

## ROTARY MEETING FEBRUARY 9, 2021

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Our next Celebration of Service, February 16 on Zoom, will welcome local artist and storyteller **Tom Roznowski**, who will talk about “The Porch Light Is On - Saturday Evening Radio.”

### THIS WEEK’S NEWS

#### Rotarians In the News

Congratulations to Past President **Loren Snyder**, CFP® of The Matthews Snyder Group, who was recently recognized by Financial Planning as a Top Regional Broker-Dealer Advisor Under 40.

Volunteering at the Hoosier Hills Food Bank last week on behalf of Rotary were **Jim and Anne Bright, Kate Cruikshank, Owen Johnson, Jim Shea, and Michael Shermis.**

#### OUR PROGRAM: The Klan in Indiana in the 1920s



**Liz Feitl** had the pleasure of welcoming celebrated author and IU Professor Emeritus **James Madison** to this week’s celebration. Published by IU Press, his new book, *The Ku Klux Klan in the Heartland*, covers the emergence and impact of the infamous organization through the lens of their activity in Indiana and the Midwest. It’s a tough subject, which has often led to a societal desire for the memories of it to just go away. False myths prevail around the organization as well. It was not an organization made up of “hillbillies, the Great Unteachables.” Little do we remember that, in the 1920s, the organization was dominant in all Indiana counties, including Monroe. With its extreme racism, xenophobia, and austerity, it was also a mainstream cultural, political, social organization, embedded primarily in Protestant communities. It was, Jim said, “as American as apple pie.”

The emergence of the Klan in the 1920s was its second wave, the first being during the post-Civil War period, and the third during the 1960s civil rights era (with resonances in today’s politics). The

pervasiveness of the Klan in the '20s included Rotary members, although it's a relief to know that, from research in Richmond, Rotary had fewer Klan members than other fraternal organizations.

Jim provided a set of arresting and deeply disturbing photos of grand parades around churches, in town squares and other public places, including Bloomington. The pageantry of the organization was part of its allure. Grand statements of purity, whiteness, and superiority were the norm. Anyone else, including Catholics, Jews, and especially Blacks, were anathema to the Klan's view of America. Catholics initially were the greatest threat and therefore considered the greatest evil. With increased immigration, xenophobia took hold, especially against Eastern Europeans, Asians, and Africans. This led to the Immigration Act of 1924 that established quotas, an 80% reduction in numbers, and a complete bar on immigrants from Asia, including Japan. The act remained in place until abolished by the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965. D.W. Griffith's film, *The Birth of a Nation*, a powerful expression of racial stereotypes, epitomizes the era. During this time jazz was spreading, and the art form that centrally represented an authentic part of America was considered deviant and regarded with hate and disgust.

Bloomington had its share of deep racism, warped academic research, and blatant segregation. David Starr Jordan, former president of Indiana University, was a prominent advocate for racist eugenics, believing that society could be improved through selective breeding of humans. Segregated schooling was the norm for too many years. Central to the maintenance of the racist norms from the 1920s and beyond was the Klan, itself thoroughly coursing through the practices of the white community.

During this time, however, there was resistance, much of it forming around organizations that would be at the center of racial equality and resistance for decades to come. The Indiana Bar Association passed a resolution in 1923 that condemned the Klan. The NAACP was active, establishing branches around the state, holding rallies and encouraging voters. The American Unity League published a newspaper called *Tolerance*. And IU students satirized the Klan and its actions in *The Vagabond* newspaper.

One of the most despicable members of the Indiana Klan was its Grand Dragon, D.C. Stephenson, who was sent to prison for rape and murder in 1925.

Through the decades since the 1920s, the Klan's power diminished greatly, but it also morphed into a much subtler version of itself, perhaps more deeply embedded in the psyche of white politics than we think. With Charlottesville and the blatant reappearance of white supremacy in recent years, the impact and legacy of the organization continue.

In the end, our guest Jim Madison believes that our kids and grandkids deserve to live in a nation that is committed to its ideals. We cannot rely on easy myths and tropes that make us all feel better. Our history needs to be researched, uncovered, and retold, with all its contradictions. That way, the truths and lessons from our past can be truly understood.

The link to today's Rotary meeting:

<https://youtu.be/6rzaSd2wfMo>

**UPDATES**

President **Ashley Wesley** presided and thanked event producers **Natalie Blais, Michael Shermis, Sally Gaskill, and Earon Davis.**

**Connie Shakalis** gave a touching reflection. As a colon cancer survivor, she doesn't feel special or different. However, she learned seven lessons from her 2007 experience:

- 1) If you want to something done, call Gus Shakalis, who will spring into action and even collect speeding tickets along the way.
- 2) People you will assume to help you probably will not. However, those at the periphery will surprise you with support and fun, including home-made chili!
- 3) If you are germophobic, be prepared for a lot of love at the hospital, including kisses on the lips from a nurse.
- 4) Do things you like and work with people you like working with.
- 5) Watch reruns of the *Beverly Hillbillies*.
- 6) As Gus said: "Sometimes it's just a bump in the road."
- 7) And it was!

### **This Week's Guests**

Because of technical difficulties, some guests may have attended asynchronously.

### **Guests of Jim Bright**

Travis Johnson, Evansville Morning  
Randy Wheeler, Evansville  
Don Harvey, Columbus Sunrise  
Tim Ellis, Bloomington North  
Mike Zawilinski, neighbor  
Guy Loftman, local attorney  
Bob Hammel, honoree, 2020 Rotary Toast  
PDG Sue Wright, Clarksville Rotary  
Mike Laros, Brown County Rotary  
Gary Taylor, Bloomington North  
Celeste McGregor  
Mike Matusik, Hammond  
Rick Kelly, Brown County  
Ken Birkemeir, Brown County  
Bev Teach, Brown County Rotary  
Julie Beasley, Sunrise  
David Henry, North

### **Guests of Alain Barker**

Liz Rosdeitcher  
John Spain

### **Guest of Judy Schroeder**

Ramsay Harik

**Guest of Connie Shakalis**

Arvind Gopu

**Guests of the Club**

Adrienne Garrison – NAACP

Cathi Crabtree – NAACP

Cheryl Munson

Dick McGarvey

James Allison

Beth Ellis

Evelyn LaFollette

Russ Dukes

Cathy Hiatt

Randy West

Gary Kidd

Susan Webb

Joe Ryan

R.D. Mann

Jeremy Harmon

Ann Foster-Hughes

Alan Backler

Tom Roznowski

Carol McGarry

Thomas Albright

Sara Gettie McNeill

David James

Jeff Richardson

Sandra Bender

Kathy Ruark

Linda Stephenson

Sharon Mayell

Lindsay Towell

Wanda Jones

Barbara Backler

Kris Kimmell

Victoria Voekler

**Birthdays**

**Efrat Feferman**, Feb. 9

**Lance Eberle**, Feb 11

**Art Levy**, Feb 12

**Jean Emery**, Feb 13

**Judy Witt**, Feb 14

**Yolanda Treviño**, Feb 15

**Anniversary**

**Geoff McKim**, 10 years

Reporter: **Alain Barker**