

They Call Him Mr. Rotarian

by Ralph Conner

A well known world traveler, Mose Coleman wears the title of "Mr. Rotarian" among his fellow members of the Vidalia Rotary Club. Also known as a highly interesting conversationalist and speaker, he is particularly interesting when you get him strung out as a raconteur, regarding legions of friends and experiences he has encountered in his travels about the globe.

The only living member of the Vidalia Rotary Club, upon whom the honor of being a Paul Harris Fellow was bestowed by his fellow Rotarians (The late Merrill Gray was also honored posthumously as a Paul Harris Fellow), the highly coveted award came to Mose in special ceremonies at the Vidalia Rotary Club in May 1978, when his wife Alice was present to share in the program. She affixed the Paul Harris pin on his coat lapel and watched as he received the Paul Harris bronze medal and a blue and gold bound citation from Rotary International, which read: "In appreciation of tangible and significant assistance given for the furtherance of better understanding and friendly relations between peoples of the world."

"I've attended Rotary meetings all over the country and other parts of the world," Coleman said, "in New York, Minnesota, South Carolina, Louisiana, Alabama, Florida, Arizona, Pennsylvania, and



Georgia. I've attended in London, England, and I was the program speaker in Rome, Italy," he continued, saying, "I've attended in San Jose, Costa Rico, many times in Mexico, including 15 times in Mexico City, 3 or 4 times in Merida, Yucatan, and in jungle parts of Mexico."

"I'll always remember Merida, Yucatan's Rotary Club," he said. "A real nice club, they owned their own two story building, and on the occasion I'm referring to, they had two dishes of hot meat chopped up. I couldn't figure out what kind of meat it was," he said, "and I asked my friend what it was. He said lizard, describing the big lizards found out

in the jungles as iguanas. It turned out to be a real delicacy," Mose exclaimed, adding, "ordinarily, in a restaurant by myself, I wouldn't have ordered lizard before then, but I would now."

Continuing his story, he said, "the waiter would reach over your shoulder and break a raw egg into that dish of hot lizard, with the heat from the meat having the effect of cooking the egg. However, I'm not a raw egg man, so I just ate the lizard after raking the egg over to a side of the plate."

Commenting on the Vidalia Rotary Club, Mose said, "it was chartered in 1960 and Hubert Darby was the first president. I became a member in 1964, and since that date, I've always told the other members, that, "they need never be ashamed to wear their Rotary pins, just conduct themselves where Rotary will never be ashamed for them to have it on—that, within itself, it is a good piece of philosophical advice and a good creed."

With evident pride in his voice and eyes, Coleman said, "People all over the world see that pin and recognize it. It carries a lot of prestige, and I can give you many instances in traveling where I'm not known, when it has helped me out of an unpleasant situation."

Recalling one of the incidents, he said, "I was coming from Venezuela down in South America one time, and I had to go through Customs in Miami. I had a close plane con-

nection flying to Atlanta, and as I went into the Customs office, where they search luggage, they were going through some of the bags, pulling stuff out and going through it. I thought to myself, my goodness, by the time they get through with mine, I'll miss my plane to Atlanta."

"When my time came," Mose stated, "the officer, who had been going through the bags, looked up, saw my Rotary pin, and asked, "Rotarian?" I said, "Yes, and he commented, "That's a fine organization, my father was one." "He hadn't touched my bags," added Mose, "and I wanted him to hurry on. I said, Well, you haven't checked my bags," when he reached over and touched my hand and said, "Yes, I have, you've been checked, go ahead."

When my host told me that he is about 79, he had also said, "I'm glad to be old; if I were not old, I'd be dead," a statement, which seemed to me quite a mouthful.

Mose recalled that his father's home stood where Brooks Auto Parts is located in Lyons. "That's the corner where I grew up," he said. "I married Alice McCorkle, a Louisiana Southern Belle," he stated, with an extra glow in the statement, adding, "We met in Athens, Georgia, where I had gone to get an education at the University of Georgia, and she was the diploma I brought back."