

Written by Dick McCurdy. Speech delivered at the memorial rock dedication ceremony on March 29, 2009 at the Loreto Plaza in Hermosa Beach, CA.

I've been asked to say a few words in overview of Joe's Kiwanis involvement and how it's tied to our Sister City's Loreto Story and the Student Exchange.

There are two significant dates, March 22, 1973 when Joe began his mission to establish our sister city student exchange, and November 29, 1980, the date he was inducted into the Hermosa Beach Kiwanis Club. Over that 30 plus year period we all know that Joe served both organizations well and from my perspective Joe worked particularly hard to build and to maintain a mutual friendship and a continuing bond between the citizens of the two sister cities – especially the young people. I don't know how many of you have had the opportunity to walk down the streets of Loreto with Joe and Marie, but for me it was like walking with "abuelo y abuela" Loreto's GRANDPA & GRANDMA. The small children would run up to them with big smiles on their faces and give both of them big hugs. Adults would wave or shout a greeting to them. They seemed to be known by everyone and it was obvious they have many long-time, good friends living in Loreto.

On my first trip to Loreto, Joe gave Cathy and me a tour of the city. The beautiful Malecon, the city hall and plaza, the mission and museo, and one place we visited that Joe was especially proud of was the Boarding School. Not a private school like we think of, but the school where the children who lived in the mountains or on the ranches could come to live during the school week. Joe showed me the wood letters he had personally cut out on a bandsaw in his shop at home. "Banos, Cocina, etc." He had glued them on

the various doors at the school to indicate what was behind them. He showed me the baking ovens he had helped build which the students and staff used to bake bread and rolls for sale to local restaurants to raise money for the school. He showed me the kitchen where he had installed refrigerators, sinks and work stations that he had built. He pointed out the large, water storage cistern and the fruit trees he had planted. Joe was very proud and rightfully so.

When Joe joined Kiwanis he was immediately appointed Committee Chair for International Relations which of course was a terrific platform for him to use to further support Loreto, and the sister city association and its student exchange program. For example for years Joe would collect baseball uniforms, gloves and bats for the Loreto Little League and have them taken down there either in one of the ambulances he was able to help get donated or by folks going there on vacation or carried by association members participating in the annual HB adult visit to Loreto. Joe started the Kiwanis student exchange picnic that was held every year at Valley Park during the exchange and chaired that event up until last year.

One of the things that the Kiwanis Club does is to immediately assign a responsibility to a new member. When I joined I was given the responsibility for "Priority One", a new KI program in support of children from the ages of 1 to 5. We had the idea to distribute "used" baby furniture to needy families in our community. Well the cribs, high-chairs, strollers, play pens, car seats, etc. that we were able to collect all needed minor repair and refurbishing. AS you all can guess I immediately asked Joe to help. He could fix or make anything that was needed and I remember so well that first single Mom who visited our storage room which was located at Prospect School. She

came there with her little children and asked, "Do you think I could borrow a crib?" AND I said "Yes of course". The mother was reluctant to ask for too much, but she did say, "I only have one car seat for my two children." "Do you think I could have a car seat too?" And when I said yes, the tears just rolled down her cheeks. It was at that moment that I understood what Joe had always known – what it was like to be a Kiwanian and not just a member of Kiwanis. Joe had a passion for helping people.

In 1997, Loreto celebrated its Tri-Centennial anniversary and our Sister City Association wanted to do something special for the event. I was the President of the Association at the time and so I asked Joe to help me get an adobe "Friendship" wall built in Loreto. I wanted it to be located just across the street facing City Hall. We also wanted to install a California mission bell adjacent to the wall to commemorate the origin of the El Camino Real in Loreto. The memorial would not have happened without Joe's help with local city officials and contractors.

Two years later we attended the Tri-Centennial anniversary of the mission in San Javier. We were not sure what the event schedule was when we arrived at the airport. But as we cleared baggage claim, much to our surprise, we were met by three, very large Chevy Suburban's. You know the kind that the CIA uses in the movies. They had been sent there by the Gov. of Baja California Sur to whisk us up the mountain to San Javier in a cloud of dust. Normally there are only about 200 folks living in the small mountain city, but when we arrived we were surprised to see more than 5,000 people crowded around the mission. We were ushered to front row seats listened to more than an hour of political speeches in Spanish which of course most of us didn't understand. We next went into the

Mission for a religious ceremony consecrating all of the work done to remodel the mission sanctuary, including the blessing of the restored oil painting of St. Paul which our Association had sponsored.

Following the service, I asked Dr. Collins if it would be all right for us to leave and find a restaurant, because it was now getting late and we were now all very hungry. He said YES, but Joe and Marie decided to stay and return to Loreto later in the evening with some of their friends. So the next morning, as we traditionally do, we all met at sunrise on the Oasis Hotel patio to see the beautiful sunrise and have our breakfast. Joe and Marie were the last to arrive and as I looked up at Joe I saw that his arms were full of proclamations and gifts and I noticed he had tears in his eyes. He kept saying over and over again, "You should have been there to receive these important documents because you are the President. I shouldn't have accepted them." AND finally he said, "Dick, do you know what I got to do?" "I got to kiss the Bishop's ring. I've never done that before and I want you to know it's one of the most important experiences of my life." Thank God I wasn't there.

Joe had great affection for my Cathy. When he'd call on the telephone to speak to her and I had answered, he'd always ask, "Is Queenie there?" I loved that! Joe was a terrific dancer and he definitely enjoyed dancing with Cathy. One of my favorite things that Joe did at Kiwanis was when we finished singing "Happy Birthday" to a member. "Queenie" would immediately yell YA-YA-YA-YA and Joe would add, UGH – UGH – UGH! Thank you Joe for many great memories!