

## **MIKE PISTAK AND THE ROTARY CLUB OF ROSSLAND CELEBRATE 50 AND 65 YEARS OF SERVICE**

Mike Pistak was asked to join the Rotary Club of Rossland just over 50 years ago. The Club was founded in 1951, 65 years ago. At that time there were about 35 members in the Club and it was quite the privilege to be a member of the Club. Of course Rossland was 1/2 again the size it is today and Teck was 5,000 employees versus today's 1,500. The needs and funding options in Rossland were very different then, so the projects that Rotarians worked on in the earlier days of the club were different than today's Club projects, but the reason we are all part of the Club is exactly the same: "it offers us the opportunity for fellowship and to contribute just a little bit to the community and to our country.", says Mike.

Mike was born and raised in Trail and after higher education in microbiology, he and his wife Barb settled in Rossland, him to a career as a "diamond driller" contractor and her as a nurse. A diamond driller tool (or the person operating it) is used in major mining exploration operations, to drill cores from the bedrock. To put this in perspective, as recent as 30 years ago, Rossland was a center of logging and mining, whereas today it is a recreation destination.

Mike has attended Rotary Club meetings in Hungary, Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, Bali, and Southeast Asia. Once he made a Rotary meeting in Prince George by helicopter - he was working in the bush and needed to buy groceries, so that worked out just fine. He speaks Hungarian and some Italian, being a first generation Canadian of Hungarian parents and having grown up in the Gulch. He's been Rossland's Club President for 5 terms, 3 of which were consecutive terms. Even his wife, Barb, has been a member of Trail Rotary for about 27 years.

Rotarians and the Clubs typically don't do much publicity, so that's why much of the work that the Rossland Club has done over the past 65 years is not well-known -- not to mention that the Club's records and memorabilia were destroyed by fire twice. Mike's 50 years as a member and his recollections are a great asset to filling in the gaps in answering the question: "What has Rotary contributed to the community over the years? "

"Back in those days" Rotary was the community organization to receive federal funds for construction and other projects. Rotary "stepped up" often to receive funds, do feasibility studies and the like for key construction projects such as the Rossland Museum, followed by Golden City Manor (1974), and later the Rossland Library, and Rotary Health Center.

The Museum and Golden City Manor construction followed a similar template: Rotarians raised funds, setup a committee to direct construction, called public meetings to get members to form the initial boards of the Rossland Historical Society and Golden City Manors Society. Rotarians did what was needed, from

painting, scraping and dynamiting to fundraising and supervising, and the Club has continued a "hands-on" maintenance role.

Rosslanders here today remember going to the library located in the old jail cells in the basement of the Courthouse and going to the Rotary Health Center to get their kids' immunizations and post-natal care. Rossland Rotary initiated funding and supervised construction of the present library (in the 1970's) and the Rotary Health Center (in the early 1960's).

In 1983, Rossland Rotary stepped up to become contractors and receive federal funds for the building of the emergency room entrance at the Mater Misericordiae Hospital in Rossland. Rossland Rotary also raised funds for the orthopedic clinic to purchase their first scopes and other specialty equipment.

Rossland Rotary had an influential hand in at least 6 community parks and recreation facilities, reflecting the Club's historical emphasis on local youth-related projects that continues to this day. In the early 1980's and 1990's, Rotary created Nickleplate Rotary Park from a field to a park with washrooms, swing sets, tire swings, a flying fox, sandboxes and monkey bars. Rotary received federal funds in the 1980's to convert the swamp that is now Jubilee Park by leveling, creating drainage and adding fill. Rotary worked with the Lion's Club to construct the barbecue building at Centennial Park; Rotary made the concrete foundation and floor and secured the heavy timbers for the structure. In the 1970's, Rotary raised funds for the original exercise bars, slides, jungle gym, and playground equipment at MacLean Elementary School. In the early 1970's/1980's, Rotary raised funds for the Rossland pool, for improvements, a fence, painting, and Rotarians painted the pool itself.

Rossland Rotary's history with the Rossland Union Miner's Hall heritage building goes back to the middle 1970's. Rotary has been involved in several aspects of the Hall's ongoing renovation, raising funds (see the door plaques) and donating time and materials for various projects. In 2008-2009, Rotary initiated the fundraising and construction project and completed a \$40,000 major renovation to the kitchen facility inside the hall.

Since its founding, the Club has provided scholarship funds for local students to seek education after high school. Rossland Rotary has made it possible for many Rossland adults and youth to participate in various Rotary programs. Some programs allow community members to visit or live in another country (Rotary Youth Exchange, Rotary Group Study Exchange). Other programs focus on youth education and leadership skills (Adventures in Citizenship, Adventures in Technology, Rotary Youth Leadership Program, guidance to Rossland Interact Club). Rossland Rotary has supported Rotary Youth Exchange every year since its founding in 1951.

Rossland Rotary has contributed to international programs. The Club regularly applies for grants through Rotary International that allow the Club to multiply its donations. The Club hosts visiting Rotarians from around the globe, enriching the Rossland community and sharing with the worldwide Rotary community. International project contributions include Polio Plus, Tegucigalpa Market Children, sanitation in India, temporary housing (through the Shelter Box program) for people in earthquakes, and Rossland Rotary Interact Club's international projects. The Shelter Box temporary housing program contributions have aided people in earthquake disasters in the Philippines (tsunami & earthquake), Haiti, Pakistan, East Africa, and Nepal (7 Shelter Boxes from the Club and community fundraising efforts went to Nepal in 2015).

Today, the Rossland Club membership is about 28 adults of all ages, gender and background united in the vision that the Club can make a difference in the community and in the world. Each club member believes that this community and international work is more effective and will have more impact by working as a team and through the structure offered by Rotary International.

Anyone is welcome to attend a club meeting to visit and learn more about Rossland Rotary, propose a project, make a presentation, or contribute to a particular project. The club is not affiliated with any religious or political organization (there is no secret handshake!), and Rossland Rotarians always appreciate the opportunity to get to know community-minded and service-oriented people who like the idea of "giving back" to one's community.

More information about the Rotary Club of Rossland, current programs, events, and contacts can be found on [www.rosslandrotaary.org](http://www.rosslandrotaary.org) .