

Thank you. I wanted to talk about my proud Rotary moment in conjunction with our speaker from Women Lead Change, because of the importance I place on Rotary for me and women around the world...

Today, in 2019, it seems almost outrageous that we should even be talking about women in Rotary as being anything particularly special.

After all, women are common place today as officers of companies—many of which they even own—provosts, deans, department heads, presidents of universities, and presidents of countries. They are physicians, lawyers, hospital administrators, principals and superintendents, realtors, government officials, senators, house of

representative members, governors, Supreme Court justices, military officers, and ministers.

There are few, if any, organizations or institutions today that don't enjoy women at the forefront making things happen—and men grateful that they are doing so.

It is interesting that the first Constitution of the Chicago Club #1, adopted in January 1906, makes no reference to gender—only to persons.

And between 1911 and 1917 there were actually two all-female Rotary clubs—one in Minneapolis and one in Duluth, Minnesota.

But that trend did not continue.

The trend certainly wasn't in effect in 1964 when the Rotary Council on Legislation's agenda contained an enactment proposed by the now Sri Lanka Rotary club, to permit the admission of women—which the delegates voted to be withdrawn along with two other proposals to allow women honorary membership.

It also wasn't the case in 1977, when the Rotary Club of Duarte, California admitted women as members in violation of the Rotary International Constitution.

And, because of this violation, the club's membership in Rotary International was terminated.

It wasn't the case in 1980 when the Rotary Board of Directors and Rotary clubs in India, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States proposed an enactment to remove from the Rotary constitutions and bylaws all references to members as "male persons."

It wasn't even the case in 1986, in a lawsuit filed by the Duarte club to the California Superior Court, which ruled to uphold gender-based qualifications for membership in California Rotary clubs.

However, eventually the die was cast later in 1986, when the California Court of Appeals reversed the lower court's decision, preventing the enforcement of that provision in California.

The California Supreme Court refused to hear the case, and it was appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Finally on May 4, 1987, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that Rotary clubs may not exclude women from membership on the basis of gender.

In 1989, in its first meeting after the 1987 Supreme Court decision, Rotary International officially voted to eliminate the requirement that memberships in Rotary clubs be limited to men, and women were finally welcomed into Rotary clubs around the world.

I am proud to say, that our club anticipated the court decision of 1987 and was ready to move with a list of female members...and I am proud to be one of them.

I think it is particularly apt that at a time when men around the globe have been “outed” for their egregious behavior towards women, that we recognize that there were men in Rotary who had been fighting for the rights of women since the mid 1960’s.

Change, as we all know, is not easy. And there isn’t a woman in this room who hasn’t felt, at some time, discriminated against because she was a woman.

Our club admitted women as a result of Rotary International changing its rules and I'd like to think the men were ready for us.

I think it was because the men in our community were already experiencing the competence and the joy that women had been bringing to the workplace for years—and they knew we would do the same for Rotary.

In my experience, and I believe I speak for the many women in our clubs, the men in Rotary have been gracious, uplifting, and willing collaborators.

In fact, the seamless exchange of ideas and collaboration of men and women is a key ingredient of our Rotary clubs today.

In 2014, (27 years after my mothers own induction into the Rotary Club in Manhattan, KS) I was inducted into this club in Dubuque, Iowa. Two years ago I was made a Paul Harris Fellow per Steve Giesz. Thank you Steve! We've come a long way.

Today, there are over 200,000 women in Rotary working to make a difference, and that number is climbing.

The history lesson I think we should learn from this is that whether we are a family, a club, a city, a

state, a nation, or an entire world, when the issue involves people, exclusion is never the answer.

In fact, it's inclusion rather than exclusion that is the only viable way to utilize the talents of all of our people and to pave the best most productive way forward.

That is my proud Rotary moment - Thank you.