

Slide #1: Stay in Formation

We took a little trip in May, and I've been invited to tell you about it. I'll start at the beginning.

Slide #2: Logos

Every one of these logos will come into play. Try to spot them as the slide show continues.

Slide #3: Ground Transportation

For our departure, we could not arrange for a workable flight out of Santa Rosa, so we had to depart from SFO. Rather than pay for weeks of Airport parking, we took SMART to Larkspur, and then Golden Gate Ferry to San Francisco. We stayed overnight, and then took BART directly to SFO.

Slide #4: SFO-JFK

Then we hopped on a jet for the first leg of our journey, to New York.

Slide #5: TWA Hotel Exterior

At JFK, they have repurposed an iconic terminal, designed by the legendary architect Eero Saarinen, into a retro hotel.

Slide #6: Sunken Pit

Inside the TWA Hotel, it's always 1962.

Slide #7: Connie

They converted an old Lockheed Constellation into "Connie," a cocktail lounge.

Slide #8: JFK-LHR, Hedgerows

The next morning, we were off to London, where we had a 23 hour layover for our connection. It's immediately obvious that we are over the UK, with all the hedgerows.

Slide #9: LHR-DEL

Finally, we caught the flight to our true destination, India.

Slide #10: Actual Flight Path

The actual flight path is interesting. They zigged and zagged a bit, to avoid flying over Ukraine, Russia, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.

Slide #11: Himalayas

As a result, we flew directly over the Himalayas.

Slide #12: Hands

Arriving in Delhi, to transfer to a local flight, there was mass confusion. Kind of like these hands. I have no idea what they are trying to do. We made our connecting flight with only moments to spare.

Slide #13: Greeting

We were greeted at the airport by our hosts. When we arrived at our hotel, we were serenaded by a small combo. That led to MeL spontaneously dancing with our host. I was unable to get the video to work, so, unfortunately, we have to skip that slide. Trust me, it would have been very entertaining.

Slide #14: RMB Logo and Dance (skip dance)

So why were we in India? You may remember a little thing that Jock McNeill brought to our club back in 2009 - - Rotary Means Business. Many of you know I shepherded RMB thru the Rotary International bureaucracy to eventually be approved as an official Rotary Fellowship.

While RMB is relatively low-key here in the USA, it has exploded as a phenomenon in India. We have about 25 or 30 active RMB chapters in the USA, with maybe a few hundred individual members. They are up to more than 70 chapters in India, and will likely hit 100 chapters within the year.

And India has more than 1,000 Lifetime members of Rotary Means Business.

There is much cooperation, and a bit of competition among RMB chapters in India. Periodically, they schedule regional meetings that include multiple chapters.

Slide #15: Conclave

This year, for the first time, they held a national Conclave, hosted by the Jaipur chapter, but including more than a dozen chapters, from all over the country, North, South, East, and West.

As the founder of the Rotary Means Business Fellowship, I was the Guest of Honor at the Conclave.

Slide #16: Conclave Images

These are some images from the Conclave:

- Candle lighting ceremony to bestow blessings on the gathering
- Many gifts and awards were presented
- Heavy negotiations to host next year's Conclave

Slide #17: Conclave Social Event

I want to talk about the culture of India. Having never been to any international locations except Mexico, Canada, and western Europe, we had no idea what to expect in a place that seemed so exotic. What we found was that Indians treat guests like family. We were immediately welcomed into their lives, their homes, and their families. These traditional clothes and Sari were gifts. We were not allowed to pay them back.

Slide #17: 953 Windows

In downtown, we met some RMBians, as they call themselves. We visited the famous Pink City. This is the building of 953 windows.

Slide #18: Views around Jaipur

Throughout our visit, we were given private tours and we were loaded with gifts, none of which I can show you, as I had to ship them back, and they have not arrived. Do you see the decoration around the door in the right had photo? What are they?

Slide #19: Peacocks

Peacocks!

Slide #20: Trash

If there was any downside to India, it was the trash. Everywhere you looked, there was trash that had not been picked up. It was sad, but it certainly did not ruin our wonderful experience.

Slide #21: JAI - CCU

After the Conclave, we jetted off to Kolkata, formerly Calcutta, for more meetings, and the same welcoming open arms.

Slide #22: Meeting flier

There, we again were the guest of honor at a regional meeting, which also featured the Consul General of the American Consulate in Kolkata

Slide #23: Johnny Walker

We were hosted at a member's private club, which featured this psychedelic statue of Johnny Walker.

Slide #24: CCu-SIN-MEL

After a week of non-stop activity and camaraderie, our journey was not over. Next, it was off to Melbourne, Australia, via Singapore.

Slide #25: Church

Slide #26: Skyscrapers

Melbourne is a very interesting city. In some ways very modern, but they pay attention to preserving the past. It was interesting how our hotel was built in an arc, in order to preserve that older building at the corner.

Slide #27: Logos of Both Fellowships

As the outgoing Chair of Rotary Means Business, and the incoming Chair of the Home Exchange Fellowship, I was responsible for two booths in the House of Friendship.

Slide #28: RMB Leaders

We had a really good team at the RMB booth, including the current Chair, Sachin Gururaj, the current Secretary, Rajamohan Dhandapani, and the Director representing Australia, Jon Bilson. We gained about 30 members and, more importantly, another 15 chapters.

Slide #29: Home Exchange Fellowship Logo

Let me tell you about the Home Exchange Fellowship. I've been a member since my first exchange, back in 2000, when we traded our beach house for a condo in the French Quarter of New Orleans, right before Mardi Gras. In the past 20+ years, MeL and I have made more than 40 exchanges.

When I first joined the Home Exchange Fellowship, they annually sent out this catalog. All exchanges were arranged by snail mail and telephone. You can imagine how long that took! In 2005, they got with the program, and partnered with a website, HomeExchange.com. That relationship was great, and really helped the Home Exchange Fellowship grow for a while. Eventually, the website was sold to a large French company, and the Rotary Fellowship was booted off.

The leadership then partnered with a very ineffective website, and the Fellowship suffered. At one point, we had fewer than a dozen members. Somehow, I had been nominated to the Board, (I have no recollection how that happened) and we began discussing the proper procedure to shut down the Fellowship. Those of you who know me well know that I don't easily accept defeat.

I had found a new, upstart home exchange website called People Like Us. It started out so small that you could directly interact with the owner. It took a little work, but eventually I convinced him that it would be beneficial for him to partner with our little Rotary Fellowship.

Slide #30: Home Exchange Crowd

Back to the Rotary Convention. Since I was to be responsible for two booths, Rotary Means Business and Home Exchange, I requested that the booths be located next to each other. While the RMB booth had steady visitors, the Home Exchange booth was constantly mobbed. It generated more buzz than almost any other booth in the House of Friendship. By the end of the Convention, the Home Exchange Fellowship had increased from 6 members to more than 40 members, and another 200 had signed up for more information.

It was very exciting to have helped revive a dying Fellowship. And now the real work begins, to make the Home Exchange Fellowship thrive.

Slide #31: Booze Fellowships

You can't say the House of Friendship organizers didn't have a sense of humor. They put all the alcohol-related Fellowships in a row. I'm not sure if you can read them but the Fellowships are dedicated to Wine, Beer, Gin, and Whiskey.

Slide #32: MEL-SYD-LAX-STS

Our final day of travel was last Thursday. Thirteen hours from Sydney to LA, most of the time seat-belted in due to turbulence. Then a 12 hour layover, and finally back home to Santa Rosa.

Slide #33: Around the World

Yes, we had flown around the world, 25,095 miles courtesy of Rotary. A whirlwind three weeks, making new friends, learning new cultures, and reviving a Fellowship. I think I need a vacation from my vacation.