Clubs in G.B.I. (Great Britain and Ireland) to pay per capita dues to Rotary International; and, arising out of that question, the whole field of relationship between Rotary International and the Territorial Unit known as R.I.B.I. (Rotary International in Great Britain and Ireland).

There was every reason to suppose that the matter had been amicably disposed of by the board in 1958-59 under the presidency of Cliff Randall. But it was not to be. Harold's board inherited the problem in 1959-60 in an aggravated form, and, with profound regret, bequeathed it to their successors in 1960-61. Harold's views on this question have already been mentioned and the matter will be referred to later in the R.I.O.P.C. report. However in addition to this participation, Harold served on four committees appointed by Rotary International especially to study and report on this question.

Writing later in 1969, Harold declared that as a result of it all he has stood where he has in principle since 1949. But that he would now add, as his own opinion, that within the provisions of Rotary International's statement of basic policy which says clearly that there is a maximum of flexibility, especially at local level, he firmly believed that in all matters of principle, all Rotary clubs, wherever they may be situated, should have the same rights, the same privileges, the same responsibilities and the same obligations in their relationships with one another and with Rotary International.

Another major development - Interact - also had its genesis in 1959-60. Harold had been impressed with the enthusiasm and sincerity with which First Vice-President Bill Robbins had tried, albeit unsuccessfully, to interest Rotary International in the Wheel Clubs which were operating in Florida. These were service clubs for secondary school boys sponsored and guided by Rotary clubs. Harold had similar thoughts and they took a serious look at the possibility of taking things further. After some research Harold was more than ever convinced that the new era in which they were living called for an entirely new type of thinking if mankind was to survive and move on to higher levels of peace and progress. He believed that Rotarians would agree that this new type of thinking is most likely to come from those young people who are growing towards new responsibilities as citizens of their respective countries. In other words mankind's only hope for the future rests with the young people.

An ad hoc committee was appointed to carry out the necessary research and to make representation to the Board, and after two years of research,

and to make representation to the Board, and after two years of research, study, and discussion the committee developed the blueprint for Interact. The project was approved by a subsequent board of directors and Interact is now a major part of the program of Rotary.

During his year as president Harold convened and presided over two major international gatherings. The first was in Cannes, France in September, 1959, where 2,200 Rotarians and members of their families from 38 countries were in attendance. These figures were dwarfed by the Convention of Rotary International in Miami, Florida, U.S.A., where 12,000 persons from 67 countries attended. One of Harold's most vivid memories of that great occasion in his life is of his wife, May, his eldest son, Hal and daughter, Dorothy sitting in the front row. Unfortunately the other son, Bruce was not able to be present. The presence of his family emphasised the overriding importance of the family as a unit that matters most.

In his annual report to the Convention covering the year 1959-60, George R. Means, the General Secretary of Rotary International, included the following paragraph:-

The President was received by Mayors of cities, Governors of States, Heads of Government, Church dignitaries, all of whom paid high tribute to Rotary. One of the highlights of the year was Harold's visit to President Eisenhower of the U.S.A. in the White House early in July. Two Universities in the U.S.A. honoured President Harold for his contributions in the field of international service - University of Redlands, California, awarding him an Honorary Doctor of Humanities degree and Baylor University in Waco, Texas, granting him its Distinguished World Citizenship Award. The Peigan Indian tribe in Brockett, Alberta, Canada, made him an Honorary Chief with the title 'Chief Eagle Speaker.'

Harold also recorded that another highlight of his year was the tranquility of his association with the staff of the Secretariat of Rotary International, and, in particular, with George Means. He notes that this was a joint effort only made possible by a deep rooted friendship. There were periods of intense activity and heavy responsibilities to be faced up to either in partnership or individually. There were times when deadlines appeared to be impossible of achievement. But he could not recall any one occasion when there was even a ripple on the surface of their mutual understanding.

The travelling schedule of the President was exceptionally demanding. For example, in the first six months of his term, Harold visited President Eisenhower in Washington D.C., then Quebec, Ontario, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Montana, Utah, Colorado, Switzerland, France, Germany,

Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Norway, Iceland, Illinois, Kentucky, Virginia, Tennessee, North Carolina, Florida, Texas, Colorado, Arizona, California, Kansas, Iowa, and Mexico. In the last six months visits were made to a further nine Eastern and Mid-west States in the U.S.A., Jamaica, Colombia, Venezuela, Peru, Ecuador, Brazil, British Guiana, Trinidad, Puerto Rico, and Britain.

Interspersed with all the travel was time spent at the secretariat attending to his many duties, as well as board and committee meetings, and attendance at the international assemblies and conventions.

Over 70,000 miles were travelled by Harold who was accompanied by May, and they were away from their home continuously for 15 months.

When considering the most striking single impression remaining on his mind after so much travel, Harold concluded that:

This was being even more convinced that the most important development of the age in which we are living is not to be found among the tangibles, such as the development of atomic power or man-made global satellites or space ships. The most important development of the age is to be found among the intangibles.

As always, it is the intangibles that matter most. And what matters most to us is the emergence of an entirely new sense of oneness in mankind, an awareness of our mutual responsibilities and mutual interdependence in a world which has so suddenly and so surprisingly been compressed into a neighbourhood.

In the midst of these fundamental changes, Rotary will make a contribution of vital importance provided we are content to play our own role and refrain from trespassing into the preserves of government activities.

From a rare vantage point it has been my privilege during the past several months to observe Rotary at work in these momentous times. We may be sure that Rotary is creating more understanding and mutual trust in human relations and is helping to build an enlightened public opinion that must in the end be the determining factor for success in our united efforts to build bridges of friendship for a more neighbourly, more friendly, and more orderly world.

At this time in Rotary's history the council on legislation was convened just prior to the convention and reported its recommendations to the convention. At the Miami Convention there were 35 proposed Enactments and 8 proposed Resolutions. Enactments related to the compo-

the convention. At the Miami Convention there were 35 proposed Enactments and 8 proposed Resolutions. Enactments related to the composition and functioning of the Council itself. A further 19 were withdrawn - however the more contentious of these were referred back to the board for further study. The remainder were adopted, but all were largely procedural in nature.

It is of interest that Enactments generating the most heat and debate were those that addressed the following: attendance credit for inability to attend for illness; permitting membership to more than one member holding the classification of religion; to provide a more representative distribution on the Board of Directors of R.I.

In his address to the convention Harold again made reference to the major impressions left in his mind as the result of his experiences and observations during his travels and these have already been mentioned. However he also made an observation that proved prophetic and must be mentioned:

Coincidentally, there is now ample evidence of a growing conviction among Rotarians everywhere that we have reached a stage where there is a real need of a specific program adaptable to Rotary world-wide, capable of capturing the imagination of Rotarians, capable of giving our movement a new impetus through a revitalisation of something of the original crusading spirit of Rotary.

My own profound belief is that what is already being done in youth service generally, and in student exchange projects in particular, at the club and district levels points the way for such a program for Rotary world-wide.

Positive steps have already been taken in that direction. It is my hope and my confident belief that when that program is presented to the Rotary Clubs of the world it will have the full and enthusiastic support the objective unquestionably merits.

For those who are interested in statistics the following are included:

Membership as of 15.4.60	492,315	At 30.6.59	480,569
Number of Clubs	10,532		10,253
Number of Districts	267		261

Contributions to The Rotary Foundation were \$442,369 - an increase of \$47,363 over the previous year. The total contributions to the Foundation since its inception totalled \$6,831,355 .

Harold commented that his year in office as President of Rotary International came to an end just as every other year of lesser office had ended. There was profound gratitude to Rotary for having made some use of him, equally profound gratitude to his fellow Rotarians for their unflinching friendship and fellowship and support. Over and above all else there was appreciation of the remarkable performance of "my gentle, loyal and long-suffering wife in keeping step with me throughout that strenuous year of travel with its constant round of official and social activity, and doing it with a suitcase instead of a home from which to operate."

Harold admitted that there were some regrets. As in all other phases of his life these regrets were almost wholly concerned with those things which had not been done, rather than with the things which had been done.

As was customary then, Harold served on the board for the year after his presidency was over. He was the last president to do so.

The Rotary International Organisation and Procedures Committee

It has already been mentioned that the Organisation and Procedures Committee was appointed by the Board of Rotary International at its first meeting in 1959 on the recommendation of President Harold Thomas. The committee of nine members from seven countries under the chairmanship of the immediate past president, Clifford Randall, and with Harold a member of the committee, produced a very comprehensive report and any biography of Harold would be incomplete without reference to this committee. Four meetings were held between September, 1959 and September, 1961. On July 16, 1959, Harold wrote a long letter to the members of the committee sharing with them some of the thinking which caused him to ask the board to authorise the appointment of such a committee. The terms of reference were as follow:-

The committee shall consider all phases of the organisation and procedures reflected in the functioning of Rotary world-wide through individual Rotarians, Rotary clubs, Rotary districts and Rotary International.

With a view to preserving and, if possible, strengthening the fundamental characteristics of Rotary, the committee shall consider ways and means of maintaining and strengthening the effectiveness of Rotary in the world today, as well as providing for its continuing effectiveness in the world of tomorrow. The committee shall exercise wide latitude in giving consideration to the furtherance of the objective of Rotary and of the Rotary clubs as constituting the association of member clubs of Rotary International, to the principles, rules and regulations as resolved over the years and to the procedures and practices which have developed relating thereto; it shall assess and evaluate the present effectiveness thereof and shall make such recommendations as in the judgment of the committee may be necessary and desirable.

The task given to the committee was mammoth, and the report covered 65 pages and a further 160 pages of appendices and exhibits. It is not

intended to discuss this report but it is most interesting to read this again and to be aware of the recommendations made at that time.

Of particular interest are the following recommendations:

3. Classes of Membership. The committee recommends that all the present classes of membership in a Rotary club be eliminated with the exception of the honorary designation; further that provision be made for a member to hold his classification for a maximum period of 25 years, after which he will surrender the classification and continue as a

member of the club provided he complies with the requirements for membership. A member may surrender his classification at the expiration of 15 years.

6. Functioning of the Individual Rotarian. The committee makes, inter alia, specific recommendations relating to better and continuing integration of the new member.

8. District Administration - General Redistricting of All Clubs. The committee recommends the regrouping of clubs into larger districts from 80-100 clubs with provision for assistants to the District Governor.

This was accompanied by a proposed procedure for the administration of clubs by districts under the headings of Basis for Regrouping, Size of District, Responsible Officers, Assistants to District Governor, Training, Expenses and Functioning Under the Plan.

13. Presidents Office. b. That the extent of the travel of the President and his personal appearances before Rotary gatherings be reduced to the extent reasonably possible.

15. Treasurer of Rotary International. The committee recommends that the constitution and by-laws of R.I. be amended to provide for the Treasurer to be elected by the Board rather than by the convention.

21. Rotary International Convention. The committee recommends that the annual convention be held more frequently in parts of the Rotary world other than North America.

23. Rotary Foundation and Rotary Foundation Fellowships. The committee recommends the following actions pertaining to these; a. That the Board redefine the fundamental purpose of The Rotary Foundation Fellowships program to clearly emphasise its

Rotary Foundation Fellowships program to clearly emphasise its objective as the advancement of international understanding and goodwill.

b. That the requirement that to be eligible for a fellowship, an applicant must be a graduate student be eliminated so that fellowships may be awarded not only to graduate students but also to undergraduate students, and to students in technical schools and colleges.

c. That serious consideration be given by the board and the trustees of The Rotary Foundation to a program providing for financial assistance and grants from The Rotary Foundation to clubs and districts undertaking international service projects within the framework of the objectives of The Rotary Foundation.

In its conclusion the report of the R.I.O.P. Committee had this to say:

As Rotary enters this decade, it becomes more and more evident that peace and understanding in the world, the preservation of civilization, the very existence of mankind itself, require the dedicated services of people of good will as well as the judicious exercise of the power of peace-loving nations.

This decade of danger brings into bold relief the destiny of Rotary - a destiny a half century in developing - a destiny which can contribute immeasurably to the welfare of mankind. That destiny stretching clearly before us implies that the social organism which is Rotary must become a stronger force for the advancement of understanding, good will and peaceful relations among people throughout the world.

Few organisations have greater opportunities for attaining such a destiny. Few organisations have a history and a record of evolution that so clearly dictates responsibilities in that direction.

For Harold, the idea of one world, to be brought about through collective and co-operative activity as opposed to the age-old idea of military conquest, had emerged as a question of practical politics during his lifetime, and had been predominant in his thinking in relation to world affairs for most of his mature years. His base had always been the paramount importance of the individual, but he recognised the problem faced by Rotary which in its broad issues is fundamental and universal - the interplay of rights and privileges, and obligations and duties, between the individual and the group or community.

Harold recalls the following well known quotation believing it provides us with a near perfect formula for our activities in Rotary world-wide:

Contining Involvement

The vital need is for us each
To till the soil within our reach,
Some reach an inch and some a mile
But every inch is well worth while,
As man evolves in nature's way,
Just inch by inch and day by day.

(From: The Balanced Man by H.T.Thomas)

Despite being over 70 years of age when the R.I.O.P. report was published Harold was consulted about many things and was able to devote time to writing his memoirs and poems. His autobiography *It's All in a Lifetime* was published in 1968; and *Way Up North* which describes his return visit to the area where he spent his boyhood was published in 1970. In 1974 Harold's *Rotary Mosaic* was published bringing together a wealth of Rotary information, and with the deft touch of an entertaining speaker. It contains information about how Rotary began and why its policy and program evolved as they did.

In 1978 a delightful collection of his poems and reflections was produced in the publication *After All* and this was followed in 1985 by *Thoughts and Afterthoughts*.

The Harold Thomas Rotary Trust

Another very significant event occurred in 1973 – the formation of The Harold Thomas Rotary Trust that Harold set up to commemorate the completion of 50 years as a member of the Rotary Club of Auckland. He donated to the trust a considerable sum of money and the purpose of the trust was:

- a. To assist financially any child resident in any of the Pacific Islands who is in need of medical treatment and/or care in New Zealand and to provide for the fares, board, and other requirements of such child whilst in New Zealand.
- b. To provide medical assistance for children in New Zealand or elsewhere who are in need thereof.
- c. For Charitable purposes as defined in The Charitable Trusts Act of 1957.
- d. For medical research.

The trustees are appointed by the Rotary Club of Auckland, the governor of the district in which the Rotary Club of Auckland is situated, The School of Medicine, and The National Children's Health Research Foundation. The trustees have the authority to appoint one or more Advisory Trustees. Being the recipient of the funds raised by an early telethon further increased the ability of the trust to give assistance, as did a large donation some years later from another generous benefactor – Past District Governor Bernard Ross.

The writer was the appointee of the National Children's Health Research Foundation for more than 20 years and can testify to the wonderful work done by the Trust and which it continues to do. Many children have reason to be eternally grateful to the founder for his compassion and foresight.

It should also be mentioned that the Rotary Club of Auckland in 1984 elected Harold to "Honorary President" of the club – an honour never before or since granted to anyone else.

The Twilight Years

At ninety plus it must be told
 I sometimes think I'm growing old
 My stick and glasses both agree
 And sometimes have sly fun with me
 More certainly as each day passes
 I need my stick to find my glasses
 But therein lurks their impish trick
 Sans glasses I can't find my stick.

(From: Dilemma by H.T.Thomas)

It was the writer's privilege to be invited to be Harold's medical advisor on the retirement of another Rotarian doctor who had tended to his infrequent medical needs for many years. Regular visits to Harold's home were always a stimulating and memorable experience.

Medical matters never seemed to take up much time – he had few complaints and these mainly were the price to be paid for advancing years. Harold was resigned to these discomforts and was averse to taking anything, so I soon realised that most medication that I might prescribe would not be taken in any case.

The longevity of the Thomas family was remarkable and it was Harold's aim to live longer than all the others. That goal was 96 years set by his father and I recall the great satisfaction he had when this milestone was passed. He was able to continue living in his own home for three years after May died in 1986. He had a house that lent itself to accommodate a live-in nurse which proved to be a very satisfactory arrangement. For those three years he was able to enjoy familiar surroundings and memorabilia. As well, visits from his family and descendants were interspersed by visits from many friends and overseas Rotary dignitaries who never missed the opportunity to pay their respects.

I frequently was overseas on Rotary business and was repeatedly asked about Harold and requested to take good wishes and kind regards back to him from so many who knew him personally. This was a joy to do and he was always able to tell me about the person concerned, how and where he met the enquirer, and his memory for people and events was remarkable. When

I returned from a Rotary assignment and visited Harold the time spent on medical matters was soon over, and the ensuing Rotary conversation would occupy considerably more time. He would enquire what was happening, what did this or that person think about things, and when I reported that a particular idea was being considered, I was often reminded that such a proposal had already been considered many years before.

In 1989 I was asked to interview Harold and record on tape his views on how Rotary had changed during his lifetime, and about some of the significant events he had experienced. Despite the fact that he was then in his 99th year, he was quite capable of answering very fully and clearly. This section of the biography is reported in the question and answer format of the interview.

O'Connell: Good morning Harold. How are you this morning?

Thomas: I'm fine – except for my ingrowing toenail!

O'Connell: Can you recall your introduction to Rotary?

Thomas: I was invited to join by A.J. Hutchinson – we used to call him "Hutch" – and he was the first manager of The Burrough's Adding Machine Company, which, I understand, is prominent in the computer world now.

O'Connell: Can you remember the membership of the Auckland Club at that time?

Thomas: Round about 40 to 50 I would say.

O'Connell: Can you recall any particular event or reason that transformed you from a member of a Rotary club into a Rotarian?

Thomas: No. In my case it was a gradual development. If I was asked to name one individual it would be Angus Mitchell from Melbourne who happened to be in Auckland on his way back from an International Assembly. He influenced me more than anyone else. I was tremendously impressed by the fact that Angus was practically giving up his business so that he would have time for Rotary. I would say that my address at the time I was installed as President in Madison Square Garden in New York explains my outlook on Rotary.

O'Connell: Of all the projects that you have seen over the years, what would be the one that you would put at the head of the list?

Thomas: I have always been interested in the international scope of Rotary, and I have always felt that that is where Rotary could make its most valu-

able contribution to the evolution of mankind.

O'Connell: Angus Mitchell's theory was that the Rotarian doing his work in his own vocation and in his own club and community was perhaps the most important. Are you saying that perhaps the internationality of Rotary — Rotary doing world community service and The Rotary Foundation — is perhaps more important than the Rotarian in his own environment?

Thomas: Well I have always been more interested that way, and I feel that the international aspects of Rotary are by far the most important. I believe that the fourth Avenue of Service is the most important. I would hope that Rotary would be remembered for its contribution to world understanding, good will and peace.

O'Connell: Do you feel that corporate projects have an important place in the Rotary world?

Thomas: For instance, the PolioPlus program I feel is an outstanding example of the fourth Avenue of Service.

O'Connell: What was your most memorable experience when you were President?

Thomas: Presiding at the international assembly at Lake Placid. It was more intimate than would be possible at a convention. I was very interested in the fact that people from 70 odd countries could come together in a spirit of the development of understanding, good will and peace. That was obvious in their attitude. They would have the international barriers to overcome during the first two or three days.

O'Connell: What do you think has been the most important factor in achieving the growth that Rotary has experienced?

Thomas: At the risk of being self contradictory, I would say the development of the friendly attitude among the members of a Rotary club. In my early experience my employer would not even recognise his competitor on the street. I think the development of the present day friendly attitude is largely due to Rotary.

O'Connell: During your term of office what was your main emphasis?

Thomas: Building bridges of friendship.

Thomas: Building bridges of friendship.

O'Connell: What prompted you to set up the R.I.O.P. committee?

Thomas: Well, there was a need for it.

O'Connell: Was this because it was just the time for a review, or was there some pressing need that you felt had to be addressed at the time?

Thomas: We had trouble with one of the North African States. The government of that State demanded and passed legislation to compel Rotary clubs to have their officers approved by the government. We decided, after a good deal of debate, to call in the charters of the clubs that would have been making the returns to the government, and that was a considerable worry and a very important issue at that time.

O'Connell: What do you feel has been the most important change that has happened in Rotary since the 1920's? Would it be the admission of women or perhaps the great increase in the visibility of Rotary?

Thomas: Well, I sometimes think the original thinking that brought Rotary into being has been achieved in the friendly attitudes of people of any one vocation.

O'Connell: What do you think about the admission of women into Rotary?

Thomas: Well — (chuckling) — I see the smile on your face when you ask the question. I think it's regrettable that the question should have arisen. However, we have to be a law abiding organisation, and in order to be this, we have to realise the situation.

O'Connell: We have to remember that so many of the top positions in the professions and business are now held by women.

Thomas: At the same time, recognising that fact, it seems to me to be quite a natural development in any family or community. There are times when the men want to be together, and there are times when the women want to be together. We see that in family life.

O'Connell: Finally Harold, do you think Rotary is doing enough to promote world peace? Should we be doing more?

Thomas: As you reminded me earlier, any organisation can always do more. As time progressed it became apparent to Harold that alternative

arrangements for his ongoing care would necessitate a move. On his own volition he went to live in a retirement complex where he remained for more than a year. Having the misfortune to fracture his hip brought about his transfer to hospital for treatment, but he was able to return to some degree of independence after recovering from that accident.

On July 22, 1991 Harold celebrated his 100th birthday. It was a most wonderful milestone which he was delighted to reach. The occasion was recorded in Rotary Down Under in the July edition, and PDG Bert Dreaver, who was the New Zealand features editor, wrote a comprehensive article to commemorate the occasion.

Vale

If life is just a longer day
Which in its turn must fade away
As other days have come to rest
In welcome sleep forever blest
So it will be when fading light
Foreshadows a much longer night
A longer night of slumber deep
The perfect rest, unbroken sleep.

(The Perfect Sleep by H.T.Thomas)

The remaining 13 months of his long life were progressively more difficult for Harold. His 69 years of Rotary service finally ended on August 5, 1992 when he was in his 102nd year. He was farewelled from the Somerville Presbyterian Church by his family and friends, and among those who paid their respects were many past and present district governors and members of the Rotary club of Auckland. RI Past President Sir Clem Renouf made a special trip from Australia just to say farewell to his longtime close friend.

So many will have reason to thank Harold for a diversity of reasons – it will depend on when and how you knew him. Perhaps for his contribution through the Rotary Club of Auckland, as District Governor, as R.I. Board member, or as President of Rotary International. He was the only New Zealander to serve as President and at the international level we have to thank him for initiating some significant changes and putting forward new ideas, many of which have shaped the future development of Rotary and are still influencing current thought today.

Add to that list all the children who have benefited from the Trust he set up, and who have been able to receive medical attention that otherwise would have not been available. Let us not overlook his books and poems – chronicles of his life and the evolution of Rotary, and thought-provoking poems.

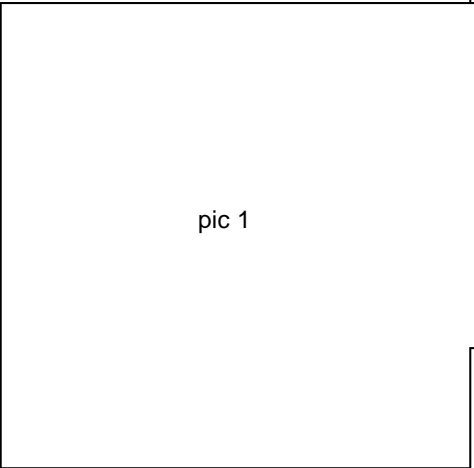
However, posterity will no doubt remember Harold Tahana Thomas for his one outstanding attribute – his simple love of Rotary and his dedica-

HAROLD TAHANA THOMAS

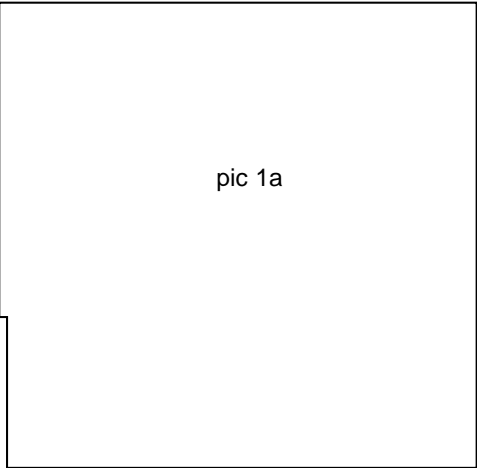
tion to his theme: Build Bridges of Friendship. Perhaps the best way to thank him for being such an inspiration and a special Rotarian in so many ways, would be to continue to Build Bridges of Friendship.

After all is said and done
After all the wisdom won
After all we've learned from sages
Saints and scholars down the ages
What matters most is just to know
That we must reap whate'er we sow
That man himself has given birth
To all that's hell on Mother Earth
While Heaven is here by God's own grace
To make this world his garden place
How fortunate the one who knows
He walks with God where'er he goes
And sees a heaven in every rose.

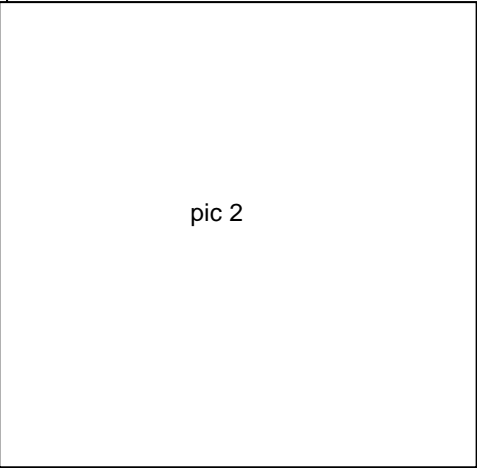
(What Matters Most by H.T.Thomas 1985)



Harold (centre right) with his New Zealand and Australian incoming District Governors at the International Assembly, Lake Placid, New York, U.S.A



The official photograph of Harold Thomas – The Rotarian, July, 1959.



Harold and May Thomas during the first official visit during their presidential year – to Montreal, Canada.

pic 3

Rotary International President Carl P. Miller, Ruth Miller and Harold Thomas enjoy the Seat of Friendship in Auckland Domain. Carl had just planted a tree in Rotary Grove, beginning the practice adopted by a long line of Rotary International Presidents.

pic 4

Harold and May enjoy a dinner party with Rotarians and their ladies in Nagasaki, Japan, following the 1961 Rotary International Convention in Tokyo, Japan.

pic 5

A full scale Boy Scout Guard of Honour for Harold and May at Rio de Janeiro Airport, Brazil, in 1960.

pic 6

Signing the Golden Book in the Mayor's office, City Hall, Montreal, Canada.

pic 7

Harold and May enjoy the 50th anniversary of the Rotary Club of St Louis, Missouri, U.S.A. — after a full day of difficult travelling in near blizzard conditions.

PIC 8

May Thomas is pictured with ladies of the Rotary Club of De Fortaleza, Brazil, in 1960.

pic 9

Harold Thomas is presented with a local Rotary pin by one of the Olivera daughters, representing the Rotary Club of De Fortaleza.

pic 10

Harold and May and a big Rotary wheel at Copenhagen, Denmark.

pic 11

President meets President – President of the U.S.A. Dwight D. Eisenhower receives R.I. President Harold Thomas in the White House, Washington

pic 12

A prolific author, Harold presents a copy of his book Rotary Mosaic to his friend District Governor Bob Yarnon of New Zealand (later to become an

pic 13

Harold Thomas with Clem Renouf during the Australian's presidential year in 1978/79.

PIC 14

Harold, May and family . . .



pic 15

The Rotary International Board of Directors
1959/60, featuring Harold Thomas as President in
the centre.



pic 16

The official Harold Thomas front cover to
The Rotarian, July, 1959.