

## Departments

# One Of Us

### **Jerry Perisho**

Whittier Host Lion Jerry Perisho stands out among the 128 men in his club. Maybe it's because he's 6 feet 6 inches tall. Or maybe it's because he's the one stirring the pot.

He has brought the room down. And for the Whittier Host Lions, he's filled it up. More than once his humor has brought grown men to tears in a good way.

The 64-year-old comedy writer, who has a "real job" in the Medicare insurance business, has used his wit and skits to liven up the Whittier Host Lions meetings in California.

"A Lions Club meeting can be dry.

"We decided not to be dry," he says.

Perisho was submitting "Laugh Lines" to the Los Angeles Times in the 1990s, then started selling jokes to about 200 radio stations nationwide and finally to Jay Leno and Jimmy Fallon.

But he discovered about 10 years ago that a smaller audience much closer to his heart needed a shot of humor. Chartered in 1922, his club had 200-plus members in their heyday, but in the early 2000s it was floundering. Membership and meeting attendance were dropping.

"We knew we had to change this trend," says Perisho. "We decided we needed to make every single meeting fun. It requires effort, time and creativity, but pretty soon our membership began to grow."

The club started to use their Tailtwister more. Perisho and a few other like-minded Lions started planning skits including game shows and a monthly speaker series featuring famous international leaders and people in the news. Lions played their parts.

"It was a gigantic success," says Perisho. "The room was packed." Increased attendance led to more active members and more financial support. The club scholarship fund recently gave \$36,000 to graduating high school students and college students continuing their education.



California comedy writer Jerry Perisho WANTS YOU to keep your club happy.

Photo by Miguel Pola

**Some tips from the laughing Lion:**

- Be self-deprecating: "I'm a tall, overweight white guy in his 60s. I'm the perfect object to make fun of."
- Adapt. "Our community is becoming much more Hispanic, so we identified the leaders of the Hispanic community and invited them to attend. That has helped us grow."
- "Evaluate your club's strengths and determine what is important to members. We happen to have some guys who are funny." In one skit shown online he lists the Top Ten Reasons to Keep Coming To Lions Club meetings. Number 10: "When you're not here, we're making fun of you."
- Keep them guessing. "You never know what is going to happen at a meeting. Keep stuff fresh, innovative and current."

- Know your limits. “We tend to be irreverent with each other. We’re a little raucous and a little loud, but raucous doesn’t mean disrespectful. We are never rude.”

Some of Perisho’s humor and club skits can be found on YouTube, including his bit where he compares Lions’ brains to Rotarian brains.

One of his favorite lines: “A Lion, a Rotarian, a Kiwanian, and a Soroptimist walk into a bar. The bartender asks, ‘What is this, some kind of a joke?’ ”

---

Do you know a Lion who you think has a great story or deserves a bit of recognition? Email us a brief description of the Lion and the reason you’re making the nomination to [lionmagazine@lionsclubs.org](mailto:lionmagazine@lionsclubs.org). Please include “One of Us” in the subject line.