



What is this "Conscious Money" ritual we practice every Thursday?

We do it without thinking as it's really a part of our Rotary routine. We know it raises money to help cover operational expenses of the Club. Many assume it's something steeped in Rotary International's prescribed procedures. What most does not know is that the Conscious Money ceremony played out every week is totally unique to our Club. Many clubs have what they call "Happy Dollars" where members can stand up, make a upbeat announcement and contributive a dollar. No other club that I know of has anything as productive as Conscious Money.

An article originally written way back in 2009 is updated and enclosed within this pamphlet. Perhaps our newer members, and we seasoned ones, should know the background of one of our traditions, something only we do.

The article is presented in its original form except for corrections of several typos and updates to reflect an additional 9-years, now starting its 41st year, at approximately \$25 each week which raises the conservative estimate to over \$62,000 being added to our coffers by your generosity.

The Birth of "Conscious Money"

A 40 year fund raiser for the Derby-Shelton Rotary Club

(First Issued July 2009)

The term "Conscious Money" is heard at every meeting these days but a new replacement therapy called "Happy Dollars" was introduced by several presidents over the years. Most members just accept the phrase, take it for granted as if it is a big Rotary Thing, or just ignore the name and contribute their dollars anyway.

I have heard the question, "What does Conscious Money mean?" asked more than a few times of others at my lunch table or within my hearing. I never heard an adequate answer and being the question was never directed at me, I never volunteered to explain things. Not a very charitable move on my part but I sort of enjoyed the mystery of it being unknown.

No, I haven't been asked but I will now explain it all. During my first years in Rotary a "fine system" was used to collect a few dollars each week. This was a Rotary Thing as I noticed that all clubs I visited had some sort of fines meted out to members celebrating their birthdays, anniversaries, etc. Usually the bulk of the fines were imposed by the Sergeant-of-Arms for having your name or photograph in the local newspaper. Names demanded about two buck and photographs brought in five. If someone volunteered that they bought a new car, a small amount was collected. If another member squealed on the victim, the fine grew larger. If the dealer who sold the car was in attendance he was also hit for a contribution.

There were some things about this system that concerned me:

- a) The Birthday Fine didn't work in our club because no one would declare their birthday and the secretary was extra kind or did not have the data.
- b) The members who got their names and pictures in the paper were those doing something good for others like heading up a division for the United Way, getting recognition from some charitable organization for outstanding service, etc. Those who never contributed to the community got a free ride.
- c) Because of vocation limits there was only one car dealer in the club and he got hit on a too regular basis.

d) The process failed to meet the 4-Way Test in the areas of fairness and being beneficial to all concerned.

So, upon being installed as Club President in 1978 I immediately announced a moratorium on all fines by the Sarge at the door. I made it clear that my successor was not bound by my decision and could reinstitute the fines in his year. I also made it clear that the floor would be opened each week for anyone to voluntarily announce their birthday, wedding anniversary or other events. I said something like "Tell us anything you want us to know or anything you need to get off your *conscious*. A generous donation of one dollar will be expected for this service you are being rendered."

At the end of the meeting I was approached by several of the older members and told that I was making a grave mistake because the club needed the 8 to 10 dollars collected by fines each week. I promised them that if things didn't work as expected, the time-honored fines system would be reinstitute.

The first week we got the normal 8 dollars (appx. \$30 today's value), the next week it went to about 15, and in a few short weeks we were at 25-30 which represented about 75% of the members in attendance. At some point in the meeting I would ask if anyone had anything on their *conscious* to tell us. It took only a few more weeks before the collection was virtually 100%. None of the original doomsayers mentioned its success and no president since has successfully reverted back to the old fine system or Happy Dollars. Quite soon the phrase "**Conscious Money**" became a common expression and no one questioned its validity, or its fairness, and it was a sneaky way to get that extra buck from everyone.

It may be called something different in the future, but the concept has survived for 40+ years and has raised over an estimated \$62,000 for our club treasury. This number is a very conservative one and has been extrapolated from actual numbers and estimates received over the years from several club treasurers.

Additional Comment: I must also add that I did have a problem with Happy Dollars being given when one of our members died. This actually happened a few years back.