



LODI ROTARY

STRIPPINGS

SEPTEMBER 29, 2005



SERVICE Above Self

ROTARY YEAR
2005-2006

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**STRIPPINGS EDITOR
BOB BADER**

An informal survey has revealed a lot of interesting opinions regarding the future of the Lodi Rotary Club. What we have is the fear the club is on the wane to the degree it may never reach its former stature and influence. The two most pressing problems are also the two most obvious: Absenteeism and the utter lack of interest in recruitment goals.

As I see it, the main problem causing those two is ennui.

Hot on the heels of that issue is the fact we seem to be lacking focus and a reason for being. Among other things, a project to make Our Fair City a better place has not been chosen (as far as I know) so there is no sense of purpose. Paul has a truly sustainable complaint in that he has to practically juggle his books to pay the District and International dues with monies that continually dwindle because the fixed weekly expenses are not met by the fixed weekly lunch income, which means the club has to subsidize itself.

Jerry Evans counted the attendees last week when the Babe from Bosnia was here and it was approximately 30% of the membership.

We are presently experiencing the lowest attendance in the past 40 or more years. Ironically enough, some of the faces we are seeing each and every week are those we have seen in here for 20-40 years and wonderful as it seems, we never get tired of seeing those faces. In quite a few cases, as the hairlines recede, we are actually seeing more and more of the same old faces.

I am hearing sincere words of discontent, even sort of anguish as some of our true stalwarts are mulling over the notion they will soon be spending their Thursday noon-times with "The Missus".

The program for today has yet to be announced, but we do have the Ambassador from Italy with us and he may be coaxed into giving us a preview of the program he will surely present at a later date on his travels and travails through the land of wine and romance.

There are similarities between Italy and this country. For example:

The CIA report on Italy is as follows: "Persistent problems include illegal

organized crime, corruption in government, high unemployment, sluggish economic growth, and the low incomes and technical standards of southern Italy compared with the prosperous north.”

Except for the high unemployment and sluggish economic growth, the parallels are truly similar, even to the north/south comparisons, but I don't want to steal el Presidente's thunder; we'll let Mark tell you everything he wants you to know about Italy in the ensuing weeks.

I do have a hunch he will touch on the Italian wine industry.

Speaking of wine related matters, we will most likely have our Strippings publisher back this week and we are certainly looking forward to that! Hope you are through picking your fruit of the vine, Joe Cotta.

You were sent a letter from Jane Wiebe this past week. I have a hunch she likes you guys. I have a further hunch she has more support from you than she does from the other clubs in the District.

Which brings up a point I have been pondering almost all my life. In looking at the various charities at work throughout the country, it is a fact that the Jane Wiebes and the Joe Serras have long since earned their angel's wings, but it makes me wonder why we find it so easy to extend the helping hand of aid and friendship clear around the world and have a sort of resentment to the needy right under our noses. Bums are bums no matter where you find them, homeless are homeless no matter where you find them, the unfortunate can be found everywhere and the lazy are without number. Just because somebody is poor in India doesn't automatically mean he has to accept his lot any more than an able-bodied bum does here.

I accidentally received a copy of Rolling Stone at the office the other day. In leafing through it, I saw an article on "Bling-Blings". These are usually diamond encrusted baubles affected by people in the music business (some of whom are in the "music " business as well since what they do is "rap" which is "crap" without the "c"). The other day, Sean "P-Diddy" Combs, gave a watch to an admirer. It was on a sort of dare and he was roped into doing it. The IRS talked to the recipient because they estimated the worth of the watch in excess of \$140,000 and there was a tax due on it.

These music people walk around wearing as much as a quarter million in Bling-Bling and their fans sometimes haven't enough to eat. Far be it from me to lecture the artists, but the incongruity of the matter has not escaped me. Neither has the fact that some of the people who are really big in the Rapper Business were on the street a few years ago and didn't have enough to buy food themselves.

Point? No point except sometimes charity begins at home and we might do well to help people right here in Lodi find either a job or the motivation to work.

Most of you who are working, just stay on your jobs, we have enough rap stars as it is.

