

Augusta Rotary Minutes

January 6, 2025

President Elect Brenda Durant rang the bell and called the meeting to order.

Faye Hargrove gave the pledge and invocation.

Gould Hagler gave the Sunshine Report.

Matt Barrett introduced the guests and visiting Rotarians.

Announcements

Brittany Burnett, Chair of the Community Service/Local Grants Committee, updated the Club on the upcoming Week of Service which will include Rotarians helping to clean up debris at Camp Tanglewood. She also reported that Golden Harvest Food Bank will be receiving \$2500 from Rotary for their disaster relief efforts.

There will be a \$5000 District Grant to assist Richmond County Schools provide much needed supplies and materials for their positive reinforcement programs for students.

President Elect Brenda reminded the club to make hotel reservations for the District Conference to be held in Jekyll Island.

She also thanked club members who assisted with donating books and funds to our Club's literacy program. Together we collected 250 books for this effort.

Dustin Young reminded the club to get tickets for the annual signature fundraiser. Each member is asked to sell 5 tickets this year.

While at the podium, Dustin congratulated club member, **Tom Denlinger**, for his promotion to the New York Yankees minor league club. Today will be Tom's last meeting with our club and we all wish him the very best.

GRSP Update

No report this week.

New Members

No new members were introduced.

Paul Harris Fellows

No Paul Harris Fellows recognized this week.

CART: **Carletta Sims Brown** was the inside challenger this week. Please continue to contribute to the blue buckets on the table or online at mycartfund.org using the same login credentials you use with DACDB. Also, please complete our club's Google form to sign up to be a Cart Challenger.

Upcoming Speakers

January 13 – Katie Wynn with Dynamik Consulting

January 20 – No meeting due to the Martin Luther King Holiday

January 27 – Joint meeting with Augusta West Rotary to discuss Human Trafficking.

College Pick'em

Commissioner Stacy Tallent gave the final report on the College Football Bowl Games. For the final week, we had 38 players with an average winning percentage of 49.40%. The overall winner with 23 correct picks was **AK Gulati**. **Michael Thurman** finished in second place and **Henry Holt** won a tiebreaker with **Dat Haung** for third place.

A special thank you to **Ashlee Duren** for sending out the weekly emails and collecting everyone's picks.

Guest Speaker/Program

David Hudson introduced our guest speaker, **Retired General Perry Smith**. Before beginning his remarks, General Smith introduced his guests, Mr. Ed Gillespie and Mr. Russell Joel Brown. Mr. Gillespie is a long-time friend and retired after a distinguished career in hospital administration. Mr. Brown is in town to perform two shows celebrating music written and performed by Jewish artists.

Today General Smith is giving his first speech after turning age 90. As a six-year-old he experienced the devastation of Pearl Harbor first hand that dreadful day. That experience along with his interest in the military led him to study the "bad" leaders of the world to better understand how they operate.

He gave his analysis of Vladimir Putin, which included sharing how Putin was bullied as a child and lost two brothers at an early age, one of which starved to death because of the conditions in Russia. By age 16, Putin was determined to work for the KGB. After obtaining his law degree he served as a KGB officer for 15 years before entering politics.

Putin has a reputation of "taking care of" anyone who opposes him which includes both imprisonment and death. While Russia claims to have free elections, they are completely fixed to re-elect Putin each year.

General Smith believes Putin is angry with how the western countries treated Russia when the Soviet Union fell apart in the late 1980s/early 1990s. He feels threatened by the west, by NATO, and especially the United States.

He shared his thoughts on the Ukrainian War which has resulted in over 200,000 Russian soldiers being killed and another 300,000 being injured. This is a war Putin is going to lose, but it will not be over quickly.

General Smith suggested we watch a very good documentary about Putin on Amazon Prime to better understand the mindset of this world leader. He followed his presentation by taking questions from the club which included asking about Putin's relationships with other world leaders. General Smith's responses covered all areas of the globe including China, Taiwan, North Korea, Iran, Israel, and our newly elected President Trump.

At age 90 he has a better grasp of world politics than most current experts in the field and showed no signs of slowing down.

President Elect Brenda led us in reciting the four-way test and then adjourned the meeting.