

# the CLARifier

## CLAREMONT ROTARY NEWSLETTER

IN SERVICE ABOVE SELF

Claremont Rotary Year 92 | Week 50 | June 18, 2021

### **Program: Collective Memories of WWII, Sharda Umanath**

submitted by Jim Lehman



Our Speaker, Sharda Umanath, is an Associate Professor of Psychology at Claremont McKenna College. Her undergraduate degree is from Washington University in St. Louis, and her MA and Ph.D. in psychology are from Duke University.

Her research areas include Human Learning and Memory, Aging, Knowledge, Autobiographical Memory, and Collective Memory. She currently has a National Science Foundation Faculty Early Career Development Program Award: "CAREER: Stabilizing Access to Prior Knowledge Across the Lifespan."

Today's topic, "Collective Memories of World War II," draws on published work she did with several co-authors, including Magdalena Abel from the University of Regensburg in Germany, Roddy Roediger from Washington University, Ruth Schaffer from Washington University, and Jim Wertsch from Washington University.

Psychology typically regards remembering as an individual activity—how many words can you recall from a recited list, etc., yet it's often the case that memory is a shared thing—as within a couple, or a family, or this Rotary Club. We have collective memories as well as individual memories—and

the extent of the collective could even be the nation, for example. One way to think about what collective memory is might be to contrast it to history (the academic activity of history), which seeks to provide accurate, objective accounts of the past. Collective memory, on the other hand, is a simplified, highly biased, highly emotional account that informs and shapes the identity of the group.

Now, if you want to examine collective memory at the national level, WWII provides a good candidate, as it involved nearly all nations, and the events and their consequences are still discussed and debated today. WWII is widely held to be one of the most important events of the last 100—even up to the last 1,000—years, in surveys. Most countries have some sort of narrative about WWII, and they differ from each other in important respects, all the more reason to use it as a case study of collective memory.

These different narratives from different groups regarding the same event were the subject of a Wertsch and Roediger paper in 2008, in which they noted that history is willing to change a narrative in order to stay loyal to the facts, while collective memory is willing to change information (even facts) in order to stay loyal to a narrative. Collective memory is protecting our group identity.

*Cont'd, p. 4*

#### **Watch it!!**

You can hear this program at about 40 minutes into the meeting. Here's a link to the [recording](#)  
Passcode: Memories!June18  
It will be available until 7/15

#### **Next Zoom Meeting**

June 25: Featuring year end report at 12:00 and debunking at 5:30

[ZOOM LINK](#)

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## ROTARY, THE ZOOM MEETING

submitted by Mike DeWees

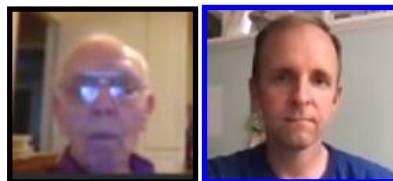
There was talk about the Rotary Convention, the inspiring presentations and the wide world of Rotary. Sylvia LOVED the Dance Party. She says it was the best thing at the convention. Sadly, that session wasn't recorded! Lyn Childress noted that she and Mark have rooms reserved for the 2022 Convention.



Juneteenth day, the newest federal holiday, is June 19. It represents the day when the end of slavery was finally communicated to the people of Texas two years after the Emancipation Proclamation and 6 months after the end of the Civil War. Of course the announcement didn't end slavery as some farmers needed to complete the growing season and preferred "free" labor. After 47 states had recognized the holiday, the US Senate just recognized Juneteenth Day as a federal holiday by unanimous vote this week. So, Buff wondered, do we need to consider whether there's a difference between politics (which we don't bring to our meetings) and discussion of a social movement borne of conscience? As we learned from Deepa Willingham, slavery, human depravity and greed are still with us.

## WELCOME GUEST & VISITING ROTARIAN

Welcome to our frequent guest, **Bill Gershon**, and to Rotarian **David Sawhill**, an honorary member as faculty advisor for the Interact Club at CHS. Interactors are introduced on page 3.



Cameron Troxell played and sang the Welcome Song...brilliantly. Muscle memory!



## ANNOUNCEMENTS

Although the incidence of new polio cases is still zero this week, in five separate incidents, 5 polio vaccinators were killed and 4 more wounded in Afghanistan this week.

**President Buff** has declared an unofficial meeting on Friday 6/25 at noon. She will present her report to the District Conference in an extended form, invite reflections on the year just past, and will welcome discussion on the RI Convention.

**Mary Segawa** has moved back to Lacey, Washington and hopes to return on zoom to say goodbye.

**Sylvia Whitlock** announced the fall Peace Conference is now scheduled and speakers have been slated. Stay tuned!

**Anita Hughes** thanked everyone who returned their committee requests and relentless reminders are going out to those who haven't. After July 1, you'll have to sign up through DACdb. (Is that an incentive?)

### June Board Meeting

Last Tuesday, our Board approved the final allocations for 2020-21, leaving \$24,000 to make up for any shortages from postponing the Taste of Claremont. Final allocations included \$500 for City of Claremont Summer Camp, \$2000 for Uncommon Good, \$1000 for the Center for Restorative Justice;

## INSPIRATIONS OF THE DAY

Submitted by Jim Lehman



"Conquer the angry one by not getting angry; conquer the wicked by goodness; conquer the stingy by generosity, and the liar by speaking the truth."

— Gautama Buddha

"The ideals which have always shone before me and filled me with joy are goodness, beauty, and truth."

— Albert Einstein

**Survey Results.** Many of us are eager to get back to the DoubleTree. The results of last week's survey are interesting, in that many of us would like an interim hybrid period – perhaps even extending beyond, where one would have the option to zoom in, depending on schedule. By the way, 49 of the 53 respondents have been vaccinated.

*Q1 - For at least a while, we will likely offer a hybrid meeting, where some meet at the DoubleTree and others on zoom. Members in each format would be able to see and hear the other, using the OWL technology. How would you prefer to participate in hybrid meetings in July and August?* Zoom 17%; DoubleTree 30.2%; Maybe both, depending on my schedule 52.8%. We may want to consider the utility of building the OWL hybrid into our Club meetings. John Howland attended the Board meeting virtually by OWL, and as long as only one person talked it was functional!

*Q2 - Do you have difficulty hearing speakers at the DoubleTree meetings? (We are working with the hotel to improve the sound system and need to assess the extent of this concern.)* 34% said yes; 24.5% sometimes; 41.5% no.

Continued on page 3





## Fine Time with Harry Sparrow

June 16<sup>th</sup> was Flag Day and **John Howland** was fined for having same birthday, on June 23<sup>rd</sup>...hmm... also Flag Day was actually June 14<sup>th</sup> so Harry was 0-2 for this fine.

**Francis Limbe** celebrated his birthday on June 16<sup>th</sup> with family.

**President Buff** also celebrated her birthday on the 16th with an exclusive off the books "Rotary" social at Nuno's using a gift certificate she and Bernadette bid on at our fall OOTT auction. *Was it fair to all concerned?*

**Lyn Childress** was fined for forgetting her 4<sup>th</sup> anniversary with the club.

**Sean Gallagher** was fined for not being picked on recently and said he'll be back more often now that his meetings are thinning out. HE also said he recently enjoyed a bike tour of Utah.

**Harry** asked **Buff** to explain one of the plenary sessions at the convention in which **Sylvia Whitlock** was interviewed by 2022-23 RI President-elect **Jennifer Jones**. They talked about how the Duarte Club started inviting women into Rotary and the Sylvia Whitlock Award established in 2017, which has now been recognized by RI as an official RI Award. **Harry** offered to pay Sylvia's fine, but **Lyn Childress** fought him for it. Both enjoyed the interview. You can too if you come to Friday's unofficial meeting!



Harry called out **Mike DeWees** who celebrated his birthday on Father's Day with his spouse April who shares the same birthday on June 20. Mike, evidently celebrating it all



## CHS Interact Report

Faculty Advisor and Honorary member **David Sawhill** welcomed the opportunity to support the CHS Interactors. **Mercer Weis**, 2020-21 President, introduced 2021-22 President **Isabelle Winnick** and showed a video that Interactor **Tiffany Nguyen** pulled together. The clever slide show went through their activities from the year including that they had 90 people on their first zoom meeting. Drive Away Hunger raised over \$900 and 900 cans of food. Their Bike-a-Thon was also a success also raising over \$900. They also did a tree planting event at the CA Botanic Garden. Sylvia Whitlock was prominently featured as one of their meeting speakers advocating for women membership in Rotary. Despite all the challenges of 2020 and 2021 Interact had an amazing year and we're proud to be part of it. Other officers shown are Afiya Imam, Alana Polanski, Lyna Bui and Jazzy Lyn.

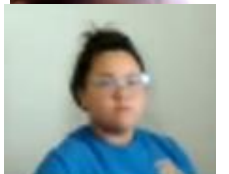
**Bridget Healy** paid tribute to Mercer Weis who was president during the Zoom year. She also showed off the yearbook that Mr. Sawhill oversaw "a very real yearbook during an unreal year. The Courier ran a story on it [June 11](#). You can buy one for \$100 from David Sawhill. [dsawhill@cusd.claremont.edu](mailto:dsawhill@cusd.claremont.edu).

Finally, Mr. Sawhill and Mercer thanked Bridget for all she does to keep them on track and bring a bright smiling light to all.

## June Board meeting, cont'd from p. 2

Works, \$1500 for Shelter Box and \$2250 to sponsor six girls at PACE Piyali School for Girls.

The Board also adopted a new membership policy. It reflects Rotary's new reality, which is becoming increasingly flexible to encourage better and more participation rather than simply regular attendance. Buff sent the policy out today (6/18), especially asking the long standing members to offer reflections.



## Collective Memories, continued from p. 1

For the USA, as an example, we have a “story” or template of our involvement in WWII (and even WWI). A rough version of the story goes something like this:

- European countries get themselves into a terrible mess.
- War ensues, with Germany as the aggressor.
- The US sides with the UK, France, and others, but doesn’t want to get involved.
- Finally the US has to become involved.
- The US throws its soldiers and resources behind the Allies.
- Victory follows!

Now, does this storyline more accurately align with *history* or with *collective memory*, the way Americans remember the war? To tackle the question, our speaker and her colleagues interviewed more than 100 people in each of 11 countries to explore their “memories” of the war. The questions were to explore what people know about the basic facts of the war, not what they lived through—for most people now, the war was not something they personally experienced. Once they had that baseline, they posed questions about perceptions of the war, for example by having them list the 10 most critical events of the war, and then by having them estimate each country’s efforts in fighting the war. (To bring it home, Dr. Umanath had us each consider our top ten critical events of WWII.)

The 11 countries of the survey were 8 allies—the US, the UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, France, China, and Russia—and the 3 major Axis countries, Germany, Italy, and Japan. Of course, many other countries and territories were involved, but the study focused on these. Over 1300 people participated, with more than 100 in each of the countries of the study; the average age was 35.5 with a standard deviation of 17, and the gender breakdown was 42.8% male, 56.5% female, .6% Other, and .1% N/A.

Now, on to the perceptions of the war: what did people identify as the top 10 critical events of the war, and what did they think were the contributions of their own country and other countries to fighting it? The answers yielded 11,024 events, an average of 8.3 per person. The authors then identified “core” events, those identified by at least 50% of all respondents, and then national core events, identified by at least 50% of an individual country’s respondents, and finally, the rest of the top ten most nominated events, even if not at the level of 50%.

Out of the entire sample across all 11 nations, the “core” events were, in descending order:

1. Attack on Pearl Harbor

2. Atomic bombings
3. D-Day
4. Holocaust

The rest of the top ten from the entire sample, again in descending order, were:

5. German invasion of Poland
6. Battle of Stalingrad
7. German invasion of USSR
8. Battle of Britain
9. Victory in Europe Day
10. Fall of France

By number seven on the list, the agreement was 23% among respondents, and for number 10, it was down to 18%. Since globally there was a lot of disagreement about what was most important, perhaps there are insights to be found in examining how the top ten lists differ across countries (if they do).

Consider first the Allies. For Australia, the “core” events (more than 50% select each event) included all 4 of the global core events plus the German invasion of Poland. All but one of the 8 countries also included the global “core” events along with perhaps one or two additional events. The order may vary, but there was broad agreement about what the list of “core” events should include. Interestingly, the UK and France each had one event that only its respondents found significant enough to meet the 50% bar. Looking through the top ten listings for the Allies, essentially each had at least one top ten event that was a top ten event for itself alone. For example, the US was the only one of the Allies for which the Battle of Midway featured in the top 10, and for

Australia	Canada	China	France	NZ	UK	USA	Russia
Attack on Pearl Harbor 77%	Attack on Pearl Harbor 78%	Attack on Pearl Harbor 75%	D-Day 90%	Attack on Pearl Harbor 81%	D-Day 75%	Attack on Pearl Harbor 91%	Battle of Stalingrad 93%
Atomic Bombings 67%	D-Day 75%	Atomic Bombings 55%	Holocaust 72%	Atomic Bombings 73%	Attack on Pearl Harbor 67%	D-Day 81%	Battle of Kursk 73%
Holocaust 58%	Holocaust 67%	D-Day 53%	Atomic Bombings 62%	Holocaust 61%	Holocaust 59%	Atomic Bombings 80%	D-Day 66%
D-Day 54%	Atomic Bombings 66%		Attack on Pearl Harbor 52%	D-Day 60%	Battle of Britain 59%	Holocaust 66%	Siege of Leningrad 65%
Nazi invasion of Poland 50%			De Gaulle's Appeal 50%	Nazi invasion of Poland 50%	Atomic Bombings 58%		Battle of Moscow 64%
					Nazi invasion of Poland 54%		Nazi invasion of USSR 60%
							Battle of Berlin 57%
Bombing of Darwin 25%	Dieppe Raid 17%	Nanking Massacre 41%	Liberation of France 38%			Battle of Dunkirk 45%	Battle of Midway 19%
							Siege of Sevastopol 18%

### Russia is different

- 7 core events → high mnemonic overlap
- events specific to the Russian side of the war

Australia it was the bombing of Darwin. New Zealand did not have an idiosyncratic choice, probably because there were no events that they specifically identified with, in contrast to WWI.

*Continued, p. 5*

## Collective Memories, continued from p. 4

The eighth country among the Allies, the USSR, presents a real contrast. Their top 10 included only D-Day from the global “core” events. All of the other events were USSR-specific, including one that was USSR-idiosyncratic, the Siege of Sevastopol. Further, there were seven “core” events for the USSR respondents, an unusually high number, signaling broad agreement among them about what was important in WWII, and six of them were not “core” to any other country. Tellingly, the Russian participants in the survey didn’t call it “D-Day,” but rather “the opening of the second front.” Furthermore, on the general knowledge about WWII, the Russians beat all others handily, so their focus on USSR-specific events did not reflect ignorance about what happened elsewhere.

On the Axis side of the ledger, almost all of their “core” events were shared—the attack on Pearl harbor and the atomic bombings were on all three; the Holocaust and D-Day were on two out of three; and the German invasion of Poland was on one of three. Each also had an idiosyncratic event in its top 10.

Given all of the above, the researchers asked, “Who won?” That is, who contributed how importantly to the victorious outcome of the war? Who did the heavy lifting? Specifically, the question, using a slider on a percentage scale from 0 to 100%, was how much was your country responsible for? The self-reported range went from a low of 14% for New Zealand to a high of 75% for the USSR. Interestingly, the totals add to over 300%. Now, as these eight were not the sole contributors to the Allied effort, what do they imagine all the other 20 or so were doing? Modifying the question to account for the eight Allies here plus a category for all the others, the researchers asked respondents to assign percentages to each of the 9. This question resulted in a lower total for each than in the previous iteration (New Zealand down to 5% and the USSR down to 64%), though curiously the total over all the responses was 191%. And, while all the assigned values fell, the USSR value fell by the smallest proportion from its initial value.

Finally, extracting from the answers what the average was for each country as seen from all the other countries, the assigned values drop quite a bit more, and indeed add up to only 87%, an over-correction of sorts. In this version, the contribution of the USSR (as seen by the rest of the Allies) was 20% vs. the 64% from the Russian responses.

Now, there is no objective measure of contributions to the victory: one might consider total lives lost; or combat casualties; or property destruction; or materiel produced and committed, etc. Estimates of total military and civilian deaths are roughly 24 million for the USSR, 20 million for

China, 7.7 million for Germany, 2.85 million for Japan, and 418,500 for the US, so the contemporary Russian view of contributions to the victory might be heavily informed by the differential burden they bore. Looking at military deaths alone, the USSR had 9.8 million, China 3.5 million, Japan 2.12 million, Germany 5.533 million, and the US 416,800. Again, the USSR far outstrips any of the others, so maybe their viewpoint shouldn’t be summarily discounted. Interestingly, the “Western viewpoint” seems to have evolved over time: in a sample of French public opinion in 1945, 57% gave the USSR most of the credit for the defeat of the Nazis. In 2015, 54% credit the US with having contributed the most to the defeat of the Nazis. This finding is echoed in the authors’ global research: assigned percentages to countries other than their own yields a consensus figure of 27% for the US and 20% for the USSR. The general Allied view now is that the US out-contributed the USSR in winning the war.

In sum, why do we see these patterns? For starters, we internalize what we’re taught in school, which nationally is pretty self-flattering. Second, the US has been a central player in the formation and maintenance of global organizations since WWII, including the UN, the IMF, the World Bank, the ILO, the GATT and its successor WTO, and the centerpiece of military alliances in Europe and the Pacific. Media globalization and media control have tended to favor the Western narrative, so the short version of WWII that we opened with has been promulgated widely over decades. Finally, this study was conducted in English by American university academics. But it was re-run in native languages—in German in Germany, in Japanese in Japan, etc., with results that were very, very similar.

Takeaways from the research? Remembrances of WWII show important overlap among nations, but there are also differences, including maintenance of idiosyncratic, self-relevant events. The Russians remember the war quite differently from all the other peoples, and now decades later, a Western-Allied perspective seems to have prevailed. Dr. Umanath, taking a cue from Napoleon, who held that “History is the version of the past that people have decided to agree upon,” puts it this way: “Collective memory is the version of the past that people have decided to agree upon.”

Or Churchill: “History is written by the victors,” becomes “Collective memory is written by some of the victors more than others.”

Though we were well into overtime, questions flowed and conversation continued. Thank you, Dr. Umanath!



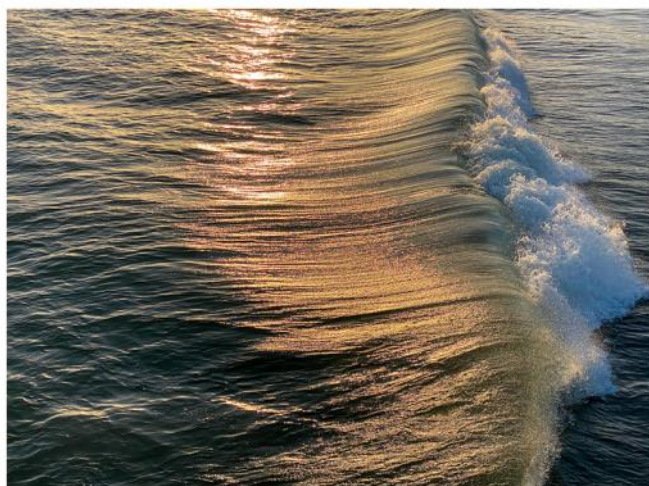


## UPCOMING PROGRAMS & EVENTS

June 25	At Noon, Special meeting: Annual Report 5:30 Debunking: presidential year zoomed by 7:00 Reception at Nunos
July 9	Club Assembly: The Carson Era Begins



**Buff Wright**  
Claremont Rotary  
President  
2020-2021



Seacliffe Beach Wave

*Photo of the Week by Steve Schenck*

I'm anticipating waves of  
year end donations.  
Help end Polio by feeding  
the virtual pig.  
Send fines and donations  
[here](#) or mail your check  
to  
PO Box 357  
Claremont 91711



**Bacon Bits**  
Let's fill up the pig!

### Website

Information about the club and back editions  
of this newsletter are always available on  
DACdb and [www.claremontRotary.org](http://www.claremontRotary.org)

### Join us on Facebook:

[www.facebook.com/RotaryofClaremont](https://www.facebook.com/RotaryofClaremont)

Club [Bylaws](#) and [Policies](#) are posted for  
member access on DACdb

### June Birthdays

Jenna Irish 6/3  
Mark Carson 6/5  
Harry Sparrow 6/10  
Zoe TeBeau 6/12  
Buff Wright and Francis Limbe 6/16  
Mike DeWees 6/20  
John Howland 6/23  
Randy Prout 6/27



*Notes by Jim Lehman and Mike DeWees. Pictures by Steve Schenck*

*The Claremont Rotary Club meets on Zoom at 12:00 on Friday until further notice*

**Sergeants committee**  
gathers before each  
meeting by email.  
Anyone is welcome to  
share information!!  
**Nona Tirre, chair**

### Clarifier Committee

Mike DeWees  
Bill Burrows  
Sean Harrison  
Bobby Hyde  
Jim Lehman  
Steve Schenck  
Chris Hayes Shaner  
Harry Sparrow  
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