**My Bout with Toastmasters.**

*By: R.S. Kumar Naidu, DTM*

**My first bout with Toastmasters**

After a few years in my job, I started my first extra circular activities which I loved doing, and it came quick and fast with cricket and then tennis, I was invited as a guest to a club called ICC ONE Toastmasters that was in 2013.

I immediately realized it was indeed a good program and I could put some attention to developing my communication & leadership skills. After all it could help me in my job and other parts of my life, and this my friends, was my first bout with Toastmasters.

**Marching forward**

 I completed a few speeches and as years passed by, I took up responsible roles as an Excom member and participated in club and area competitions. I must say I did well as a Toastmaster and noticed the amazing transformation in my skills as orator and as a leader and went on to lead the club as President and as Area Governor.

**Stepping back**

In the fall of 2016, I gave leadership a retreat, but continued attending meetings and the roles that were on offer, and achieved the Advanced Communicator, and then stagnation set in for no reason and thought I’d return once I get the urge.

**Life will always be busy**

Fast forward a few years and the urge to get to the summit of being a Toastmaster crept in to achieve a distinction of being called a DTM. Life was busy -work, home. It occurred to me that life flies by very quickly, perhaps I should get back with Toastmasters.

**Getting back in the ring**

2019 -I jumped back in the ring, not 100% sure. I gave a speech and felt I did pretty good but had gotten a bit rusty. Reviewed the requirements it would take to become a Distinguished Toastmaster and thought I’d go for it. The DTM status is a nice accomplishment and carries with it earned recognition. The real motivator for me was the challenge and growth it would bring me.

**DTM journey end game**

I made significant progress and was on my way to completing my Advanced Leadership Silver awards which will have me complete the program by March 2020. I’ve grown a lot in the process and have found it both challenging and rewarding.

When I received my DTM award through DHL, in one moment I had in my mind the whole Toastmasters journey projects, places I’ve visited, people I met and the skills that I gained.

**What’s next?**

Toastmasters has a new educational system, which is Pathways. For new members who are undecided, invest your time and relish the journey and you too will master the art of communication & leadership. As for me my icebreaker is coming up.

A big thank you to my family, ICCONE & KEF Toastmasters Clubs and all my friends for nudging me to complete this program.

Signing off

*DTM R.S. Kumar Naidu*

 