Passing Our Tenth Milestone

By Paul P. Harris

I WISH you a Happy New Rotarian Year.

That is to say:

I hope that the coming year may prove to be one of the happy periods which will go to make up your happy life, and I hope that Rotary may be a means of making your share of happiness more abundant than it otherwise would have been.

We have been wishing each other Happy New Years so long and so often that our words are sometimes not even trite; they are empty.

I have wished you happiness and I have expressed the hope that Rotary may be a means of contributing to your store. I have wished you much, but I have not wished you more than I have wished Rotary. If Rotary is to be a true messenger of happiness, it is to realize its highest possible destiny.

The salutation—"A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year"—allows one day for Merriment but Three Hundred and Sixty-Five for Happiness.

We can stand much more happiness than merriment. Who ever heard of a life too happy?

The American Declaration of Independence proclaimed the inalienable right not only to life and liberty but also to the pursuit of happiness.

Could there have been a higher tribute paid to happiness?

Happiness is to be desired first, last and all of the time. It is the Ultima Thule of all laudable human ambition. I am not speaking of the excitable feverish brand of happiness. I refer to the commonplace, peaceful, even-tempered happiness that gets into one early in the morning, even before breakfast and stays all day. Happiness is a hallowed word, and might well also be a haloed word, haloed by Rotary's luminous circle.

I devoutly believe happiness to be the natural order of things. Health, happiness' first prerequisite, and not sickness, is the natural order of things. It is not God's fault, if we are unhappy.

I believe that nature is lawful, not lawless, and that civilization's progress depends upon how successful we are in discovering the law. There is a cause back of every effect.

It would be strange would it not, if the power which rules this wonderful material universe with such consummate precision even to the last little detail were to leave to caprice, so vital a consideration as the happiness of men?

Happiness is our natural heritage and if we fall short of realizing it, we shall be deprived or, more likely, we shall be depriving ourselves of that which is rightfully ours.

It is marvelous and piteous what a world of woe man can create for himself, if he tries, and he need not try very hard at that.

Happiness has some mortal enemies, among the most formidable of which are—ill-health, drunkenness, gluttony, worry, fear, hate, jealousy, selfishness, thoughtlessness, miserliness, extravagance, laziness, love of display; but it also has good friends such as good health, temperance, clear conscience, fearlessness, love, kindness, thoughtfulness, friendliness, consideration, economy, frankness, fairness, sincerity and simplicity.

The enemies of happiness are loyal to their cause and are generally found together. The same may be said of the friends of happiness. Few

of the enemies of happiness can remain in the society of the friends of happiness, and still continue to live. The friends of happiness are numerous enough and powerful enough to annihilate all of its enemies if given a chance.

Many of us seek happiness in strange places, in places where it simply cannot be found. The cause of this is, of course, thoughtlessness. No man would thoughtfully give himself pain.

Big dreams of Rotary are gradually coming true, and encouraged by past performances, we dare to dream again and of even bigger things. I sometimes see, or think I see, Rotary the harbinger of a general world wide philosophy of business and of life, with happiness as its goal.

Don't you think much of philosophy, Friend?

Why philosophy is at the bottom of almost everything. It is the foundation of permanent happiness, and it lies way down beneath the very laws of the land. It was the foundation upon which both the Magna Charta and the Constitution of the United States were placed. We are sometimes disposed to think of law not only as a guide to human conduct but also as a fundamental cause; but bless you, such is not the case, law is an effect; a law which is not based upon sound philosophy cannot be serviceable to mankind. First comes the philosopher and then the legislator.

Build up the right kind of a fundamental philosophy of life in a country and the laws can't go wrong.

We have laws on our statute books today bad enough to make men laugh, sad enough to make them weep.

We need in this world a much better and clearer understanding of the worth of some things and of the worthlessness of others.

Rotary has demonstrated its ability to contribute toward the world's supply of happiness by elevating business to a companionable standard. Most of us have to live pretty near to business and it is worth while to have taken a part in the great movements of the day tending toward the idealizing of trade. In this respect the advent of Rotary was particularly opportune. It has often seemed to me that we should stop there, lest our fire become too much scattered to be effective. At other more sanguine moments, it has seemed to me, in view of the heart that has evidenced itself in past endeavors, that it would not be presumptuous, were we to look the entire big job right in the face—Life itself, and rise to the task of undertaking its betterment.

If I improve my mode of living, my business will be very likely to be benefited. Many business successes are the direct consequence of right living, outside of business; and many business failures are directly traceable to wrong living. The business life and the home life are not independent of each other; they are interdependent, one upon the other.

We shall have a Rotarian good book some day, a sort of Rotarian bible; not a disconnected product of many and diverse minds, but a carefully evolved compendium of, not a Rotarian philosophy of the day, but of THE Rotarian philosophy of the day —not the Rotarian philosophy for all time to come, because Rotarian philosophy will always be progressive.

Chapter by chapter, I would love to see the great book built up, not rapidly. In my optimistic moments, I can see it take place among the foremost of the world's productions of its kind. It will fill a long felt want. What a pleasure it will be when we really have something definite to show; when we can hand our book to a friend and say—"There, My Friend, within the covers of that book you will find all that Rotary holds dear. Read it, it will do you good." "Not a Rotarian? Hush man, every one with the love of the world in his heart is a Rotarian; you mean that you are not a member of any Rotary Club; that is different."

We are passing our tenth milestone now. May our happiness increase with our usefulness. What Rotary will be One Hundred years hence, none living can imagine. There is nothing impossible to Rotary now.

I believe that Rotary will live; if it lives, it will grow.

There may come a day sometime (for even we must obey the inexorable law and grow old), a day when we shall not care longer to bear the responsibility imposed upon us by our present plan of membership. What shall we do then—Resign? Perhaps not, if not, possibly then will come the dawn of the day "Greater Rotary."

May your happiness continue and increase. May it mature some day into rich, ripe contentment, happiness grown mellow, and may the peace and satisfaction which comes of lives well spent and work well done be yours.