

Rick King, Past President of Rotary International, shared the following experience with the Presidents Elect at a training seminar in Los Angeles on March 6th, 2004.

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One day Rick was walking through the Rotary International building in Evanston IL when he encountered an elderly gentleman who was simply standing in the lobby apparently deep in thought.

Rick went over to the gentleman and introduced himself. The gentleman introduced himself, When asked where he was from, the gentleman shared that he was from Prague in Czechoslovakia.

Rick asked the gentleman if he was a Rotarian, and the gentleman replied, "I hope so."

A little confused, Rick asked the gentleman to explain.

The visitor shared that many years ago he and some friends had banded together and chartered a Rotary Club in Prague. One day the Nazis came and it was illegal to have a Rotary Club so they disbanded. But for many years they agreed together to meet weekly, as long as it was safe, just for two minutes to say hello as they passed in the store or on the street.

Finally the war was over and it was a joy to once again charter their Rotary Club and begin again in their friendship and service. Their club was once again issued a charter.

Then one day the Soviets took over. Once again it was illegal for them to be a Rotary Club so they put away their badges and put away their banners. They agreed again to keep meeting each for a couple of minutes to honor and encourage their friendship and commitment.

Finally, once again, the wall came down and the Soviets were gone and once again they were allowed to meet again as a Rotary Club. Proudly they once again received a charter and re-established the Rotary Club in Prague.

The gentleman shared that it had been a life long dream for him and wife to come to the birthplace of Rotary and see where it all started. Now his wife was too ill to travel but he had come to fulfill their dream.

Rick then told the gentleman, "Do not wonder any longer. You are indeed, a Rotarian."