

Gift to the Skelton Scholarship Endowment

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William E. Skelton Scholarship Established in 1994



**District 7570 PDG 1969-70
President Rotary International 1983-84**

William E. Skelton

Endowment Scholarship

The Educator

William E. Skelton, Dean Emeritus of Virginia Tech was an outstanding leader of Rotary International, Rotary District 7570, and the Rotary Foundation.

He was born in Dinwiddie County, VA, earned degrees from Virginia Tech and Cornell and did post-doctoral studies at the University of Wisconsin in agriculture. He received an honorary doctorate from Dankook University in Seoul, South Korea. Skelton was a past national president of Epsilon Sigma Phi, a professional organization specializing in adult education and 4-H programs. He served as national president of the Virginia Tech Alumni Association and received the Virginia Tech Alumni Distinguished Service Award. He was a member of the Board of Directors of the Virginia Tech Foundation and the Smith Mountain Lake 4-H Center. He twice received the U.S. Government's Superior Service Award and the Ruffner Award, the highest recognition given to an alumnus of Virginia Tech. He had a history of serving youth locally, in the Commonwealth of Virginia so it was no surprise that he also received the national 4-H Diamond Leadership Award.

The Skeltons led the effort to build the Alumni Conference Center of Virginia Tech, serving as chair of a committee that gave oversight to the planning, design and fundraising for the \$45 million center and hotel that provides space for continuing education of adults and youth. The complex was named the Inn at Virginia Tech and Skelton Conference Center, to recognize the service to the university by Skelton and his wife, Peggy. Former Virginia Tech President T. Marshall Hahn Jr., who led the university during much of Skelton's tenure there, said Skelton's "tireless efforts on behalf of Virginia Tech, the Skelton 4-H Center, Rotary Inter-



Skelton International Scholarship. The Scholarship was originally known as the “Skelton Ambassadorial Scholarship, “and the student was encouraged to participate in a local Rotary Club project and present programs to the local Rotary Clubs. That expectation still holds true.

The history and legacy of the Skelton Scholarship reflects the legacy of the theme of the year of Bill Skelton’s presidency, “Share Rotary – Serve the People.”

A Continuing Legacy

How is the support of the Skelton Scholarship sustainable? The continuing funding of the Skelton Scholarships continues with generous contributions from Rotarians and others as well as the “Skelton Fellow” program. A Skelton Fellow is named with a gift of \$500 who may or may not be a Rotarian who has provided outstanding support to a Club or District. Members also show their support with gifts and attaining the recognition of Skelton Fellow.

Won’t you join us? You may become a Skelton Fellow or name another to become a Skelton Fellow with a gift of \$500 or more. See Janet Johnson (janetmj610@gmail.com) or a member of the Endowment Committee.

Thank you to the contributors of previous materials compiled for this information – PDG Buddy Russell, PDG Doug McAlister, PDG Archie Cromer, PDG Bill Flowers, PDG Ned Lester, PDG Henry Nickels, Jim Owen, John DeVogt.

national, and many other organizations have made it possible for generations of Virginians to aspire to greater learning, teaching, and living.” This perfectly described the commitment to education for all by Bill Skelton throughout his career.

The Rotarian

A Christiansburg-Blacksburg Rotarian from 1955 until his death in 2008, Bill Skelton served Rotary International as District Governor, Director, Vice President, and President. He also served the Rotary Foundation as a committee member, Trustee, and Chair of the Trustees. Skelton received the Foundation’s Citation for Meritorious Service and the Distinguished Service Award for his support of its educational and humanitarian programs. He received the District 7570 Distinguished Service Award in 1999 and the RI Service Above Self Award in 2003.



His accomplishments and commitment to education provided the solid backdrop of why a Rotary scholarship was established in his name through an endowment for international students.

He wrote in the Rotarian Magazine during the year of his presidency, 1983-84 that, “I hope this will be a year of development –

membership development, community development, vocational development, and international development. We have the vehicles, the programs of Rotary so that our humanitarian goals can be realized. In order to meet our goals to serve people, however, we need more Rotarians to share in the advancement of the program so that our humanitarian goals can be realized.”

Thus, were the tools of his philosophy of education and humanitarian service that built the Rotary Ambassadorial Scholarship. His service during World War II in the Caribbean left a memory of observations of children living with marginal support and resources and little or no opportunities of education. For him, the direction was clear that there was a need to support graduate education for the men and women of the area in sustainable agriculture and health and nutrition who would return and make a difference in the community. The University of choice to provide the education was his alma mater and land grant university, Virginia Tech.

A Rotary Scholarship Makes a Difference

After his completion of service as Rotary International President and other offices held by the Past-President, several Rotarians, including four who had served as District Governor of his District 7570, (Archie Cromer, Douglas McAlister, Howard Massey and



Buddy Russell) proposed that something visible be established in his honor at the Christiansburg-Blacksburg Rotary Club, December 6, 1993. He was absent from the meeting when plans were made to establish a scholarship in his name. Rotary International granted “Ambassadorial Scholarships” beginning in 1947 at the close of World War II that was demonstrative of a commitment to a worldwide education to foster peace.

On hearing of the plan by the District to establish something in his honor, Bill added his idea that a scholarship endowment be established for those students from a developing country of the Caribbean and later the Philippines was added) to do graduate study at Virginia Tech in agriculture, nutrition and related fields. This was consistent with the scholarships offered by Rotary International but with an endowment, District Designated Funds from the District would not be necessary for funding. The District goal was to raise \$75,000 and an anonymous donor matched for a total of \$150,000 in honor of the beloved Rotary International president from the District.

Since the first scholarship was awarded in March, 1994 at the District Conference, the amount of the endowment has grown to \$1.7 million and makes a difference each year for 2 – 4 students studying in a subject matter that reflects one of the six areas of Rotary focus. The scholarships are granted to international students who wish to study in the USA or students who are either residents of or attend school in District 7570 and want to add international study to their progress toward a degree. The scholarship is now administered by the guidelines of the Rotary Foundation but the District requirements remain that the recipient be an international student coming to do graduate study in District 7570 or traveling from District 7570 to pursue graduate study in an international location.

An accredited university with the appropriate curriculum may be selected for study. The students selected are both inbound to District 7570 and outbound to a selected international university. Approximately 60 students have been recipients of the 7570