

Clem was interviewed by the Sunshine Coast Daily yesterday at his home. This is the result:-
<http://www.sunshinecoastdaily.com.au/story/2010/02/21/how-one-mans-vision-could-eradicate-polio/>

One vision could eradicate polio

Peter Gardiner | 21st February 2010



Sir Clem Renouf spearheads Rotary's campaign to rid the world of polio and will feature on ABC's 7.30 Report.

Jason Dougherty

SIR Clem Renouf thinks of himself as an ordinary bloke who, thanks to a life-long liaison with Rotary, got to do an extraordinary thing.

As Rotary prepares to mark another anniversary around the world this

Tuesday, the 88-year-old former World War II pilot is unshaken in his belief the world is close to eradicating polio.

And the fact this unassuming accountant, who joined up as Nambour Rotary's foundation secretary 60 years ago, deserves a lot of the credit is one of the Coast's best little-known facts.

But not for much longer, as the ABC's 7.30 Report is soon to broadcast Sir Clem's "secret" life of service. The program will detail how Sir Clem's campaign has saved untold millions of people from one of the world's most terrible diseases.

The opportunity came to him in July 1978 when he became only the second Australian to be elected president of Rotary International. Sir Clem decided it was time for the legion of Rotary clubs around the world to focus less on parochial projects and tackle a big-picture problem that would leave an indelible mark on society.

He had been inspired by the World Health Organisation's eradication of smallpox and came up with Rotary's Health, Hunger and Humanity program that would initially see 6.3 million children immunised against polio in the Philippines at a cost of just \$760,000.

Another offshoot of the project was providing free tetanus vaccines to 390,000 expectant mothers. Suddenly Sir Clem realised there was a real power for good in the form of the ready-made Rotary network spanning the globe.

"A lot of people say I spearheaded the eradication of polio campaign, but that's not right. I just happened to know the right person to talk to," Sir Clem said.

The "right person" was Rotary district governor Dr John Sever, who was head of infectious diseases at the National Institute of Health in Washington DC.

Sir Clem put the question to him – was there another disease that could be eliminated?

He pinpointed polio, which was crippling 1000 people every day while an oral vaccine could be given for about 10 cents a dose. "I had no idea where that simple question would lead us – others would build on it, none more so than John Severs whose commitment to the goal of eradication has not wavered for more than 30 years," Sir Clem said.

He was not backwards in coming forwards when it came to seeking funding. "I would see someone smoking and say to them 'instead of ruining your health why not give that money to the Rotary polio eradication and help save 15 lives?'. The final blow against polio is now tantalisingly close with Pakistan, Afghanistan, India and Nigeria the only places where people can be crippled by the easily preventable disease.

"I used to say it would be eradicated in the next few years, but it gets harder the closer you get," Sir Clem said. "But I intend to die in a polio-free world."

His eternal optimism comes from the support of people like US philanthropists Bill Gates and Ted Turner, who have poured \$US16 million into the campaign.

Sir Clem has been to India and other polio hotspots and helped give the oral doses, which WHO officials were not interested in when he and Rotary first offered to help. "I guess they didn't really think a non-government organisation should get involved, but they didn't have our network," he says. "After they saw the effectiveness of our campaign in Central and South America, they came to us and asked us to work with them."

Sir Clem said one story that hasn't left him was the time his Rotary International successor was giving a dose to a girl when a boy crippled by polio said "thanks Rotary – that is my sister". "I couldn't help thinking why we couldn't have started sooner to spare victims like that boy.

"None of this could happen if people did not get together around tables on Tuesday nights at Rotary meetings." "I used to say it would be eradicated in the next few years, but it gets harder the closer you get. But I intend to die in a polio-free world."

Kind Regards,
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