

## **YEARS OF PROGRESS**

Many years ago, in 1905, there were four lonely men in a great city.

Paul Harris worked as a newspaper reporter, a business teacher, stock company actor, cowboy, and traveled extensively in the U.S. and Europe selling marble and granite. In 1896, he went to Chicago to practice law. One evening Paul went with a professional friend to his suburban home. After dinner, as they strolled through the neighborhood, Paul's friend introduced him to various tradesmen in their stores. This reminded Paul of his small hometown in New England, and it occurred to him "Why not have a fellowship composed of businessmen from different occupations, without restrictions of politics or religion?"

On February 23, 1905, Paul Harris invited three friends to his law office: Silvester Schiele, a coal merchant; Gustavus Loehr, a mining engineer; and Hiram Shorey, a merchant tailor. He proposed the group form a club and suggested the name "Rotary" because they would ROTATE the meeting location between their various places of business. The group liked the idea and within a short time, three other men, Harry Ruggles, Charles Newton and Montague Bear, joined them. Newton suggested that they meet for lunch, perhaps once a week to discuss business problems and affairs in general. Club membership grew rapidly. Many members were from small towns and in the Rotary they found an opportunity for camaraderie.

The group also found that unselfish SERVICE had great rewards, not only to their business endeavors, but to their community as well. In 1908 the club adopted the slogan "He profits most who serves best". When Paul Harris became president of the club in its third year, he was convinced that the Rotary club could be developed into an important service movement and strove to extend Rotary to other cities. Little did they think, or even dream, that from this small beginning, there would emerge a great organization of SERVICE and Friendship that would extend around the entire world.

The second Rotary club was founded in San Francisco in 1908. By August 1910 there were sixteen clubs and the National Association of Rotary Clubs was organized. When clubs were formed in Canada and Great Britain in 1912, the name was changed to the International Association of Rotary Clubs, and was later shortened to Rotary International in 1922. Paul Harris was the first president of both the National Association and International Association. As Rotary spanned the globe, branch offices were opened in Europe and Asia. In 1933 the Four Way Test was adopted. Two world wars changed the face of Rotary - Eastern Europe was closed to Rotary until 1989 when clubs were re-established in Poland and Hungary. In 1990 the first club was opened in the Soviet Union and negotiations are currently underway to establish Rotary in China. In 1987, Rotary membership was opened to women.

When President emeritus Paul Harris passed away on January 27, 1947, his dream had grown from an informal meeting of four men to some 6,000 clubs brought together through the service and fellowship of Rotary.

Worldwide, there are presently over 24,000 Rotary clubs whose members lend their time, expertise and resources to a number of vocational programs, and community and international service projects. The Rotary Foundation of Rotary International carries out some \$60 million annually in international education and humanitarian programs, providing grants which save lives and improve conditions throughout the world; and sponsors international ambassadors of good will through educational awards to university students and teachers, and through international exchange of business and professional people. Today, the Rotary Foundation scholarship program is the world's largest privately funded international scholarship program. Approximately 1,000 scholarships are awarded annually. Through its PolioPlus Program, Rotarians raised some 230 Million dollars to purchase polio vaccine and support "social mobilization", the motivation of public and private sectors, and thousands of volunteers to perform immunization campaigns.



## **HISTORY OF THE ROTARY CLUB OF PEORIA**

In the spring of 1913 a group of interested Peoria businessmen, encouraged by members of the Chicago Rotary Club, decided to establish a Rotary Club in Peoria. Fifteen men met early in April and elected a committee to draw up a plan of organization. On April 26th a group of fifty-three charter members met with more than a hundred members of the Chicago Club and THE ROTARY CLUB OF PEORIA was organized with George Bean as its first president. On June 2, 1913, the club was granted Charter No. 76 by The International Association of Rotary Clubs. On June 30, 1913 George R. MacClyment was elected president and served for two years.

The first party for exceptional children was held on December 25, 1913 and was a yearly feature of the club program. Ladies Night was first held on April 13, 1915 and was one of the annual highlights of the club.

The Peoria club was host to its first District conference, covering all of Illinois and parts of several adjoining states, in April of 1914. Since its existence, Peoria has entertained District Conferences on 14 occasions. At one, more than fourteen hundred delegates were in attendance. P.G. Rennick, Dr. A. L. Peters, Chas. Engstrom, William J. Crawford, J. Forrest Bennett and Joseph M. Kilton have served as District Governors. E.C. Fisher was District Governor while a member of the Rock Island club and later became one of our most active members.

The Peoria Club has assisted in organizing other clubs in Bloomington, Kewanee, Canton, Princeton, East Peoria, Lacon, Galesburg, Washington, Jacksonville, Morton,

Metamora-Germantown Hills, Chillicothe, Pekin, and Peoria-North.

In 1917 a Thanksgiving dinner was given for needy boys, followed by a "Big Brother" dinner for the next several years. This culminated early in the 1930's by the club's active participation in the "Big Brother" movement, which was sponsored by Dr. A. L. Peters. Club members were made responsible for wayward boys by the Juvenile Court with a very marked reduction in juvenile delinquency. Peoria received the first "Big Brother" charter granted in Illinois and because of Dr. Peters and his "Big Brother" movement, three cottages at St. Charles were closed and two proposed new ones were never built.

The Boys Work Committee sponsored and supervised citywide marble tournaments and Little League baseball teams.

The Handicapped Children's Committee conducted trips to Lincoln Shrines in and around Springfield, Brookfield Zoo, Camp Ellis, Chicago museums, major league baseball games at Chicago, and the "Passion Play" at Bloomington. These were outstanding occasions in the lives of the children who were guests of the club.

The Student Guest Program, that invites students from Peoria High School, Manual, Woodruff, Limestone, Bradley and Illinois Central College to attend our weekly Rotary meetings, began in the early 1940's. The Student Loan Fund was established in 1928 to assist deserving students attending college. This assistance was on a loan basis until 1945 when a Scholarship Fund was made available. This fund is financed through members' contributions as set forth in Section 2, Article V of the By Laws. Today over \$13,000 is allocated annually for scholarships at Bradley, Illinois Central College, Methodist School of Nursing, and OSF St. Francis School of Nursing.

A large part of our membership has led or assisted in worthy community efforts, including the United Way, Red Cross, March of Dimes, Salvation Army, YMCA, Boy Scouts and many others. Members from THE ROTARY CLUB OF PEORIA serve on boards and committees for most of the social service, charitable, civic, and cultural organizations in our community.

Members of our club have served in the armed forces of our country with distinction in World War I and World War II, Korean and Vietnam Wars. Stanley Terhune gave his life for his country in World War I, and a memorial tree was planted in Glen Oak Park in his honor.

Naomi Schaefer began her association with our club in 1944 and retired from her position as Executive Secretary in 1990 after 46 years of service. She became the club's first female member on August 28, 1987.

THE ROTARY CLUB OF PEORIA, in cooperation with the Rotary Clubs of East Peoria and Peoria-North, and assistance from The Peoria Journal Star, has sponsored the Sterling Merit Awards Banquet since 1965. This banquet

honors the top eight percent of graduating seniors from ten local high schools for outstanding academic achievement.

In January 1992, the club hosted its first inbound Rotary Exchange Student, Carley Smith from Pahiatua, New Zealand. Megan Lisenby was the first outbound Rotary exchange student sponsored by the club. Megan began her one-year exchange in Buin, Chile in January 1995.

In 1992, our club voted to have a soup and salad lunch on the 4th Friday of each month. The savings in meal cost from the reduced buffet create a fund of approximately \$6,000 annually. The Project Committee allocates these funds to various hunger related programs in our community.

The Service Above Self in Education Award was established in 1993 under the leadership of President Scott Porter. The first recipient was Mr. Ron Geruin, a math teacher from Manual High School, who was presented, with his award in May 1993. The annual award is presented each May to a teacher who has exemplified the ideal of "service above self".

In April 1995, the club served as an Adopt-A-House sponsor for the Junior League's Christmas in April Program. Members made renovations to the home of an elderly widow, which not only improved the livability of the home for the owner but enhanced the neighborhood as well.

Other projects the club has sponsored in recent years include a Book Shower for Literacy, bell-ringing for the Salvation Army Tree of Lights campaign, and an annual clothing drive for South Side Mission and Peoria Rescue Mission. In February, 1996, sponsored its first Reading A-Loud program at Tyng School, and expanded to include Garfield School in February 1997.

In 1995 seventeen members of the club have made a \$1,000 contribution to The Rotary Foundation to become Paul Harris Fellows. This represents the largest amount given by our members to The Foundation in a single year. Twelve of our members became Paul Harris Fellows in 1996. The Rotary Club of Peoria continued to lead District 6460 in Foundation giving in 1997 and 1998 increasing the total number of Paul Harris Fellow to over 100.

The Rotary Club of Peoria was one of the major donors for the Military Services Memorial on the Peoria Riverfront. A special plaque acknowledging the club's \$5,000 contribution is a permanent part of the Memorial. In the fall of 1998, the club became an Adopt-A-School partner for Tyng School. Rotarians participate as tutors and mentors for the "Success For All" reading program assisting Tyng students whom read below their grade level. A "School Supply Drive" and a "Mitten, Hat & Coat" Drive were also held for the students at Tyng in 1998 and 1999.

The club contributed \$10,000 to the establishment of a "Rotary Literacy Center" at the South Side Library Branch (near Harrison School) which was opened in September, 1999. Under the leadership of Rotarian Sue Herring

(Director, Peoria Public Library) an additional \$10,000 was obtained for the establishment of the Literacy Center when the club was successful in receiving “Children’s Opportunity Grant” from the Rotary Foundation. This special area of the library branch contains computers, software, books, and learning games that enhance reading and learning skills.

In June 1999, the club established The Rotary Club of Peoria Endowment Fund, in cooperation with The Peoria Community Foundation. The fund will be used to make allocations and grants to projects and programs that benefit the community and are consist with the ideals of Rotary.

As of October 1999, THE ROTARY CLUB OF PEORIA had 304 members, and is the largest Rotary club in District 6460. Our membership includes a distinguished group of business and community leaders who work together to make THE ROTARY CLUB OF PEORIA one of **the** outstanding service organizations in the Peoria area.

The History from 2000-2014 is now being updated...check back soon.

