

When I was two my little sister was born; 8 pounds 2 ounces of screaming, crying, baby. If the noises she made weren't bad enough, I was expected to share everything I had! My toys became our toys, my clothes became our clothes, and worst of all, my room became our room. It was the worst thing my two year old self had ever experienced. But then as we started getting older, something magical happened. Her toys started become our toys, her clothes started becoming our clothes, and even her friends started becoming our friends. And that's when I realized that sharing works both ways. It was sharing that really made us a family. But I didn't discover that all by myself. I looked to a different kind of family to be my inspiration, I looked to Rotary. Rotary is an organization of business professional persons united worldwide who provide humanitarian service, encourage high ethical standards in all vocations and help build goodwill and peace in the world. But the thing about Rotary that really helped me was the four way test; which is a four question test that's suppose to help with daily decisions, so I decided to give it a try.

The first part of the four way test simple asks is it the truth? Boy, did I ever get sick of hearing that. I can't tell you how many times I was grounded just because my sister happened to climb into toy boxes...and lock it...from the outside....But in the case of rotary, they really do tell the truth. This can be seen in the Rotarian of the year, Carl L. Schweinfurth, who said that he could get things done. Boy was that the truth! According to Rotary International "the district looked to Carl when they needed special funds and he would always help. Locally, Carl was a member of the Mt. Vernon Rotary Club. Carl was vitally interested in International Relations and he established an International Forum held in Mt. Vernon for many years. He would bring international leaders to Mt. Vernon

and invite community leaders. He was very active in the Mitchell Museum, responsible for bringing quality international artists for concerts, lectures and art shows. Carl was a very prominent man in Mt. Vernon and throughout Southern Illinois.” Carl is a wonderful example of a Rotarian! He said he could do something, then went above and beyond expectations. A lot of politicians could learn from Mr. Schweinfurth.

The second question asks is it fair? In my case, of course it wasn't fair! It wasn't my fault she was born into my family, so why should I have to share my belongings? Rotary shares because it's the right thing to do. The Rotarian president, Wilfred J. Wilkinson explains it by saying "In Rotary, sharing does not mean giving away what we have to spare, what you don't need for yourself. Sharing means giving of yourself, selflessly, for the good of others." And Rotarians seem to have lived up to President Wilf's definition. Rotarian Harry Henderson even offers proof for the community. He says “We can show Rotary Shares through our club service because our clubs are the hands of Rotary. We can show Rotary Shares through vocational and community service because Rotarians make a difference. Rotary shares in many ways, and we can obviously see that, and it isn't just in our area. For example, they helped provide dental care for children in India by purchasing a care van. They helped children who otherwise couldn't afford it. Not because they had too, not to get their name in the paper, but simple because it was fair. It was the right thing to do.

The third question asks if it will build goodwill and better friendships. Now you tell me how your suppose to look cool when you and your friends have to see Pokemon the movie because your kid sister, who just had to tag along, isn't old enough to see anything over PG. Rotary, however, isn't that socially destructive. They offer a chance

for everyone of any race, gender, or lifestyle to become part of something that helps organizations that need it, weather financially, or just by lending a helping hand. When people come together for a common cause, it creates one of the strongest kinds of friendships. Rotary helps bring people together who otherwise never would have met. Rotary also helps develop leadership skills, which is one of the most valuable things anyone can learn. By spreading leadership skills, Rotary is spreading seeds; seeds that will grow into bigger organizations that will help more and more people who will in turn spread more seeds. It's a never ending process. One that will effect people in a positive way for a very long time.

The final question of the four way test asks if it will be beneficial to all concerned. And in my case, in the long run...it was. After 16 very long years of screaming, yelling, shouting, and slamming doors, my sister really is one of my best friends. And though she still gets annoying...a lot...I love her, and she's my family. Much like Rotary provides a family for those in the organization as well as those it assists. If people can walk away from Rotary with more then they walked in with, then it is beneficial! Whether it be a new hobby, or a better understanding of our fellow human beings, it's definitely something worth while.

Just as my sister is family to me, Rotary is family to many people. Not by blood, but by a sence of community. Rotary shares everything it has with anyone they come in contact with, and they share everything they have with everyone *they* come in contact with, and so on and so forth. It's a never ending circle of something that's a rarity in today's word; kindness. Just as I learned to share with my sister, Rotary has learned to

share with their community, and that's a trait that can only be learned from patience, time, and most of all, a big heart.