

Carl-Wilhelm Stenhammar
RI president-elect
Keynote address

Ladies and gentlemen,

In the year of 1638, the Swedes sailed up the Delaware in the United States. They bought some land, and they settled down in a community called New Sweden. Their happiness was a short one because 17 years later, the Dutch kicked the Swedes out. But during that short period of time, the Swedes left a lot of landmarks in Delaware. I've been walking in the cemeteries in Delaware, and on the gravestones you'll find many typical Swedish names, and that's from those days. Also the state flag of Delaware, amongst the many colors in that flag are blue and yellow, which are the Swedish colors — and also the Rotary colors.

When I was nominated president by the nominating committee, I got an e-mail from a Rotarian in Delaware. He referred to this historical background, and he suggested to me that the official Rotary jacket in 2005-06 ought to be a blue-and-yellow striped jacket. I have never heard from him since. And can you think of 529 district governors traveling around as Rotary clowns?

Well, I didn't think that was too good an idea, but I could not get away from the thought as such. Maybe I could do something with the two colors. Maybe I could have [a jacket with] a yellow front and a blue back. Or I could have a blue jacket with yellow arms. But then I came to think of doing something that no other president has done. How about a reversible jacket? And what is a reversible jacket? Well, if you're formal like I am here, then you have this nice, blue jacket on (*indicating his own*). If you want to be less formal — a picnic or a barbecue or something — yet you want to wear a jacket, all you do is unbutton it and reverse it!

(Stenhammar quickly unbuttoned and removed his jacket, turned it inside out to reveal a yellow reverse side, and then put on the "new" yellow jacket, all to the audience's laughter and applause.)

There we are. A very smart reversible jacket. Now, I did not have the courage to make this the official jacket of the year. But (*again taking off the jacket*) when I'm now taking it off, it's the last time I will ever use it. And I'll tell you, it is unique, it is handsome, it's one-of-a-kind — an exclusive and complete fake. It doesn't have any pockets, just flaps. But the good thing about it is that I have had a bid for US\$2,000 for this jacket. And I don't think that is good enough. [*laughter*] So this jacket will be put on my Web site for a silent auction, and the money will go to The Rotary Foundation.

It's a privilege to be able to serve as president in the first year of the second 100 years of Rotary. I have, during the last year, been working very closely with President Glenn, and I can assure you all that a nicer man to work with does not exist. I don't know where you're sitting, President Glenn, but I'm sure that you don't have any enemies on this globe. And if I'm wrong on that, please name them and I shall straighten them out for you.

I would like to see our first year of the second 100 years be the year of the women. The world consists of 52 percent women and 48 percent men, and we are less than 15 percent women in Rotary. We have to do something about that. We will eventually get there — it may take another 100 years — but I'm not going to wait that long. So what can I do? I can do very little, but what

I've done is this: I have appointed as the chair for the Membership Development and Retention Committee, Alana Bergh. And I have appointed Mary Fleming from California to lead our Public Image Resource Group. I have appointed Eileen Gentilcore to take care of our literacy and education [Literacy Resource Group]. And I have appointed, which you heard two days ago, the first female trustee of The Rotary Foundation, Carolyn E. Jones. I know that there is disproportion in my appointments compared to the ratio between men and women, but I'm doing this [to send] a signal to all the women who are members already — and also to those who are not members already — that there is a place in the leadership for you in Rotary International. And as a businessman, I see this as a short-term investment for a long-term profit.

We have an extension committee [Extension of Rotary Committee] that has several subcommittees. The South Asia area is a subcommittee. We have subcommittees for various ideas in new areas. We have one for China, and we have one for Cuba. And I have a feeling sometimes about things, and right now I have a feeling that it might be the correct time to seriously consider bringing back to the Rotary family China and Cuba. This is not going to be easy, but we are going to give it a good try. We've had the Cuba committee already meeting here in Evanston, just outside of Chicago, and we have had the China committee meeting in Beijing, just in the beginning of this month, and their report will go to the Board, *your* Board, which you have elected to work for you in the best interest of you and this organization. We are meeting tomorrow, and hopefully we shall take a first step — we will not make it [the whole way] tomorrow, but we will take a first step — toward bringing Cuba and China back. And wouldn't it be wonderful if in Malmö-Copenhagen next year, the two new flags in our family would be those of China and Cuba?

Youth has always been close to my heart and particularly Youth Exchange. I honestly believe and I have a dream that every single youth at the age of 17 should become an exchange student, because these 17-year-olds come to a new country, experience a new language very often, a new culture, a new religion, a new currency — *everything* is new to them — but they find out very, very quickly that their counterparts in this country want nothing else but what they want themselves: to make the best out of life. And I believe that youngsters who've been youth exchanges will not shoot at one another. And that if we can make every single 17-year-old youth an exchange student, we will have no wars.

I believe in continuity and cooperation. All the issues that we are working with — polio, hunger, health, literacy, and whatever it is — are so immense, they are so huge, that we cannot do that by ourselves; we have to ally with others. Now, there are some leaders who feel that we shouldn't go into cooperation too much because we risk to lose our identity. That is not true. And we have already proven it, because for 20 years we've been working together with the United Nations, through WHO and UNICEF, and in doing that with PolioPlus I can guarantee you that we have not lost our identity. [*applause*] One of the highlights during my Rotary years was a press conference in Geneva, Switzerland, some years back, and we were three on the podium — I was representing The Rotary Foundation, and there were Carol Bellamy, then the CEO of UNICEF, and Gro Harlem Brundtland, then the CEO of WHO [World Health Organization] — and in front of us was the world press. These are two very strong and capable women, and listening to them giving credit to Rotary in front of the world press was an experience second to none. We *gained* in our attitude. This was not a loss. This was a good moment for Rotary, and I think that we should continue to work toward cooperation with others, and this is the way for us to go.

As I said, we can't do this all by ourselves, but let us work with others. And I urge you because I can't do everything by myself next year, so I urge you all to join me. Let us together in 2005-06,

through *Service Above Self*, continue to show the world the great leadership of Rotary International. Thank you very much.