

THANK YOU!!!

"I awoke this morning with devout thanksgiving for my friends, the old and new," Ralph Waldo Emerson. A couple of Sundays ago, Beth and I kept Scarlett, our granddaughter. Because of teething, she did not feel good. She spent most of the day in our arms. Looking at her sweet innocent face, I realized how thankful I was to have her. November is Thanksgiving Month and I want to share with you some of the reasons I am thankful for the Lions.

I am sitting in my office looking at the mementos I have received during my time in Lions. On the wall is a cypress clock given to me by PDG Jim Varn. It was a gift to him from the widow of PID Jake Watson. PID Jake received it from the Lions of Texas and looks like a lion. On a window sill is a flag stand with the "Stars and Stripes" and the 'Union Jack.'" This was a center piece from PCC Matt Jones' Mid-Winter. There are pins and pens, many coffee cups, a fuzzy thing saying "I Am Already Visualizing the Duct Tape Over Your Mouth," a penguin, a "Marion" lap throw, and many other gifts that daily remind me of the many reasons to say thanks.

I will begin with the Lion Leadership that has befriended an old country boy like me. PIP Kay K. Fukushima spent an hour or so just talking with PCC Matt and me at a State Convention in Greenville. He called me Randy and showed interest in me. I had just been elected Vice District Governor Elect. Here, the Immediate Past President treated me as an equal. It showed me that Lions, in spite of all the warts, are decent people. I am thankful for this and the Lions I have met.

I am thankful for the PIDs. During my first time around, PID Roy was supportive of me in too many ways to put here. In a nutshell, his help made me look better than I was. PID Jay allowed me to get to know and appreciate a different culture. This made it possible for me to be a better Lion and Governor. Because of PID Bill, I was introduced to many of the Lions and friends in the upstate. PID Franklin's experiences have inspired me beyond belief. PID Gene is a friend and a mentor that I would not trade for anything. I am thankful for my experiences with these five outstanding Lions.

I am thankful for my friendship with PCC Matt. His knowledge of Lionism is untouchable. He shared it with me. As Governor, he treated me as an equal and took me under his wings and "raised" me the right way. I am also thankful for the fact that his friendship opened up international friendships that have broadened me as a person. I am also thankful for Eileen for the friendship she showed Beth.

I am thankful for Chris Marrett for her friendship to both Beth and me. I will forever be thankful for her doing the "Hospitality" for us during our first Mid-Winter. That set the persistent for 32-C has the best hospitality rooms.

I am thankful for Diane and Joe Pitts. They are dear friends in more ways than Lionism. Dr. Joe was responsible for my son Josh receiving a college education. Both were guests at Josh and Rachel's wedding at the children's request. It may be hard to believe, but Beth used to be very shy. During training the first time around, Diane and Joe brought her out of her shell. They were the first of the many Lions who have made Beth's life better. They both have made me a better Lion.

I am thankful for those Lions who are no longer with us. Rudy Jo from District A was a special person. We would try to outdo each other over pins and pictures. When we were



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in Peoria, I arranged to have a picture of us with then President Ashok Mehta. That cemented our friendship. I will forever be thankful for my time with PDG Nancy Knowles. From her, I learned one of the true reasons for we are Lions, service to the sight impaired. I saw first-hand the day to day effects of our help for the blind. Then there are Lion Larry Fox and Governor Carl Applewhite. I first met Larry when he was a senior and I was a knob at The Citadel so he was the Lion that I knew the longest. I reconnected with him as a member of the old Hemingway club. Carl and I would spend hours discussing not only Lions "stuff" but personal items where we would challenge each other. We both came away stronger persons. I miss these Lions and am very thankful for them being a part of my life.

I am thankful for the time I was allowed to spend with SCLCS and SCLF. To be able to be a part of the miracle of our work with the Candy Day and Sustaining Member monies is something to be proud of. I am thankful that we have Lions Gregg Tuner and ML Recsh on our side in Columbia. I am thankful for the Lions who have made donations and have worked to sell the candy that allows us to do the work.

I am thankful for both Councils I have served with. They are as different as night and day. They both have served the citizens of South Carolina well. I am proud of both. I am also thankful for the two Councils that served before my Councils. They were supportive of us and taught us well. The Vice Councils under us also supported us and are making life easier and us look better.

I am thankful for the Lion and families who have befriended Beth and me during the last ten years as I have served on the District level. They the best in the world. These range from the Kingstree Lions to the Lions in the far reaches of MD32. Lou Gehrig once said that he "was the luckiest man alive." I know how he felt. I consider myself very lucky.

I would like to thank all of these persons for being a lifesaver. Two years ago when I found out that Josh had kidney cancer, I felt that my world was in ruins. In the weeks before and after the Frankfort Convention, I received hundreds of calls, emails, and notes of support from not only around South Carolina but from around the world. Although they were not a cure for Josh, they provided they the support I personally needed so I could be there for my son and his family. In my heart you helped save two lives. That is priceless.

So to the Lions of Kingstree, District 32-C, the state of South Carolina and the world, I say thank you from the bottom of my heart.

HAPPY THANKSGIVING

DG Randy