ROTARY CLUB FLAGPOLE DEDICATION SPEECH

FOR

JAMES HIGGINS

Hello everyone and thank you for being here today to share this flagpole dedication with all of us. We of Burlington Rotary Club 1610 dedicate this flagpole and all that it stands for to all of the veterans of Coffey County who have selflessly placed the well being of others before their own comforts, the true embodiment of “service before self,” and to our youth-the future leaders of our community, our county and hopefully our country. Occasions like this one are significant and necessary parts of life. They provide the opportunity to come together as a community, to meet as one entity, acknowledge past contributions and encourage continued participation for our future from our future leaders. Every day allows us the chance to recognize the events and people that shape our lives and today we make those acknowledgements and gestures of gratitude proudly and publicly. To the servicemen who have so gallantly given of themselves to protect and defend our nation, we are grateful and say “Thank you.” General Norman Schwarzkopf once said, “The truth of the matter is that you always know the right thing to do. The hard part is doing it. I think you’ll all agree that the selflessness demonstrated by those in our community who have served our country knew the right thing to do and did it, no matter how unimaginably hard it was. (**If there are certain individuals you would like to acknowledge for his or her service, do so here**). To Dan and Linda Allen, who took charge of the design and completion of this Flagpole and the burying of the time capsule, and to the contributors, **most of whom** are represented here today, as well as engraved on the plaque, this community owes you a debt of gratitude and you’ve set a fine example for the young people of our community. To the youth of Coffey County, and especially those from USD 244 Middle School, you are all fine examples of the best of the **young people** of this country and we are very, very proud of all of you.

This flagpole serves many purposes. Of course it supports our nation’s proudest standard, but it also serves as a giant pin on the mark of time and place. Although it signifies the symbolic center point of our community, it also represents timeless traditions and generations past and future. **We’ve chosen to bury items that symbolize a time gone by, and as the items buried at this site will remind most of us of those days, t**hey will also teach us to honor the past, celebrate tradition and encourage our youth to be prepared for the future as they conceptualize what their own time capsule might contain, or, in other words, as they make the memories to be placed within future time capsules. I imagine each one of us has our own “treasure chest” of sorts-a box or container or trunk filled with items that remind us of what life was like. They are symbols of lessons learned and serve to show us how far we’ve come and what we still have to learn. Being a part of Rotary acts to keep us grounded as we focus on pinpointing what is important in life as well.

This flagpole also has two other special features besides the time capsule **we are burying.** You will see two plaques. One is inscribed with the names of the Rotarians **of** twenty years ago, and the other has the names of our current Rotarians. These plaques are yet another symbol of time and space and acknowledgement of the heritage that belongs to all of us. You can see we are proud of Rotary’s contributions in the past and we are even more proud to encourage contributions well into the future.

General George Patton said, “Live for **something** rather than die for nothing.”

As many of you know, the objective of Rotary is to “encourage and foster the ideal of service as a basis of worthy enterprise.” In particular, Rotary applies a “4 way test” to encourage and foster integrity and “service above self” in all that we do. Rotary also recognizes the value of diversity and encourages contributions from everyone so it reflects and represents the uniqueness and “voice” of each community with regard to age, gender, race, profession, and religion. We believe that diversity is the key to success and sustainability now and into the future. Here are our criteria, and we encourage you to apply this checklist to areas of your lives as well:

* FIRST. The development of acquaintance as an opportunity for service;
* SECOND. High ethical standards in business and professions; the recognition of the worthiness of all useful occupations; and the dignifying of each Rotarian's occupation as an opportunity to serve society;
* THIRD. The application of the ideal of service in each Rotarian's personal, business, and community life;
* FOURTH. The advancement of international understanding, goodwill, and peace through a world fellowship of business and professional persons united in the ideal of service.

The principles of Rotary are simple. Consider others. Act with integrity in all that you do. Every opportunity we have in life is a door to serve someone and strengthen communities.

The points of the 4 ways test are:

1. Is it the TRUTH?
2. Is it FAIR to all concerned?
3. Will it build GOODWILL and BETTER FRIENDSHIPS?
4. Will it be BENEFICIAL to all concerned?

These questions are really at the foundation of living a life filled with integrity and value and as we acknowledge these points we realize what a positive impact would be felt if we all practiced this 4 way test. The good news is that Rotary is currently in hundreds of countries throughout the world. As of May 2012, we have over 1.2 million partners worldwide, and our mission and 4-way test have been translated into over 100 languages. We live in an era that may offer seemingly limitless access to information through technology, but that technology brings us information at unprecedented speed. The news we receive on a relentless basis clearly indicates the need for outreach that participants in Rotary so selflessly offer. Whether someone chooses to take part in our community based programs, Club Services programs, Vocational Services programs or International Service, every helping hand is cherished and valued and is essential in doing what is needed and wanted at every level of service. We are also particularly proud of our New Generation Service, focused on the vital and indispensible contributions made by today’s young people. As more of our nation’s and community’s youth recognizes the value of “service before self,” we can set our sites on a future world whose inhabitants truly **care** for each other, and in turn, are cared for.

As we dedicate this flagpole, I want to invite all of you to join me in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance, but first, I would like to share a story that I heard long ago, and as we acknowledge the past and how events and people have influenced our lives, it’s only appropriate to give this to you. Many years ago, Red Skelton, most famous for being a wonderful comedian, told of an incident that he witnessed as a schoolboy. It clearly made a lasting impression on him and is a fine example of the impact an individual can have on impressionable youth. He was in class and his teacher observed that it seemed that, to the students, saying the Pledge might be getting a little “monotonous.” It seemed that each one was saying the words by rote and not feeling the **true** meaning, **impact,** and **purpose** of pledging one’s allegiance to our great country, so Red Skelton reminisced how his teacher, Mr. Lasswell, explained the importance of **each word**:

**“I**: me, an individual; a committee of one.

**Pledge**: dedicate all of my worldly goods to give without self-pity.

**Allegiance**: my love and my devotion.

**To the flag**: our standard, Old Glory, a symbol of freedom. Wherever she waves, there's respect because your loyalty has given her a dignity that shouts freedom is everybody's job!

**United**: that means that we have all come together.

**States**: individual communities that have united into 48 great states. Forty-eight individual communities with pride and dignity and purpose; all divided with imaginary boundaries, yet **united** to a **common purpose**, and that's love for country.

**And to the republic**: a state in which sovereign power is invested in representatives chosen by the people to govern. And government is the people and it's from the people to the leaders, not from the leaders to the people.

**For which it stands, one nation**: one nation, meaning, "so blessed by God"

**Indivisible**: incapable of being divided.

**With liberty**: which is freedom; the right of power to live one's own life without threats, fear or some sort of retaliation.

**And Justice**: the principle or quality of dealing fairly with others.

**For all**: which means, boys and girls, it's as much your country as it is mine.

Since I was a small boy, two states have been added to our country and two words have been added to the Pledge of Allegiance... UNDER GOD Wouldn't it be a pity if someone said that is a prayer and that would be eliminated from schools too?”

So, Ladies and Gentlemen, let us pledge together and really feel the impact of what it means to devote our allegiance to this wonderful country:

**“I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United Sates of America, and to the republic for which it stands, one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.”**

I want to thank each one of you for being here, for your contribution and presence in the past, for your devotion to integrity and service in the present, and for your consideration of sharing your skills and character in the future, all with the intent of “service before self” and a stronger, healthier, community, country and world. I am proud to be a part of Rotary and I look forward to partnering with each one of you as we create a brighter future for ourselves and those whom we serve. Thank you all!