



Rotary Club of Greensburg, PA

Club 5228 District 7305

Service Above Self

December 17, 2019

Rotary Vision:

Together, we see a world where people unite and take action to create lasting change across the globe, in our communities, and in ourselves.

Our meeting began in the usual way with the President Jeff Balzer leading in the Pledge of Allegiance, God Bless America and our invocation by *Jeff Balzer*.

Sergeant at Arms Report:

Mark Barnhart reported **29** of our **58** members were in attendance and **5** guests.

5 Guests:

- Richard Albright, Zion's Lutheran Church
- David Cobb, First Lutheran Church
- Lt. Cheyenne Martinez, Greensburg Salvation Army
- Rhonda Tipton, First United Methodist Church
- Chris Sierk, Los Alamos, New Mexico

Announcements:

- Yvonne Bloom was awarded Rotarian of the Year
- Shelly promoted the invocation and speaker chair list looking for volunteers
- Rotary Grand Cycle is open *****

History of Christmas:

1. What Christian group banned Christmas in Boston from 1659 to 1681?

The Puritans

Even though the ban on Christmas was lifted in 1681, Christmas didn't become popular in Boston until the mid-19th century. Puritans also suppressed Christmas in England as well, during the Interregnum.

2. Before becoming tied up with Christmas what was Yule?

A pagan midwinter festival

It was celebrated by Germanic peoples and was connected to Norse mythology. With Odin being the Yule Father who led the Wild Hunt across the sky. Yuletide is about two months long and falls roughly mid-November to early January. In the middle of Yuletide is Yule.

As a fun side note, jolly most likely has its origins in Yule.

3. The French word “Noel” is often used around Christmas, but what was its original meaning in Latin?

Birth

You can definitely see why Noel became so synonymous with Christmas!

4. What Roman holiday held from December 17th to the 23rd had a large influence on how Christmas was celebrated?

Saturnalia

Saturnalia was one of the most popular holidays in the Roman calendar. It of course involved lots of feasts and drinking and merry making. Because, well, they’re Roman. But it also involved role reversals where slaves were allowed to be rude to their owners and by some accounts were waited on by their owners. Also, similarly to our modern Christmas, there was lots of gift giving. Especially on December 19th, Sigillaria.

Even though the timing is similar, it isn’t believed that December 25th was chosen as the date for Christmas because of Saturnalia. Some people believe that the origin for the date for Christmas was the Roman feast day Sol Invictus which was also on December 25th. And others insist that the date of conception was the basis for choosing December 25th as day when Jesus was born. But really what it all boils down to is that there is a lot of controversy on how December 25th was chosen as the date for Christmas.

5. Among Christians who lived in the East, when was Christmas originally celebrated?

January 6th

In the West, Christmas was always celebrated on December 25th. Now, except for a select few, like the Armenians, almost everyone who celebrates Christmas does so on December 25th.

6. In what century was the first written use of Xmas?

The 16th century

The “X” in Xmas comes from the Greek letter Chi which looks like an “X”. The letter “X” has long been used as an abbreviation for Christ since the Greek word for Christ begins with what looks like an “X”. Christ was often written with the letters Chi (X) Rho (p) which looks like Xp. The Chi-Rho symbol representing Christ looks like this:

Santa Claus trivia

7. The modern Santa Claus is mainly a mix of what two figures?

Saint Nicholas (Sinterklaas in dutch) and Father Christmas, also if you said Odin I’d accept that too

St. Nicholas was a Greek bishop who lived in the 4th century and was famous for his generosity and gift giving. Sinterklaas (Dutch for St. Nicholas) gives gifts on December 5th and is based on St. Nicholas. Father Christmas dates back to at least the 16th century and is the personification of Christmas cheer and is widely considered synonymous with the modern Santa Claus. And for good measure, there might be some Odin thrown in, especially with the tradition of Santa's long beard. And there is Santa's nightly ride, which is pretty similar to Odin's Wild Hunt. But while it doesn't take much of a leap to make comparisons between Odin and Santa, there's not a lot of direct evidence linking them.

There are lots of other gift giving figures around Europe and elsewhere, but as far as I can tell Father Christmas and Saint Nicholas are the main influences behind Santa Claus as we know him today.

Speaker:

There was no speaker this week

Dates to Remember:

Our Lady of Grace Food Pantry Distribution First Saturday of every month

Our meeting ended in the usual way with the Four Way Test.

Respectfully submitted by,

The Great Dictator

The Rotary Club of Greensburg meets every Tuesday at the Ramada Inn. Meetings commence at noon and finishes by 1:00.

