



The Meaning of Kiwanis Membership

Notes of an Address of Welcome by J. Roy Sanderson, Ph.D.
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Many different phases of the meaning of Kiwanis have been given. This is quite natural, as that which the word Kiwanis stands for is, like white light, composed of many parts, and these parts become apparent only under analysis. All are beautiful.

Our motto is service.

Our slogan—we build.

Our objective, a square deal for the underprivileged child, our future citizen.

Service can mean only one thing—value rendered to others.

There was a time when the horse and the mountain stream ran wild; there was activity, but not service. The horse and the mountain stream, however, were harnessed, and for many centuries have been of value. Horsepower has resulted in a great advance in our material civilization. So valuable, indeed, has been the service of the horse, that horsepower today has become a standard for measuring many other kinds of power.

As we look out upon society today we cannot but observe many men, running wild; there is activity, but no service. Today, however, service clubs are doing something towards harnessing these wild men, and directing their energies into the channels of service. And, what horsepower has meant in our material civilization, manpower will mean to our spiritual civilization.

What limitless power for good there is in the aggregate of human beings—so much of which is now going to waste, waiting to be harnessed and utilized for community good!

Kiwanis is a community service club, and that means an association of men harnessed for social service. In Vancouver this means that owing to the interest of some 250 men, an almost incredible amount of useful work has been done for underprivileged boys in this city, building them up into wholesome men, not only for their own sakes, but for the sake of the communities of the next generation, instead of allowing them to rot and to spread disease in those communities of the future.

The community life of Vancouver has been aided by Kiwanis in various other ways, to which it is not necessary here to call attention.

The Vancouver Kiwanis Club, therefore, as a community service club, looks to its members to give a portion of their time, and possibly something of their substance, and a great deal of their interest, to community building. This is good for them, and good for the community, too.

Compared with ordinary standards, the rendering of such service may appear almost generous. But that is only because we are living in an age which is accustomed to the misplacing of values. Twenty-five hundred years ago in Athens the situation was the reverse: "No full Athenian citizen had any business, or work of money-getting to do. Yet the Athenian citizen worked, and usually was a very busy man. But all his work was for the city, and for it he got no pay." We seem to have gone to the other extreme, and from first to last strive to make all our work count for individual material advancement. A mean between these two extremes is provided by the Kiwanis, and other community service clubs. Kiwanis takes men from their individual aims at certain times during the week, and uses their energies and abilities in social aims.

When individuals thus give up to community good, time that otherwise might be used for selfish ends, do they deserve any credit for so doing? Not a bit—except that of exercising good judgment. Altruistic service is a man's salvation. Without it his soul becomes ingrown; it shrivels to ever smaller proportions until the time comes for the reading of his will. Life demands expansion, not contraction, and one often wonders if we, as men, realize that unless we expand from the seed of the individual man to the fruit of the social man we cannot attain to full growth. Would it not be a pity to die before reaching full growth? Community service provides the opportunity for such development to maturity. In such an organization as Kiwanis one may learn the art of expansion, so that if the Kiwanis spirit be properly assimilated, even one's otherwise selfish pursuits become avenues for social expansion.

In the Vancouver Kiwanis Club are representatives of nearly two hundred vocations. Think for a mo-

ment what this means! Instead of 250 remaining within their individual compartments, they come out to weekly luncheons and to committee meetings, and plan to carry out Kiwanis work for the benefit of the community. In Kiwanis they all have an interest in common, however different their daily occupations may be. On these occasions the accountant meets the barrister, the druggist meets the insurance man, the hardware merchant meets the clothier, the musician the physician. The retired man comes out of his retirement and shakes hands with the publisher; the sculptor converses with the transportation man; the physical director associates with the University Dean. Each man learns to work with and to know all the others.

Again, think what a broadening influence this has upon each. The barrister, for example, gets an opportunity to see the real human brotherliness which exists in all our hearts, especially under the influence of the social atmosphere of the club. The lumberman learns, as he sits at table with the artist, that there is more in trees than wood. The legislator can forget men in the mass, for whom he devises legislation, and think of them as George, Roy, or Frank, each with his separate individuality. Those who feed, clothe, and shelter our bodies, as they gather at our tables, see that we have minds as well as bodies. And those who have to do with the training of the mind, come to realize that body and mind are so closely related that what affects the one affects the other, too.

In short, association within a Kiwanis club brings home to each of us that none is sufficient unto himself, that each one contributes his part to a community of interests. As Kiwanians thus associate they experience a broadening in their outlook upon life, a broadening from the individual to the community point of view. When we attain to the community point of view, then and then only do we rise to the status of full citizenship. In this way, Kiwanians become builders, of the welfare of the community, that larger organism in which each man is but as a cell, and for the glory of which he lives.