

Farewell Speech of Alois Serwaty on August 17, 2007

Dear Fellow Rotarians, dear guests, dear camp participants, ladies and Gentlemen,

The Rotary District 1870 Summer Youth Camp “European Youth – A Bridge to the Future” is approaching its end. Although we should wait until the evening to see how splendid the day has been, I would like to state already at this point that from our perspective the camp has been a success story.

I am very pleased to welcome you all to this final event of the camp programme. Please accept my apologies for not addressing you all personally - with one exception. It is not only a pleasure but also an honour to welcome our District Governor Paul Böskén-Diebels and his wife Anne. Dear Paul, dear Anne, thank you very much for joining us.

I do not wish to make a longer speech. That would be easy. It is much more difficult to make a short speech. At least, I will try to do my very best. But nevertheless, let me just take a quick look back. I very well remember one year ago when Paul met me to discuss the aims of his Governor tour, of his Governor year concerning youth exchange activities. He was well aware of the fact that D 1870 is extremely committed to the Rotary Youth Exchange programmes. But he had something special in mind: a D 1870 Youth Summer Camp. Fortunately, I was in the position to tell him: We are already in the planning phase of this camp. And now, dear Paul, I report to you: Mission completed!

We have a saying in Germany: “Der Erfolg hat viele Väter, der Misserfolg nur einen.” (Literally translated): “Success has many fathers, Failure has only one.” And indeed, there are many who “fathered” this camp. I am not going to summarize all of them. We all know the different phases in planning, organizing and executing such a project, we all know, what project management is about. It starts that someone has a brilliant idea and he shares this idea with others in order to get support. Everyone is enthusiastic and initial planning starts. But soon, enthusiasm turns into scepticism, criticism and fading commitment unless someone takes the initiative again and pushes the project further to success. But I must admit that our organization team never experienced these negative aspects, only the positive ones, that means, there was always ongoing commitment and everybody was devoted to set up an challenging programme for our students we had invited not only from European, but also from neighbouring countries and regions. And we were really glad that we could welcome 21 students from 14 different countries on August 4. Sadly, other students we expected from Russia and Israel or other countries were not able to participate.

Dear camp participants. I will make good on my promise to keep me short. Just a few words. We are well aware of the fact that the camp programme was a real challenge for you, not only with regard to survive a 45 km bicycle tour on the first day. But obviously, the most challenging task for you was to get up in time in the morning and to have breakfast within the schedule. Nevertheless, you were great students. And I would like to repeat: You were really great students.

The camp programme was designed to provide a broad range, a broad spectrum of German and European history and culture. But the camp programme was also designed to provide fun. And so I would like to redefine our camp motto:

We love(d) to entertain you ... and to educate you.

And I did it my way. We we did it our (German) way. And you will do it your way! I do hope you enjoyed these 14 days in Germany in the Lower Niederrhein Area. And now, it is your turn to entertain us. Thank you very much.