

THE EMOTIONS BEHIND THE PIN



Why do you wear your Rotary pin:

1. Because you are supposed to?
2. Because someone told you to?
3. Because it happened to be left on this jacket from a previous event?
4. Because everyone else in the club wears theirs?
5. Because you value your belonging to a global organisation dedicated to doing good in the world?

If you are in one of the first four groups, do not read this article! You will find it boring.

If you are in the last group, congratulations! You fully understand the role of the Rotary pin.

The first Rotary pin was created in 1909 by John Frick, a member of the Rotary Club of New York. As the predecessor of the traditional Rotary pin worn today, it depicted the Rotary wheel in its earliest form — with eight spokes, without gear teeth and without a keyway. Over time, it changed, just as the Rotary wheel itself changed. Many clubs around the world used different versions of the wheel until 1922, when Rotary International announced that everyone should adopt one unified design as the exclusive symbol of Rotary.¹

But why do we wear it? According to Past RI President Bob Barth (1993–94), the Rotary pin says the following about the person who wears it: “You can rely on me. I am dependable. I give more than I take. I am available.”²

On aeroplanes, at supermarket checkouts, during meetings — it is a wonderful reason to start a conversation. Wearing a pin is a beautiful way to show our pride in Rotary and to have an easy opening to speak about what Rotary means to us.

RI President Sakuji Tanaka (2012–13) said the following: “I am a Japanese businessman, and I wear a suit almost every day. The Rotary pin is always attached to my lapel. It is there because I am proud to be a Rotarian. Wherever I go, people see the pin and understand who I am. Other Rotarians see it and know that I am their friend, and people who are not Rotarians notice it as well. I want to make sure that all of them also understand the meaning of this pin.” His appeal

was for all of us to wear our Rotary pins and to spread information about their meaning. He believed that wearing this pin on our lapel changes us. It makes us think more carefully before we speak and before we act. It constantly reminds us that we are Rotarians — and that, as such, we are here to help.³

Wearing a Rotary pin is one of the first visible things that distinguishes us from other organisations. It moves us away from the ranks of ordinary pedestrians in the street or ordinary consumers in shops and places us on another level — that of people who give their time, money and energy in service to others.

Although not every Rotarian fully realises the global nature of our organisation and the impact it truly has worldwide, its role in peacebuilding and conflict prevention; disease prevention and treatment; access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene; maternal and child health; basic education and literacy; community economic development; and protecting the environment is enormous.

Have you watched the videos that won the “The Power of Goodness” competition? They are yet another proof of the incredible power of Rotary — how it inspires, gives wings, makes dreams come true and makes everyone who has been touched by it better, whether they are among those in need or among those offering support.

Everything mentioned so far is my reason for wearing my pin. And not only that. Whenever I look at it, I know that whatever happens, there is someone I can rely on, because I have true friends — thanks to Rotary. By wearing it, I show, to myself and to everyone else, my respect for the organisation that helps me grow as a person and makes me more humane in a world where compassion, goodwill and humanity are becoming increasingly rare. It is my small way of showing reverence.



Because Rotary is the organisation that has brought us together, wearing a pin at Rotary events, whether formal or informal, and at club meetings shows our respect for it and makes us recognisable. If no one wears a pin and a stranger happens to come in, how would that person know where they are?

In Rotary Club Shumen, we have a nice and usually quite amusing tradition: at the beginning of every club meeting, we put out a jar, and anyone who has forgotten to wear their pin puts money

into it. The act itself is accompanied by many jokes and teasing remarks, which always make the atmosphere more charming.



Have you noticed that at official Rotary events, most people who have a Paul Harris pin wear that one rather than the others — the pin with the annual theme, for example? I sincerely hope this is because of “the true legacy of Paul Harris, which is not measured by the number of pins presented, but by lives changed, communities transformed, and the future built through the work of The Rotary Foundation.”⁴

The Paul Harris pin is a sign of recognition for support of The Rotary Foundation. It is usually worn during meetings, events and Rotary gatherings, although many members prefer to wear it every day. You may wear it together with your Rotary pin or instead of it — both options are acceptable.

A tip:

- Wear only the Paul Harris pin of the highest level.
- If you wear both pins, place the Rotary pin in the primary position, usually higher.

There are no official restrictions — Rotary culture emphasises pride, not rules.⁵



Photo: Facebook page of the Rotary on Pins Fellowship

Although in most cases we are used to seeing someone wear two, or at most three, pins at the same time, there are Rotarians for whom collecting and wearing pins has become a passion. In 2016, this passion grew into a Rotary Fellowship — “Rotary on Pins”. One of their goals is to

promote Rotary through Rotary pins. Another is to get to know the world through Rotary's history, annual themes, events and the unique aspects of clubs, districts, zones and The Rotary Foundation through Rotary pins.

You can learn more about them from their official website,

<http://www.rotaryonpinsfellowship.com/>, and from their Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=1408836807943192&set=pcb.1408837711276435>.



Photo: Facebook page "Being Rotarian"

And the next time you attend a Convention or another major Rotary event, look around for this man — Rtn. M. Aslam Chishti from Pakistan, also known as "The Pin Man of Rotary". He is a legendary figure and is widely recognised for his deep dedication to the organisation. Among his most remarkable achievements are his extensive advocacy and fieldwork dedicated to the global eradication of polio.

As a start, let us, amid this great variety of pins, begin by wearing just one!

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Sources

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