



DG Erna Morain, DGE Steve Dakin and DGN Alka Khanolkar were among District 6000 Rotarians at the Peace Pipe reception in Flensburg (Schleswig-Holstein, Germany) which was attended by 135 Rotarians from 21 countries. Photos provided by Yogi Reppmann

Peace Pipe project connects the world

In 1931, Keokuk Rotarian W.J. Fulton attended the first Rotary International Convention outside North America, at Vienna, Austria. There, he and other delegates grew concerned about rising nationalism which leads to war. Returning home, he sent letters to 496 Rotary clubs in 65 countries, inviting them to symbolically smoke a peace pipe in the tradition of his city's namesake, Chief Keokuk. Letters received back from those clubs have been remarkably preserved and are published in a 332-page book, "Die Peace Pipe Briefe." Members of those clubs were invited to a Peace Pipe reception at the Hamburg RI Convention. Keokuk Rotarian Tony Conn's report from that incredible event is presented here. One additional note: The peace pipe which Tony is holding here was delivered to German Chancellor Angela Merkel by her aide, Dr. Klaus Schueler, who is a friend of Rotarian Dr. Joachim (Yogi) Reppmann.

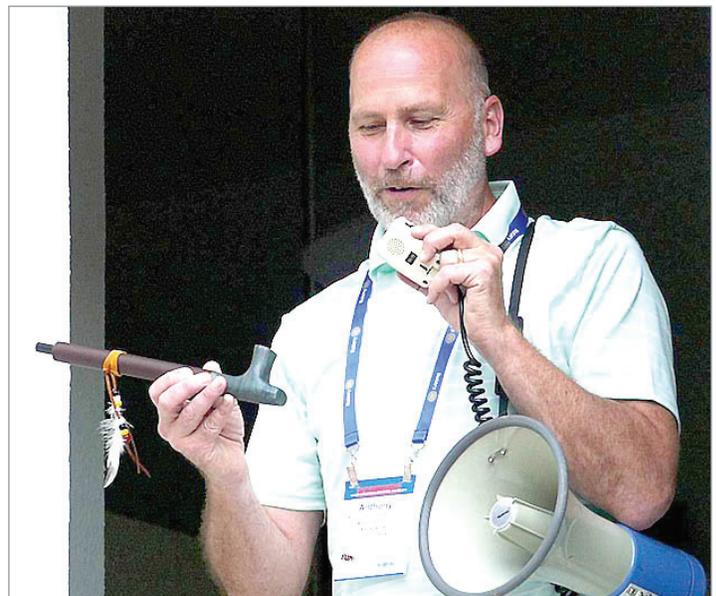
By Tony Conn/Keokuk

Northfield, Minnesota Rotarian, Dr. Joachim (Yogi) Reppmann, and his wife Gitta opened their Flensburg, Germany, home to host over 135 Rotarians at the start of this year's Rotary International Convention in Hamburg.



Dr. Klaus Schueler (r), a friend of Yogi Reppmann, delivered the peace pipe to German Chancellor Angela Merkel. The two are pictured in an earlier photo provided by Yogi Reppmann.

Attendees represented 21 countries and 68 Rotary clubs. Dr. Reppmann, a history professor at St. Olaf College, co-authored the newly released book, "Die Peace Pipe Briefe," which is a collection of letters from Rotary clubs around the world written in 1931-32. He and co-author, Keokuk Rotarian Tony Conn, organized this event to celebrate the release of this book, which celebrates an International Service Project of the Rotary Club of Keokuk in December 1931.



Keokuk Rotarian Tony Conn with the peace pipe.

After months of planning and sending out personal invitations to more than 500 Rotarians, the event nearly crashed before it got started. Attendees were instructed to load chartered buses at the front entrance of the Hamburg Convention Hall, to travel 1-1/2 hours north to Flensburg. When the buses arrived at the Convention Center, however, Hamburg police pushed them off to an open field nearly a half mile away.

Keokuk Rotarian and book co-author, Tony Conn, found DG Tom Gump (Minnesota) and quickly came up with a plan to gather the attendees. Tony walked the front of the convention center holding a Peace Pipe Letters sign among the 20,000 Rotarians entering and leaving the Convention Hall. Conn collected up those looking for the Flensburg bus, directing them to DG Tom, who had an identical sign held high, just inside the convention hall entrance. At 1:15 p.m., the two led their collected group off on a walk through the busy streets

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The welcome sign shows how Rotary connects the world.

Nations come together



Yogi Reppmann

to the waiting buses.

Unfortunately, Rotarians from Johannesburg, South Africa, and Chennai, India, did not make the connection. Their seats were unknowingly filled by Rotarians from Singapore and California, who decided to join the friendly group following the guys with Peace Pipe Letter signs. Both parties were surprised where they ended up, and at the same time, thoroughly delighted they got to join this event.

Reppmann and Conn wanted to host a party at a location in Hamburg, but found meeting halls to be outrageously expensive. Refusing defeat, the two started to look at alternate sites. One option was to hold the reception at the Flensburg home of Dr. Reppmann, renting buses to get attendees to and from Flensburg. This was a plan which fit their modest budget, a fraction of the cost of a Hamburg room.

The "tour" included a 1-1/2 hour bus trip through the Schleswig-Holstein countryside, crossing the Kiel canal on the way to historic Flensburg. Buses stopped at the home of Dr. Reppmann for hors d'oeuvres and drinks, then off to the Flensburg seaport for a brief tour. Buses then reloaded and traveled a short distance into Denmark, stopping at the Danish Queen's summer castle and a world-famous hotdog stand. During the travel time, attendees were entertained by a local historian. Buses ended up back at the Reppmanns' for more drinks and snacks before heading back to Hamburg.



District 6000 leadership supported this event as DG Erna, DGE Steve, and DGN Alka all made the trip. The bus trip and smaller crowd allowed attendees to make connections with international Rotarians. Many new friends were made and open invitations to come visit were set.

A true Rotary event!



MY FIRST RI CONVENTION

'Get ready to be blown away by the power of Rotary'

By Ryan Bell/Iowa City

For several years now, I've hinted to my wife that it'd be really cool to attend an International Rotary Convention. This year, as a surprise for my birthday, she came through! Colleen and I were bound for Hamburg!

As I delivered this news to my club the following Thursday, I was given lots of advice from club members who'd been to conventions in the past. "Get ready to be blown away by the power of Rotary" was the common theme. I was ready!



Ryan Bell

My main motivation for attending was to see Rotary from a wider lens. To immerse myself into the thoughts and traditions of Rotarians from all over the world just HAD to be a successful way to stoke my inner fire for all things Rotary. It turned out to be exactly that. Upon arriving in Hamburg, it was quickly apparent that Rotarians had overtaken this beautiful, historic city. It was amazing and inspiring to see the Rotary banners, pins, clothing and signage EVERYWHERE!

Now, to make sure my non-Rotarian spouse is as into this as I am! As it turns out, there were many sessions focused on

empowering women to rise up the ranks and serve equally at the available leadership positions. Being a focused, independent working mom, Colleen was all ears and found many parallels to challenges faced in her industry of financial services.

The events and sessions of the convention were uplifting, but what really got me was the sense of optimism for a better future for all humanity. This optimism flowed from each of the session speakers and was evident from quick eye contact with anyone else in the room... these were people ready to improve the world for the benefit of others! Colleen and I were blown away with the thousands of people from over the world participating in learning from one another. Even when the rain was pouring down, each Rotarian we encountered was full of optimism for the opportunity that was unfolding.

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This article first appeared in District Governor Erna Morain's July email newsletter, D6000 NEWS.