

“MAKING CONNECTIONS”

ROTARY CLUB OF MARIPOSA YOSEMITE September 2022



THE OAK FIRE

July 22, 2022, is a date we may remember for years. It is the day the Oak Fire began and sent havoc through Mariposa. That growling lion of a fire roared through our hills consuming everything it could. Its tail was pushed by the wind and sparks flew up to two miles according to our Sheriff Jeremy Briese.

At this writing 127 homes were burned and nearly 20,000 acres were blackened. So, what is Rotary doing about it? For the first week, we met at 7:30 am every morning and 5:00 pm every evening to determine our best steps of action. We began by calling our members to make sure they were okay. Unfortunately, Susie Stonum, Erin, and Josh who lived with Susie, lost their home along with some valuable contents. Our founding father, Bob Stonum's house on the same property is still standing. And thanks to Kris Casto, for taking all four into her bed and breakfast until they could get resettled.

Upcoming Events

- Sept 2nd - 5th - Fair Parking
- Sept 3rd - Labor Day Parade
- October 6 – Evening Social
- October 22nd Golf Tournament
- October 31st - Trunk or Treat
- Food Collection in November for Safe Families
- Moving Bus Shelters
- Christmas Parade
- Christmas Village
- Salvation Army Bell Ringing



www.mariposarotary.org

“I left My Heart in Africa”

Submitted by Vinita Bali



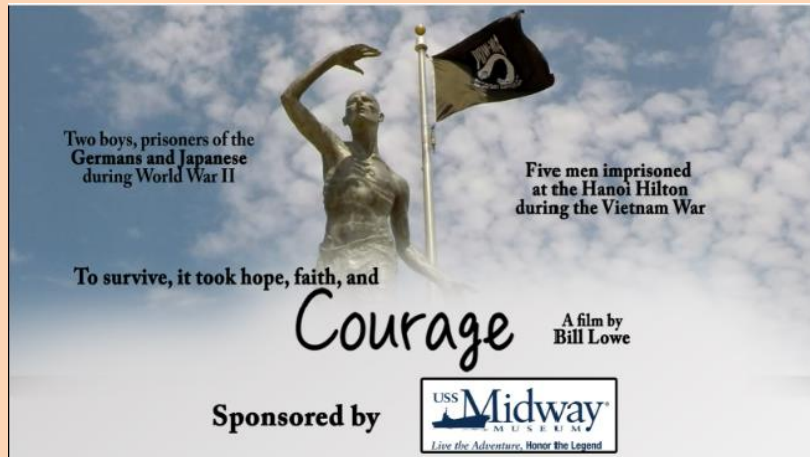
Vinita is holding a dress, one of the gifts, that was given to her.

On a 2016 trip as part of Department of State and Department of Commerce literacy and education project, Vinita’s group of educators started in Johannesburg, South Africa. There, they worked with libraries to provide academic content for a suburban village’s online learning program. Their hectic, non-stop schedule took them up the west coast of the vast continent, eventually landing in Grand Bassam, Ivory Coast. There, while headed into a museum situated right off the beautiful coast, Vinita stopped on the museum’s elevated porch to look at what sounded like fireworks on the beach. As masses of people ran in panic from the beach, and as a gunshot came close to where she was standing, she realized this was gunfire. Their panicked group found shelter in an unfinished basement cavern under the museum. They huddled there in darkness, terrified with every sound of gunshot, of footsteps near their hiding space, and of creaking floorboards as people walked just above them. At times, she was sure every breath was heard, every “ping” and lit screen from their cellphones being turned off, magnified a hundred-fold.

Hours later, they were rescued and rushed to safety. Their convoy of armored cars drove at breakneck speed to safe haven at the U.S. Embassy – at times on the wrong side of the freeway to escape the rush-hour traffic that clogged the freeway. It was, they found out, an Al Qaeda attack that killed 16 people. “Were we, a high-profile U.S. group, targeted? Likely not, but who knows?”

She says that colleagues from other universities rescheduled flights and left that evening. “No one is to blame; we had barely survived a terrorist attack and were shaken. There were things I learned about myself that day – some I am not proud of, others that I am.” She stayed back one more day to honor their commitment to visit schools and inspire young children to get educated.

The school organizer, who had put in tremendous effort to organize the group’s visits to several local schools, was so grateful that someone had remained to carry out the work. Vinita will never forget his kindness to her throughout the day. Finally at the airport at the end of the day’s work, mission completed, he unraveled gift after gift – which he had surreptitiously picked out for her from local markets throughout the day. “I could tell from the car he drove that he wasn’t a wealthy man. The shower of gifts, the use of his cell phone so that I could make an international call – all cost him dearly. What he had was a big heart full of gratitude and kindness. This kind man’s actions reminded me of what Rotary does every day, selflessly helping others regardless of what differences we may have – whether religious, political or the color of our skin.”



THE SPIRIT OF 45

Bill Lowe has been working down in San Diego with the Spirit of 45 group that also handles the San Diego Honor Flights to Washington DC. San Diego is a military town with probably more retirees from the military than any other city in the nation.

He has completed two documentaries featuring Veterans from the San Diego area. One, "*San Diego Vets,*" premiered at the Spirit of 45 event the 14th of August. This features men and women Vets, some of whom are over 101 years old, who served in WWII and Korean Wars.

Premiering on September 18, at Balboa Park is the film, "Courage." This features seven amazing POWs from WWII and The Vietnam War sharing stories of survival. Bill is excited to report that the USS Midway Museum is sponsoring the "Courage" event" in San Diego. If the event goes well, that should set the stage for his biggest film called "The USS Pueblo" (The beginning of a year of crises in America). That is a mouthful.

Because of these film projects, Bill has been asked to go on the November Honor flight to interview the men and basically hang out with them as they travel to Washington DC. This is a great honor, because he is not from the San Diego area, and for them to trust an outsider, is pretty special. The people he will be traveling with are highly decorated veterans with purple, and bronze medals and more. So, the stories they have to tell will keep him busy in the editing room for a long time.

Submitted by Bill Lowe

ANNOUNCEMENTS & AUGUST MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

- Our next social, previously scheduled for September 1st has been rescheduled to **October 6th** as Fair Parking starts September 2nd, and everyone wants to be bright eyed, and bushy tailed for the event. If you have not signed up to park cars, please contact Susie Stonum.
- Do you follow the club's activities on the Mariposa Yosemite Rotary #589 Facebook page? The Art, Wine, and Wheels page? The Mariposa Yosemite Rotary Scholarship Golf Tournament page?
- Do you check the club's website, <https://www.mariposayosemiterotary.org/>, for information about dates, activities, and achievements?
- Heidi Dulcich had two raffle tickets pulled, and guess who won, Heidi and Colin. They were able to choose Rotary gifts.
- Our long time Rotarian and friend, Duane Robinson, and his wife are moving to Arizona, and Duane attended his last meeting. Moving to Arizona is something they have wanted to do for years, and their beautiful house and acreage finally sold. We will miss them.



Sometimes, a project takes a village...together, the Mariposa Yosemite Rotary and Lions are purchasing a portable electronic scoreboard for the Mariposa Bears Football. Shown holding the checks are Eric Weihe and Joe Williams.

THE COMMUNITY PICNIC



The Community Picnic, held on the courthouse lawn on Saturday, August 13th, was a remarkable success. The kids had tons of fun with all the games and events. The Ukulele ladies and gents led the musical chairs with Baby Shark. The Odd Fellows entertained us with music from the 70's. The Lions served 350 polish dogs and chips. The Soroptimist supplied the ice and water. Rotary passed out cookies, and 200 fire shirts. I look forward to doing more with the service clubs, we all worked together well.

Submitted by Eric Weihe



July 21, 2022, Marilyn Saunders presented Vinita Bali with her first Paul Harris Fellowship and our president Eric Weihe with his PHF + 1 sapphire. the donations that earned these awards go to Rotary humanitarian projects all over the world, based on these causes:

- Promoting peace
- Fighting disease
- Providing clean water, sanitation, and hygiene
- Saving mothers and children
- Supporting education
- Growing local economies
- Protecting the environment



Marilyn Giving Eric his Paul Harris Pin.

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

The Unmet Needs Council, co-chaired by Marilyn Saunders of the Mariposa Community Foundation, and Laura Norman, with the Eastern Madera and Mariposa Volunteers Active in Disasters (VOAD), began meeting before the Oak Fire was fully contained. The Council serves as a clearing house for addressing the needs of individuals and families in the community who have been affected by the emergency. Case management services are provided to help victims of the fire navigate the many resources available through governmental and non-governmental programs, and to ensure that at the end of the day those who have an important need resulting from the fire are addressed.

Our Rotary Club has been a member of the Council since its formation following the Detweiler Fire in 2017. During the Detweiler Fire, and subsequently the Ferguson Fire, we met on a regular basis with other community organizations, churches, the local Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation, County Health and Human Services, the Governor's Office of Emergency Response and others.

At the organizational meeting for the Oak Fire, some immediate needs were identified by the Southern Sierra Miwuk Nation. A number of tribal members were displaced as a result of the fire, and the tribal council opened the Miwumati Healing Center on Highway 49 South to those community members requiring housing, supplies, clothing and food. As a part of ensuring support for those displaced families, the Healing Center wanted to put a commercial washer and dryer in the center facility for use by community members needing that assistance.

This was an important need that was immediately addressable, and at the Rotary Board meeting on August 10, our directors authorized the purchase of the washer and dryer requested by the tribe. Those items will be delivered and installed on August 22.

In addition to that immediate action, the Board authorized the use of up to \$27,000 of club resources to address unmet needs that may arise as a part of the Unmet Needs Council process, and to authorize John McCamman and Debbie Peters to continue as the representatives of the Club. In addition, our Club has asked the District Governor, through the District 5220 Disaster Assistance Corporation, to match the club's commitment to this community based process, as they did during the Detwiler Fire.

The club's priorities in past years have been to take whatever steps are necessary to restore displaced homeowners back to their property, generally consistent with the seven areas of service established by Rotary International. What this means in practice is that we have funded core infrastructure that allows people to reestablish a residence: electrical supply, water supply, etc. while other organizations have obtained trailers and other temporary shelter.

Identifying victims of the Oak Fire is an on-going process. The County and the Alliance for Community Transformation has already started the case management process to help families get back on properties and to reestablish homes lost in the fire. We look forward to continuing this partnership and the important work which contributes to this unique community of Mariposa.

Submitted by John McCamman