

# SPOTLIGHT

## James M. Ford

President - Motivational Marketing, Inc.

*(Member since 1976)*



Rotary has played an important role in Jim Ford's life since 1960 and he has been a member of the Rotary Club of Milwaukee for 42 years. Jim was a member in 1987, when women were invited to join for the very first time. It was memorable for Jim as he recalls not everyone agreed, and while it was not a contentious decision, he does remember one member was definitely opposed. Jim, of course, was fully supportive and is glad to see more women members each year.

Jim's first awareness of Rotary's reach was when he was a young sailor stationed in Japan in 1960. Jim's grandparents took a ship to Japan to attend the Rotary International Convention, and his mother flew over, too. It was "a mind-blowing experience" enjoying the Japanese Rotarians kindness and generosity.

Jim will tell you he has been extraordinarily blessed with his involvement with Rotary. In 1975, Jim was one of six young men in a group study exchange to Sweden. (Jim was selected by the Rotary Club of Milwaukee representative even though he wasn't a member). Upon his return, Jim joined RCM in 1976. In 2006, he led a non-Rotarian study group to Taiwan and represented RCM in Argentina. He and his wife, Judy, have hosted several international group study members throughout the years. The couple kept in touch with most of their former international guests, with one even calling Jim November 11 from Argentina to wish him a Happy Birthday.

Rotary was even instrumental in Jim meeting his wife, Judy. One of the Rotarians he met while in Sweden was the Assistant Principal of Nicolet High School in Glendale. They forged a friendship and lunched together at least monthly. One day Jim was given a tour of the school's newly redecorated math department. Sitting behind a desk was "a cute little blond named Judy." Five years later they were married. As Jim was 41 when he Judy wed; they opted to not have children; rather their family is built on relationships they've nurtured and grown throughout the years.

Jim hails from LaCrosse and graduated from the University of Denver. He's always been in sales and marketing, having worked for several large companies and conglomerates. He realized the corporate world wasn't really a good fit, so he set off on his own and carved out a living starting from the second bedroom of his and Judy's home. He has specialized in turnkey business travel incentives and training programs as well as marketing/sales premiums used by corporations. He had three major clients Johnson Wax, Johnson Controls and Allen-Bradley (prior to morphing to Rockwell International). He keeps a hand in the game by supplying the gift shop at Children's Hospital.

"I have had many wonderful relationships and experiences through my membership and it has always been an integral part of my adult life. My business experience, running my own little business, meant I was always running hither and yon making a living, so I didn't really have a broad network of friendships and associates. But on Tuesdays I could sit down at a table of eight diverse people and learn about their work, contributions to the community and other interests."

An avid golfer, Jim's activities have been curtailed by an undiagnosed neurological condition. He has spent the better part of the last year working with every imaginable medical team to determine the cause of his intense discomfort. There are days when standing is excruciatingly painful. However, despite that challenge Jim knows he has much to be thankful for and has much to live for so he continues to soldier on hoping a diagnosis, and thus an effective treatment is just around the corner.

Jim Ford is a quintessential Rotarian and looks forward celebrating a 50-year membership milestone in 2026.



**Editor's Note:**

*Next week this column will feature Leslie Hauser, Tax Managing Director (Retired) KPMG. Rotary Spotlight is written by RCM Board Member (and its Sergeant at Arms) Barbara Velez.*