

Ambassadorial Scholar  
First Report  
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Hosting Rotary District 1040  
Leeds, England

## Rotary Involvement and other Ambassadorial Activities

After arriving in London on September 12, and making my way up to Northern England (Leeds) by September 13<sup>th</sup>, I began to settle into life in England. An induction for my MBA course started on the 13<sup>th</sup>, so there was little rest of the weary. This semester has flown by and is nearly coming to an end already. It has not only been packed with reading many books and attending many lectures at the University of Leeds business school, Rotary has afforded me the opportunity to really get to know the county-side of Yorkshire and to meet many fine citizens of Great Britain.

## Bradford University Reception

My first Rotary event I was able to attend was in early October. My gracious host counsellor, Leslie Jewell, and her husband, Mike, drove in from their hometown of Castleford to pick me up and take me to Bradford for a reception with all of Yorkshire Ambassadorial Scholars as well as all the Rotary Peace Scholars at the University of Bradford. The event was held in a beautiful and historic old state home which boasted paintings and sculptures that inspired talk of history, tradition and service. Many Rotarians from around Yorkshire were at this event, and it was nice to meet several of my Ambassadorial Scholar counterparts at Universities near by.

At this event, I was amazed at one particular occurrence. A very nice man from Castleford, who happened to be the past District Governor of Rotary in Yorkshire, asked me where in Texas I was from. I explained to him, as I do with anyone else who asks me, that I live in the very top of Texas near Amarillo Texas. (Usually people don't have a clue where Amarillo is, but they might have heard of it in a song.) I then usually explain that my hometown is about 60 miles Northeast of Amarillo, etc.,etc.,etc. Well, this particular gentleman asked me what the name of my hometown was (which I normally say after explaining where in Texas I am from) and I said "Pampa." The reply came back, " I know Pampa, I've

been there." I couldn't believe it! In fact, he went on to tell me that not only had he been to Pampa, he started naming people he had met from Pampa - fellow Rotarians: Curt Beck, Bob Nestledge, and a few others. I told him I knew both men, and let him know that I had known Curt Beck my entire life he was in my hometown church. What an incredibly small world. This Yorkshire Rotarian's name is Milton Frary. A very nice "chap." I joked with Milton that he had done something many Texans hadn't even done, including the other Texas Scholar, and that was to visit Pampa and several other towns in District 5730. It was, indeed, a great way to kick off this Rotary Ambassadorial Scholarship.

## District Conference in Scarborough

In mid-October, the Scholars were invited to attend the Yorkshire District Conference in Scarborough on the east coast. Leslie and Mike Jewell picked me up again from my flat and we drove 2 ½ hours to get there. Mike and Leslie have been wonderful. They are very giving of their time and have been a great support for me in getting settled in Leeds.

At the District Conference, all the scholars from Yorkshire Universities attended seminars, entertainment, speeches and went to a youth Rotaract Conference. We met many Rotarians from around the county and got to know the other Scholars much better. All of the Rotary Ambassadorial Scholars in Yorkshire are either from the U.S. (Virginia, Hawaii, and Texas) or Japan.

The conference was the entire weekend, so we were able to see some of the historic sights in Scarborough and to take in their famous "fish and chips" that they are know for (and it was good!).

## Ripon Rotary Weekend

At the Bradford reception, a Rotarian from Ripon invited all the scholars to attend a weekend away in Ripon, one of the oldest cities in the entire U.K. The weekend was hosted by the Rotary Club of Ripon and the Ambassadorial Scholars stayed with Rotarian members at their house. Ripon Rotary does this every year for the scholars. It sounded like an opportunity I couldn't pass up, so I signed up to go. The weekend was November 12-14 and, once again, Leslie and Mike came to pick me up. Little did I know at the time that they were just driving me there and returning back to their home that same Friday night. We drove for about 1 ½ hours and then they turned around and went back home. Needless to say, I was grateful for their time. (For some reason I thought this would be a weekend like Scarborough where Rotarians attended the weekend as well.)

At an opening dinner reception, each Scholar that came (7 of us) all gave a brief presentation of where we were from and a little about ourselves. I presented the Ripon Club a banner from Pampa and they were very appreciative of the gesture. I also brought a Texas map to show them exactly where Pampa was located! They seemed to like that as well.

Ripon is such an old town full of history. It is about the same size in population as Pampa, but it is a little bit older. It was founded over 1300 years ago and since AD 886, a daily tradition of a horn blower blowing his horn in the town center still continues today. They claim that every night at 9 p.m. since 886, the horn-blower of the town has sounded the horn 365 days a year in order to let the people know that the guard was on watch for thieves so they could sleep soundly. Maybe even just as amazing as this deep long tradition, the original horn from 886 is still in their position! In fact, the Mayor of Ripon let me hold this horn at an evening reception Rotary held for the Scholars and for them to honor the Mayor. Ripon has fascinating history, for sure!

The President-elect of the club took all the scholars on a tour of Fountains Abbey which was built for Christian Monks over 800 years ago. This Rotarian dressed up as a Monk (he was a high school history teacher) and played the part of a Monk in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Absolutely fascinating. The old ruins came alive when he spoke about what happened in each room we went into.

The Ripon Rotary club also arranged for the Scholars to have a tour of Ripon Cathedral. The Cathedral was stunning. It is now somewhat famous as a place that helped inspire Lewis Carroll to write Alice & Wonderland, but it has so much longer-term history to observe. The Cathedral now sits on top of what used to be one of the oldest Christian churches in the Western World. St. Wilfrid opened this church in AD 672. The most amazing part of that history is the complete Saxon Crypt (basically a basement that was built under the original church for worship - representing the tomb of Christ) was still well preserved. The tour guild took our group down to this holy place and showed us where St. Wilfrid, a man who lived well over a millennium ago, stood and worshiped God. It was absolutely amazing to witness such history. I would highly recommend a trip to Ripon if one plans to visit the Yorkshire area of England. The hospitality of my host family for the weekend, Harry and May Livingston, was wonderful. They explained that they like to take in American students during this weekend every year because they lived in Minnesota in the 1950's as Harry was studying a masters degree at the University of Minnesota. He explained that the people in the U.S. were so friendly and welcoming to them, that they feel the need to give back by showing hospitality to U.S. students now. If only the entire world would be so

thoughtful, especially 50 years after the hospitality that they experienced, they are still giving back.

Needless to say, Ripon was an impressive place with a great Rotary Club that sponsor this weekend for the Ambassadorial Scholars. Incidentally, the Ripon Rotary Club was formed the exact same year the Pampa Rotary Club was founded.

## MBA Study Program

The course is fairly intense. What makes it unique, is the diversity of the students. By diversity, I mean true diversity. The class is made up of 43 students (17 women and 26 men) from 15 different nations: Japan, China, Taiwan, South Korea, Thailand, Nigeria, Ghana, Uganda, Romania, Canada, Chile, England, Chile, New Zealand, and, of course, Texas. On top of this, politically there are many liberals (Democrats, Labour Party, etc.), conservatives, socialists, communists, a Republican, a libertarian, and a probably a few radicals! Adding to these political worldviews, there are Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, evolutionists, atheists, agnostics, and a few in the middle. I am amazed at the variety of thoughts, approaches to tasks, attitudes, and lifestyles that are so different, and yet, we are a very close class with virtually no hint of cultural non-acceptance towards any individual.

This first term is broken into 7 modules which each contain one lecture and one class every week. The lectures are simply professors lecturing on the subject. The classes, however, are designed to challenge the student by having smaller groups to discuss readings and topics assigned for study and to learn the materials from the lectures. The classes force individual accountability, because if you are not prepared for the class, it becomes obvious fairly quickly. Overall, I would say I am learning just as much outside the classroom as I am inside (maybe even more). I recognize it for what it is, a truly unique opportunity and privilege for me. The Rotary Foundation and the Rotarians who have sponsored me back home are whom I have to thank for this life changing experience.

While the course work has been demanding, I have been able to stay on top of my studies for the most part. The only assessment for each module will be one exam at the end of the semester.

## Observations About Host Country

The culture in England is much different from in the United States. Of course it depends on what part to the US one compares it to, but from my upbringing in the Texas Panhandle, this is a much different place! The obvious differences are the consistently rainy weather, its green!,

difference in language (more than one would think), a much more liberal society, and the people, at least in Leeds, are not as friendly as they are in Texas. It is an important point to make that people here are nice, but not necessarily friendly. There is a difference I have come to learn. For example, and with many large cities, people don't tend to say "hello" to each other unless they know each other. I have greeted several people with a "hello" to receive very strange looks of scepticism in return. In their minds they are thinking two things: 1.) What does he want from me? 2.) Why would he want to be nice to me - he doesn't even know me - what is wrong with him?

But, I must admit, I found that to be true in New York City so it may be a difference in big cities and small towns. In fact, it was proven to me that it was the city mentality during my trip to the small town of Ripon where people were both nice and friendly.

Other observations, there is a high amount of Anti-American sentiment during this time. The reactions to the U.S. elections were extraordinary. There is little doubt that if the populations in the U.K and/or the majority of Europe were able to pick the head of America, they would have chosen differently in an overwhelming fashion. That perspective has been of great interest to me and have given me a greater understanding of world perceptions and thoughts. I don't agree with a lot of them, but it makes me understand "how" something is said is just as important, and sometimes more important, than "what" is said.

I am living in a flat with everything I need. It is only a 10-minute walk to the school, and only a 15-minute walk to the city center where most of the shops are. I feel like I am getting settled in and have really enjoyed learning from and observing the culture.

#### Sponsor Rotarians and Preparation for Experience Abroad

When I arrived in England, I had relatives who were able to pick me up and take me to Leeds. They helped to get me settled and had everything lined up for me when I arrived. As far as the host Rotarians, we unfortunately could not get in touch for several weeks as a result of my e-mail address being incorrect on her form, and her contact information being incorrect on my form. Therefore, we had a little bit of a rocky start with communication, but through the help of my sponsoring Rotary Counsellor able to make contact with my host counsellor in Castleford.

The best preparation for this experience for me was the pre-departure ASETS conference in Austin. That helped me to learn about expectations and what I should prepare for once I arrived.

- Scarborough District Conference
- Rotary Reception at Bradford University
- Ripon Rotary Weekend

### Upcoming Events

- Invited to Speak to Castleford Rotary Club (TBD)
- January 21, 2005 Speech to Batley Rotary Club
- Civic Reception for the Rotary Amb. Scholars February 25 2005 in Leeds