

PDG L. Earle Johnson recounts

## A visit to One Rotary Center

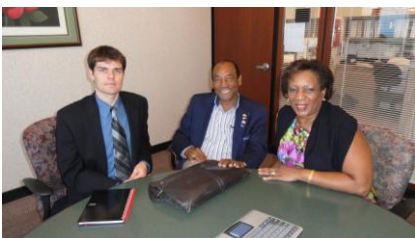


**1560 Sherman Avenue, Evanston: The Home of Rotary International**, since 1976. As an active Rotarian, if you have never been there, you do not know what you are missing! Recently, Heather Dawn and I decided to make a brief diversion to visit RI, on our way to the Montreal Convention.

For me personally, it was a return visit with a sense of nostalgia, perhaps just to see what has been changed since my last visit of 1989. My first visit to the original RI Headquarters was way back in 1974 when as a young Charter Club President, I scrambled to grasp every learning opportunity about Rotary.

The other, perhaps a more ingenuous reason for the recent visit, was to enable Heather Dawn, now a three year veteran of the Rotary Club of South Lake County (D-6980), to connect with our RI support and to experience, first hand, what takes place at the epicenter of Rotary International.

We were greeted by Jack McCabe, Coordinator for Club and District Support in Southern Pan America. Jack would be our guide, our friend, and our mentor on RI Affairs, for the day. He was prepared, because we informed RI well in advance of our intended visit.



For close to six hours we were ushered between the departments responsible for Group Study Exchange, Youth Exchange, Alumni Relations, Rotary Peace Scholars, Grants, Scholarships, and of course Polio Plus.

With every encounter, staffers and program coordinators were elated by our presence, and displayed obvious appreciation for our taking the time to visit with them. It was very evident that rather than being an interruption of their work routines, we, the Rotarians, gave purpose to their responsibilities. They expressed the wish that many more Rotarians would take the time to visit with them; as such visits provide an impetus to better serve our clubs.



On Thursday, June 17, 2010, it truly felt good to be a Rotarian as we toured the various RI Halls of Fame for Past RI Presidents and Directors, the TRF Major Donors walls, the Freedom and Liberty Bells.



On other occasions, we paused for a brief photo by a life-size statue of Paul Harris, or at his original desk inside the replica of our Founder's office. We paid a mock visit to the restored office of Gustavus H. Loehr,

the first and original meeting place, known back then as the Paul Harris 711 Club, where we could see all the original furniture and artifacts of the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century vintage. What an exhilarating experience.



But without a doubt, the highlight of Heather Dawn's visit was her impromptu meeting with Elizabeth Lazar, Coordinator for Rotary's TRF US \$200 Million Challenge. Joined by a newly appointed Program Assistant, who was only on the job for less than a week, we explored and discussed ideas for projects and fundraisers. Heather Dawn came away with more than a few goodies, project support materials and a promise of support. She is passionate about the PolioPlus project, and with the support from her fellow Rotarians, will continue to coordinate their efforts in achieving the Club's commitment to the \$200M Challenge, dedicated to the "End Polio Now" and "This Close" campaigns.



Our visit ended with one final pose at the life size bronze Polio Eradication statue, at the frontage of the One Rotary Center; and then, it was off to Canada, for the exciting 101<sup>st</sup> Rotary International Montreal Convention.

PDG L. Earle Johnson has been a Rotarian since 1973, and is a member of the Rotary Club of South Lake County (Clermont), Florida. (D-6980).