

# THE ROTARY BIG WHEEL

Anderson, Indiana

May 29, 2007

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## Dave Groner, Rotary King, Eradicating Polio

(Herald Bulletin, May 29, Gabriel Khouli)

Dave Groner is an African king. The 68-year-old Michigan resident and funeral director is the assistant king of the Nigerian state of Apappa. Wearing his traditional royal garb, a blue-and-peach robe with a tall blue-and-pink hat, Groner spoke to the Anderson Rotary Club Tuesday about his experiences in Africa and Southeast Asia.

Groner was promised the position of assistant king if he could keep the state of Apappa free from polio and lockjaw for an entire year. He kept his promise, and they kept theirs. Over the years, Groner has fought to eradicate polio and other diseases, immunizing millions of children in Africa and Asia. He is vice chairman for polio eradication for the World Health Organization and is in charge of polio vaccination for 22 countries in Africa and Asia. He's gone on 15 separate trips to help immunize people.

For many young Americans, the once deadly disease has become a myth. The polio vaccine was developed in 1955 by Jonas Salk, and polio was eradicated in the United States in 1979, according to the National Museum of American History's Web site.

When the Rotary Club started its PolioPlus campaign in 1985, there were 1,000 new cases of polio per day in 125 countries, Groner said. Last year, 1,980 cases new cases were found for the entire year. Progress is being made in the four countries above as well, with Pakistan remaining polio-free for the last 10 months, Groner said. Afghanistan has seen a two-third drop in its polio cases to 130 cases so far this year.

Groner has made immunizing the world's children one of his main causes. He has immunized tens of thousands of children with his own hands in one day on several occasions, working nonstop throughout the day. He says his goal of total eradication is close, but no matter how tired he gets, immunizing thousand of children in 100-degree weather, he won't quit until his job is done.

"I will not quit until polio is gone," Groner said. "I've ridden camels across the desert until my legs rejected my thighs. I've given vaccinations to kids with live maggots in their mouths.

"But I've never had a bad day," he added, his eyes smiling. "I'm lucky to be Rotarian."

## **Invocation, Pledge and Four-Way Test**

Mary Lee Ewald

### **Rotary Moment #521 – Polio Plus – Bill VanNess**

The work of individual Rotarians to combat polio over much of the world has been remarkable. More than twenty years ago the goal was established and the planning began. No plan could proceed without money to buy the vaccine and other necessary supplies to immunize those children of the world unfortunate enough to be living in countries without easy and affordable access to immunization.

Anderson Rotary club members were exceptional in their generosity and in the speed with which they responded. Under the leadership of the late T. Franklin Miller every member contributed. The total came to \$109,000 with an average of \$1,000 per member. The largest individual contribution was \$10,000 and there were more than one of that size. In recent years Anderson Rotary has contributed even more toward the goal of universal polio immunization. Today the Anderson club has over 190 Paul Harris Fellows presently or formerly within Anderson Rotary.

Individual volunteer Rotarians have done the detailed and difficult task of administering vaccine directly to billions of children and working with their families in some of the most difficult areas of the world. This is work that few have been privileged to observe. Our speaker today has.

## **VISITORS**

**Visiting Rotarians:** District Governor Bing Pratt

**Guests:** John Wilson, Video, Herald Bulletin; Gabe Khouli, guest of club

**Student Guests:** Alex Jones, Interact; Bryan Sewell, HHS

## **YEAR-END CONTRIBUTIONS**

Foundation Chair, John Eddy, and Governor Bing Pratt encouraged year-end contributions to RI Foundation to help with Rotary Funds around the world.

## **50/50 DRAWING**

\$96 Dollars collected with proceeds going to Relay For Life. Betty Crum, winner.

## **RELAY FOR LIFE**

**Friday, June 15<sup>th</sup>, 6:00pm to Saturday, June 16**

**Contact:** [gricker@rickers.net](mailto:gricker@rickers.net) or [kharrison@eCommunity.com](mailto:kharrison@eCommunity.com)

## **Today's Fortune**

**We need to attract people who create more light than heat.**