

After moving to the Augustinum in Heidelberg in July 1996, I was often asked what I missed most after my life in London. The answer was simple: "My Club" (See Title 335) where I regularly lunched one or twice a week and greatly enjoyed the companionship of fellow members. I had heard of Rotary International, and I knew that its Clubs existed in Germany, but I also knew that its membership was far more exclusive in Germany than in England. Of the 72 Members of the Heidelberg Rotary Club, 33 are professors, 25 have academic titles and 14 are senior businessmen.

Rotary International was founded in 1905 by a young lawyer, P. Harris in Chicago, to foster the 'ideal of service', to encourage high ethical standards as a basis of enterprise, and to promote world fellowship of business and professional men. His plan also restricted membership in each club to a single member of each business and profession.

Through the courtesy of Professor Peter Brix and later Professor Gisbert zu Putlitz, both of the University of Heidelberg, I was invited to come to the luncheons of the Rotary Club, meeting every Tuesday at the Europäischer Hof, the best hotel in town. I was even asked to address the club on my professional work, which I considered to be 'Science-Journalism'. After that I was given to understand that I should not come to further meetings, as my possible election had reached a critical stage because my age was over 80. I gave up all hope.

Then suddenly I was told that I had been elected an Honorary Member. I was officially informed by the Club's President, Joachim Plass on 9 June 1998, during a most interesting visit to the large Tannery Company of Carl Freudenberg in Weinheim. In his after-lunch speech Plass told the assembled Members that I deserved to be an honorary member because, in the period after World War II, I had contributed "in the Rotary Spirit", to renewed contacts between English and German scientists. It was the same citation which was quoted for my Verdienstkreuz.

The Freudenberg Tannery Works, dating back to 1849, used a combination of modern technology and traditional craftsmanship to produce calf leather of the highest quality for top European firms, like Hermes, Gucci and Ferragamo as well as John Lobb's shoe-shop, in London. Where possible, automation for the chromium tanning process was introduced, as a daily throughput of about 1000 hides demanded. Yet constant quality control by highly skilled tanners and other craftsmen succeeded in making one of the oldest human manual crafts produce into modern, uniformly excellent, rawwhite.