

ARTHUR ALEXANDER, ROTARIAN

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Rotary International is a group of 1.2 million do-gooders. Rotarians have no creed, other than to help others locally and internationally. Rotarians, on the whole, are a staid bunch. Most Rotarians tend toward conservatism. Because of this, Rotarians can be—well—boring and excessively earnest. Still, Rotary is a remarkable organization. I am proud to be a Rain City Rotarian. I was also proud that Arthur Alexander was a Rain City Rotarian.

In some ways, Arthur broke Rotary's mold. He was not conservative in either soul or opinion. Arthur liked to shock people. Arthur's vocabulary was often better suited to a crab boat than polite society. Rain City Rotary established a special weekly award, called the Tawdry Trout, for that Rotarian who during our meeting cursed or injected topics more appropriate for taverns. Arthur was frequently awarded the Tawdry Trout. Rachel blushed more than once. Arthur had the checkered past one might expect of a brash Alaskan crabber. Arthur survived the Bering Strait because



he was just plain tougher than those seas. Arthur lost digits, fingers and toes, to the battle, but not his sense of humor. Few Rotarians bring their parrots to meetings. Fewer still wear dead fingers around their necks or carry toes in their pockets. Arthur is the only Rotarian who ever gave me a switchblade. Arthur thought I needed one.

In my view, Arthur was a perfect Rotarian. His idiosyncrasies were a front. Arthur's oddnesses hid a great heart. Arthur gave to others. Arthur cared more than most of us. These traits are the essence of Rotary. I should be specific. Arthur loved our service projects, especially when he got to cut things down with his chainsaw, blast things clean with his pressure washer, and haul other people's garbage to the dump in his giant white truck. Arthur bought all the bowling shoes from Leilani Lanes when it closed its doors. He threw them in his truck and took them to a homeless shelter. Our little dog Lucy died slowly of complications from a brain tumor. Arthur offered to put her down for us, knowing what a great grief that day would be for Kim and me. Arthur brought a piece of homespun wisdom to each Rotary meeting for Arthur's Words of Wisdom. One night he recited the King James Ten Commandments from memory. Arthur chided us that "Worry is a misuse of the imagination." On Arthur and Rachel's tenth wedding anniversary, Arthur told us: "When you draw the Queen of Hearts, put down the deck and play the hand." He also shared this fisherman's gem: "Before you drink water, remember that fish mate in it."

We go on. Arthur does not. We will heal. There will be a scar where Arthur was excised from our souls and our community. When we rub that indelible mark, we shall fondly recall the exuberant uniqueness of Arthur Alexander.

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