



# the SPLINTER

CLUB 470 \* DISTRICT 5160 \* ORGANIZED APRIL 29, 1926

[www.rotary5160.org](http://www.rotary5160.org)

MEETING DATE: January 26, 2016

[www.woodlandrotary.org](http://www.woodlandrotary.org)



**Today's Meeting** President Kris Kristensen called the meeting to order. Peter Holmes led us in the Pledge of Allegiance, and Jim McGibbon led the Rotary Grace so enthusiastically we almost sounded harmonious.

**Visiting Rotarians/Guests** / John Martin of the Woodland Sunrise Rotary Club was visiting. Todd Tommaraason was present for his final time as a guest.

**Announcements** Todd Tommaraason was installed as a (rejoining) Rotary member. Mark Ullrich, his sponsor, said that besides being a family member, Todd is a great guy. Todd is a lifelong resident of Woodland. He's married to Aubrey, and they have a son and twin daughters. Todd joined Laugenour and Meikle in 1994 as a civil engineer, and is now a principal of the firm. Todd promised that, "This time I will improve my attendance, which will not be too hard."



Carl Diekman brought back a club banner and greetings from the Rotary club he visited during his 14 days working on the Rotary project in Nicaragua. The club sponsors a project where former sex workers produce items such as the beautiful club banner to support themselves. Carl said it was striking to go into the town, and see virtually everyone on horses or on foot.

Gary Wegener reported that the tickets for the dinner/auction were available in the back of the room. He reminded everyone who had not yet paid that they need to do so. He also said that the tickets for the raffle of the vacation at Hawaiian Plantation are available. It was reported that the Kohlmeiers and another couple are hosting and wine-tasting day, including lunch and dinner, with a limo ride so there are no worried about driving home after enjoying wine. A stay in the McNary cabin is also being made available as an auction item, as well as other dinners. Dan and Gary are offering a motorcycle ride.

Mark Ullrich said that sponsorships are doing well, and one new sponsor has been added.

The 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary dinner is now tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, April 26, hopefully at the Gibson House. The dinner will replace that day's noon meeting.

On March 19, there will be a Rotary work day packing food for Easter food baskets at the Yolo Food Bank from 9-12. Davis and Winters Rotary clubs will join the Woodland clubs; it's a big job. Last year so many volunteers came that the work was finished early. Let's do that again this year.

Dan reported that he's still working on a hands-on project. The Welfare Department needs a playground where the children can play while spending time with parents who don't currently have custody. This is part of the Welfare Department's efforts to help families reconcile. This would possibly be a 2-year program.



***Birthdays and Anniversaries*** No birthdays or anniversaries were recognized.



### ***Recognition***

Gary Bunch did Meals on Wheels before coming to Rotary.

Becky Martin was recognized for being named Realtor of the Year for 2015 in Yolo County. Congratulations, Becky!

John Leckey reported on last weeks' Rotary Mixer. He said it turned out NOT to be on the third floor, so he spent part of the time directing people to the proper location. Around 15 people came. If anyone has pictures, let us know.

Dan gave a shout-out to Kevin Vaziri of Woodland Healthcare for helping him with an issue with his medical plan. He said Kevin listened and made changes within two weeks.

Gary Wegener said he missed the event at Mojo's to go snowboarding and skiing. He was thankful he made it off the mountain safely.

Jim McGibbon was happy to be in California while all 18 of his grandchildren were snowed in on the East Coast.

George was asked how duck season was. He said it's been better. The water situation has a lot to do with how many waterfowl stop in the area.

Frank was also asked about duck season. He said he got terrible bronchitis and lost January. He's going to close the season with a big dinner.

Members were quizzed about "this date in history":

Jeff Barry was asked what country was discovered on this date in 1506 (answer: Brazil).

Don Huff was asked what famous general was born on this date. (MacArthur)

Bob Muller was asked what famous actor, known for his salad dressing, was born on this date. Bob didn't know, even after being told the actor also drives race cars. (Paul Newman)

Dave Flory was asked which state was admitted on this date in 1837, and said "Now you know why I don't come". (Michigan)

Clyde Brooker was asked which state left the Union on this date in 1861. He was close in guessing Mississippi (which seceded early in January), but the answer was Louisiana.



### *Rags to Riches*

John Martin of the Sunrise Rotary Club won a free lunch, so we look forward to his visiting again.

### *Today's Program*

Daniel T. O'Brien of the Bentprop Program spoke to the club today about what the organization does. Mr. O'Brien was born and raised in Buffalo, New York, but has lived in California for thirty-seven years and in Woodland for twenty-seven.



O'Brien has been known to jump out of perfectly good airplanes and fly some not so perfect ones. He has accumulated just under 1,000 hours of fixed wing flight time and just over 10,000 exits from all types of aircraft. Or to put it in perspective, he has spent a full week in freefall, that's 168 hours, falling gracefully. In 2006 he was a member of the World Record of 400 skydivers (from 30 countries) in a freefall formation, set in Thailand, jumping out of 5(five) C-130 aircraft flying in formation at 24,000 feet. He has worked in the film industry as a stuntman, some films you may have heard about; James Bond, Spider-Man, Minority Report, Mr.Deeds, The Hulk, Aeon Flux, Planet of the Apes..... and some not so notable ones too.

His recent accomplishment is co-producing and co- directing a documentary film, and being a team member for fifteen years with the Bentprop program.

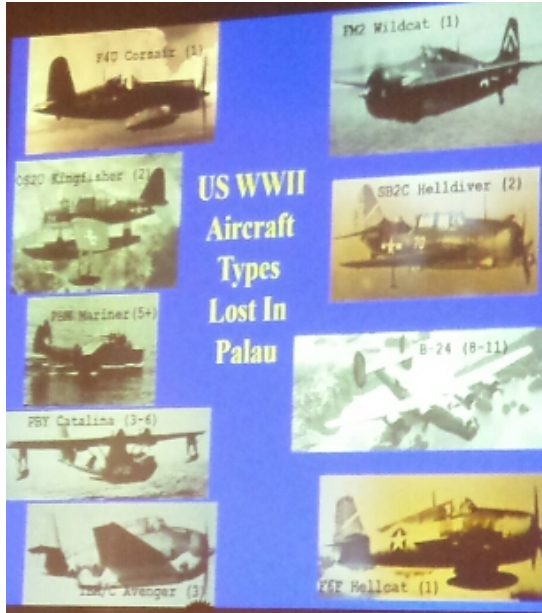
BentProp is a team of volunteers, trained specialists, and professionals, each with essential expertise (history, aviation, diving, navigation), who are dedicated to locating and assisting with identifying American prisoners of war (POW) and missing in action (MIA) from World War II and other conflicts around the world. This effort is done through research, searches, recoveries, and other methodologies while coordinating with appropriate national authorities.

Bentprop has been working for the last twenty-one years, with a primary focus in the area of Palau in the Pacific. The founder of the organization was inspired when he came across downed planes while scuba diving. A Rotary member asked whether Bentprop or other organizations did the same work in other geographic areas. O'Brien said there were a couple of others, but they're the main one searching in the Pacific. He said that in Europe the Europeans work hard to find missing planes and their crews.

In 1944, over two hundred U.S. aircraft were shot down in the area around Palau. Around seventy of them are thought to have been crewed by military who are listed as missing in action. Palau is made up of around four hundred islands, some as small as a room. Japan had 35,000 troops there at the time. Huge battles took place there to weaken the Japanese forces in order to protect MacArthur's flanks. It took three carrier strikes to take out the Japanese fighter base.

Bentprop volunteers spend around one month a year in the area, looking for MIA's and the sites of possible execution of U.S. prisoners of war. For example, one plane was found with eight servicemen still

on board. Three other crew members were known to have ejected and been captured – but later executed by the Japanese. Volunteers are searching for the site of that execution, which was likely also the site where eight Jesuit priests were executed. Besides those service members, three members of UDT10, the precursor of today's Navy Seals, were known to have been captured, brought to Palau, and then disappeared.



O'Brien showed a photograph of a TBM Avenger 110 feet deep in the ocean. Even in an enhanced photograph, the plane was barely visible. Once in a while, a nearly intact plane is found. In most cases, only bits and pieces, like a wheel casing, propeller, or other part of the plane is left after the plane crashed into water or land at 300 mph. O'Brien said the easy sites were found right after World War II.

In the ocean, marine life and salt water take a toll on anything made of iron. Coral grows, and fish begin to inhabit what was once an airplane. Only the aluminum survives well. The search is difficult. It's "boots on the ground, fins in the water." A Rotary member asked whether metal detectors helped. O'Brien showed the densely-packed mangrove roots they had to walk through, and said "You try carrying a metal detector through that." In the jungle, six-foot geckos climb the trees.

They're harmless, but O'Brien said they give you quite a scare. In the water, sharks abound. Visibility is very limited. NASA has done fly-overs with LIDAR with no results.

The volunteers get information from military archives, and have recently been going to a lot of military reunions, getting information from the veterans. Some stories are amazing. One pilot ditched. He was picked up by a rescue boat, had a few beers, and was back to flying the next day. One of the most valuable resources is the elders in Palau. They hunt and fish, and use the pieces of downed airplanes as markers to guide them back to favorite hunting and fishing sites. A local historian who has "adopted" the Bentprop volunteers translates.

One Rotary member asked whether they ever come across explosives. O'Brien said it was very common, especially on the fighter planes. There's sometimes still fuel in the fuel tanks, but also bombs and unexploded 50-caliber shells. He said they have a saying, "If you know what it is, don't touch it, and if you don't know what it is, don't touch it."

Bentprop got some welcome publicity a year ago, when 60 Minutes did a piece on them. They've also received some technical help in the last few years. A local Michigan high school had a contest to build an underwater ROV (remote-operated vehicle). He said the ROV was a "Home Depot special" built very well on a limited budget. For the last three years, eight students have come from the high school during spring break to operate the ROV.

The other big change was the REMUS, an autonomous under-water vehicle. It has sonar and GPS, and allows them to map the ocean floor much more quickly, looking for small man-made objects. He said the ½-¾ million dollar piece of equipment comes with technicians, and can map a 1-mile-square area in 150 feet of water.

When divers go down now, they have hand-held sonar, so they locate things in the limited visibility.

When the volunteers receive confirmation that they have found an MIA, there is a brief ceremony. They fly U.S. and Palauan flags, then keep the flags to give to the families when the remains are delivered later by the military.

Bentprop volunteers pay all their own expenses to travel to Palau and spend weeks at a time searching. A Rotary member asked whether Bentprop solicits volunteers for the field work. O'Brien said that they're very picky, since they're going to spend a long time working together. He said volunteers also need to bring skills to the table.

For more information on the Bentprop program, <http://www.bentprop.org/>

### **Upcoming Programs**

Next week's speaker with Tony Delevati on Rotary Club and Rotary Endowment finances.

The following week Mary Kimble of the Center for Land-based Learning will talk about how they're raising the next generation of farmers.