

INDUCTION: **STEVE COOK**
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“MAKING FRIENDS BY SERVING”

HUMANKIND

Humans emerged from savannahs of the southern Rift Valley in East Africa from hominid species paleo-anthropologists have traced back about six million years. *Scientific American*, this month, speculates that humans almost went extinct about 200,000 years ago. Our deep ancestors suffered a 100,000 year ice induced drought. The sparse survivors huddled just east of the tip of Africa in what is now South Africa. The sea saved them, says Curtis Marean, a professor at Arizona State University. Abundant intertidal fare and scrubby coastal fauna made life easier than the highlands of Ethiopia and Tanzania, on which savannahs humans first evolved. Humans hung on, and, as our existence evidences, began to flourish. 150,000 years later, migrating from Africa, humans domesticated plants and animals, turning hunting and gathering on its head. Humans communicate survival schemes one generation to the next by language, building the intricate web of relationships and skills that is civilization.

Why did humans survive, when so many other hominids lines died out? Some answer, “Chance.” Others credit God. Many point to the male capacity for vicious predation. These thinkers portray man as a superior competitor, praising the human ability to fabricate weapons fatal to any uncultured species. The human mind, these people believe, is sharper than claws, harder than fangs, more toxic than venom. Man perseveres because man kills well. I prefer another answer to the mystery of why humans survived. I believe humans survived because they learned to cooperate. They learned to solve disputes with less and less violence. They learned to hunt, gather, and raise babies cooperatively. Humans enshrined these values in their religions and cultures and minds. A minority of humans has worked ceaselessly to make the world a safer and less contentious place. They transmit their insights. The great danger that remains for humans is not sharks or lions or things that go bang in the night. The great danger is human thought. When humans think themselves predatory beasts, they behave as predatory beasts. When humans think themselves caretakers of the future and the weak, they care and preserve. Predators always win the short haul. They savage their detractors. But the few who stand for cooperation and forbearance and peace are winning the long haul. Human history is a tale of increasing forbearance and care as the millennia pass.

Rotarians stand among the precious humans who seek the mankind’s well-being by non-violent means. Rotarians serve. Our acts are not earth-shattering. Our projects do not make the news. But they are the little battles that cumulate history, in generations becoming the great pacific tide sweeping humanity. We inch toward life vibrant with compassion and absent murder.

Human-kind. Be both. That’s why Rotary exists.

Welcome to Rain City Rotary, Steve.

BRAD LANCASTER
Member