

ROBERT BEARDEMPHL
President 1985 - 1986
INTERNATIONAL DISTRICT ROTARY CLUB

It was a distinct honor to serve as the second president of the International District Rotary Club. After being a member of two previous Rotary Clubs -- the White Center-Burien Club, and the Des Moines-Midway Club -- I was very excited to be a part of forming a new club. Those were indeed exhilarating times, we were a group of young people who did not believe that the status quo was necessarily the way things should be. We were very committed to some basic values of decency, humanism, and multicultural advancement. We did not believe that anything was impossible, and made several early decisions to implement our personal beliefs.

During the year before Jim Johnson became president and we officially initiated women into our membership, we laid a very careful course of legal and moral doctrine that was unanimously approved by the entire membership at each phase of implementation. This club was excited about being able to practice what we sincerely believed in, and did not believe that anything was impossible. As I look back on us at that time, I am very pleased that we were not deterred by Rotary, International; the District Governor; or the other clubs in our region. Our club had a unanimous mandate to do what we thought was right, and in retrospect we certainly made a difference. One of the proudest achievements of my professional career has been to participate in what has become a landmark social change with such positive long-range impact. I remember several of our members reminding us that we needed female members if Rotary was to survive, they did not need us nearly as much as we needed them. That has proven itself to be very prophetic and true.

One of my favorite anecdotes was when one of our female members was asked to speak to the Tacoma Rotary club. After her presentation, one of the older members said, "Well, now I've seen everything, a woman Rotarian!! What is next, a pregnant Rotarian?" At which point our member stepped around the podium, obviously pregnant, and said, "Now you have seen everything!"

In those early days of the club we did not consider ourselves very special, or that we particularly had a mission. We merely felt that barring a group from membership for all of the wrong reasons was incorrect and we could not agree with Rotary, International and their insistence on being discriminatory. We merely did what we thought was right, and I for one take great pride in our stubbornness and dedication. Isn't it amazing what a difference ordinary people can make when they have extraordinary convictions.