

SPOTLIGHT

Harry Drake

(Member since 1994)



Harry Drake hails from the Chicago area but has made Milwaukee his home since the early 1990s.

While not of German descent, Harry has a significant understanding of the language and culture of Deutschland. He majored in German and German literature at the prestigious Williams College in Massachusetts and earned a master's degree from Harvard and Tufts in the disciplines as well. He also lived in Germany for nearly two years as part of his studies. Well-armed, Harry went on to teach college and high school for several years in Boston and Illinois.

Upon his return to Illinois, this very gentle man looked up his sister's childhood friend, Barbara Jean. Four years later Barbara and Harry were married and moved to Milwaukee. The couple have two children, a daughter Katie living in Cudahy and their son, Charlie, lives in Austin, Texas.

While a teacher at heart, because of his love of research and working with people, Harry transitioned into consulting. He'll tell you he didn't immediately feel the fit, but as time went on, he came to love the work and became a specialist in structuring employee benefit solutions.

In the last several years, Harry has devoted much of his free time to helping non-profits; serving on several boards and helping worthwhile organizations raise money. He and Barbara are staunch supporters of Planned Parenthood. Harry has served on the boards of Ten Chimneys, Literacy Service of Wisconsin and helped to start the Bach Babes, a musical ensemble specializing in Baroque music.

Harry also loves to read and is a member of "The Old Men's Book Club." Meeting once a month, they sometimes get sidetracked and talk more life than the book at hand. They do read a variety of genres but tend to concentrate on history and biographies.

Up until a few years ago tennis was Harry's game, but as he says, "I was so bad at it; I couldn't bear losing anymore so gave it up. Now, my exercise is walking around my neighborhood."

Harry and Barbara live in Glendale and it is the third house they've owned since coming to Milwaukee. They've downsized their domicile each time.

Travel has taken them down the Danube visiting Prague and Budapest, not unlike the trip several Rotarians took a few years ago.

Harry and Barbara enjoy their life in Milwaukee and go out frequently with friends. However, Barbara does caution Harry not to get embroiled in talking politics as the current tone of government upsets him too much.

Harry was introduced to Rotary when he moved to Milwaukee. Barbara's aunt told the couple to look up Ken Burgess when they arrived in town. Ken said, "before you do anything else I want you to join the Rotary Club of Milwaukee."

Harry remembers the very first Rotary speaker he listed to was Gerald Daniel "Jerry" Kleczka democratic politician Jerry Kleczka. (Jerry Kleczka served as a Democrat in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1984 to 2005. He represented Wisconsin's 4th congressional district.) Harry remembers there were a lot of questions from the floor as it was, and may still be, a largely Republican body. Some Rotarians were giving Mr. Kleczka a pretty hard time. Then RCM President Bill Alverson gave the membership a bit of a lesson. He said, "We owe it to our speakers to treat them with respect and dignity."

Harry was very impressed with Mr. Alverson's attitude and proud to be a member of an organization he led.

Harry loves the opportunity to meet new people at Rotary. He's also seen a huge change in the membership over the years. "It's younger, more diverse and much livelier and fun. Before it was a little stodgy. The change of pace is much better and there's more enthusiasm. I think much credit is due to Mary McCormick. I think her leadership is phenomenal."

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Editor's Note:

This column will resume with the December 21, 2018 CONNECTING edition as Spotlight writer RCM Board Member (and its Sergeant at Arms) Barbara Velez, will be traveling the week of December 10th.