

China Day in North America 1942

By Herbert K. Lau (劉敬恒) (Rotary China Historian)

1 February 2014



This is a piece of Rotary International history about China in February 1942. President Tom J. Davis requested that each Club in the United States and Canada (there were more than 3,000) should, before 15th February, hold a meeting which would feature a program devoted to the interests of China. Here is the story

With the attack on Pearl Harbor and the opening of the Pacific War in December 1941, the Republic of China (中華民國) became one of the Allied Powers. Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek (蔣中正統帥) was even named the “Supreme Commander of Allied Forces in the China Theatre plus India and Burma”. The Second Sino-Japanese War since 1937 became a chapter of the World War II. China moved in November 1937 the Central Government from Nanking (*Nanjing*) (南京) to Chungking (*Chongqing*) (重慶) where became the war-time capital as well as the command center for the Allied Forces in the Far East. As at 1 January 1942, there should be 25 Rotary clubs in China, but about 15 of them were not functioning due to the cities occupied by the Imperial Japanese Forces.

On 1 February 1942, Rotary International President Tom J. Davis gave his presidential message with ample answer to the question: “What can Rotary do in a world at war?” A note of urgency then marked the letter of President Tom J. Davis was sent to all Rotary Club presidents in the United States. By authorization of the Canadian Advisory Committee, a similar letter, signed by the President and counter-signed by Third Vice-President Arthur FitzGerald (*Canada*), was sent to the clubs in Canada. It was a request that each Club stage a “China Day” program at its next meeting, or at its second next, at the latest.

When President Tom called on all Rotary clubs in the United States and Canada to observe a special “China Day” program, it was a challenge to the imagination of the clubs that was wholeheartedly met with practically unanimous enthusiasm. The suggestion fell upon ready soil. In the next two weeks hundreds, yes, thousands, of Rotary clubs throughout North America had “China Day” programs---original, enthusiastic, instructive ones, etc. This whole-hearted response showed that North American Rotarians generally bear a deep respect for the Chinese people---and wanted to let them know it.

Letters, newspaper clippings and bulletins were received at the Rotary International Secretariat from all over 1,200 clubs. The newspaper and radio publicity was wide-spread. President Tom J. Davis personally made two 30-minute broadcasts. A prominent commentator of the National Broadcasting Company, U.S.A., in a radio broadcast, called attention to this initiative of Rotary. The Associated Press and the United Press sent out 500-word stories on the activity. The Central China News Agency (中央通訊社) at Washington, D.C., transmitted information about “China Day” in the Rotary clubs to China by short wave.

The “China Day” programs made a great many men interested in trying to build a better world. Reports were pouring in from clubs, of which these were typical examples:

- At the Rotary Club of Mount Pleasant, Pennsylvania, a Chinese laundryman Yee Hong was a special guest at a program whose speaker, F. G. Hardenbrook, was in China during the opening of the War.
- The Rotary Club of Cleveland, Ohio, entertained prominent local Chinese citizens and visitors and showed motion pictures of the war in China. It also heard Dr. Ernest H. Wilkins, president of Oberlin College, trace the history of China in the last 25 years.
- That China was the greatest actual and potential ally of the United States was the opinion expressed to the Rotary Club of Kearney, Nebraska, by Dr. J. W. Creighton, president of Hastings College and for 21 years a missionary and teacher in China.
- Rotarians of Huntington Park, California, heard T. M. Elliott told of his experiences in Amoy (*Xiamen*) (廈門), China, where he lived and worked.
- Resolutions of friendship for China were passed by the Marlin Rotary Club, Texas, and forwarded to Senator Tom Connally, a member of the Club, and Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. The Chinese Vice-Consul from Houston, Texas, and his wife, and the Governor of Texas, Rotarian Coke Stevenson, were guests.
- The Rotary Club of Winchester, Massachusetts, considered that was the time when they had so great admiration for the heroic and prolonged resistance of China to her Japanese aggressors. It was very much worthwhile for the Club to make due recognition of the patriotism, valor and self-sacrifice exerted by the great nation of the Orient. Guest speaker at a regular meeting was Mr. Albert Lee who was an American Chinese residing in Boston. In his address he explained to the Club the reactions of the Chinese government and people to the War which had been carried on for four and a half years and was later included into the World War II. He took occasion to reiterate the statement that China had a wealth of manpower to carry on the War but was dependent on other friendly nations to provide the modern armament without which success for her troops was unattainable. Also Mr. Lee also made the point that the Oriental peoples, including the Chinese, who had observed or were experiencing the hostile attitude of the Japanese naturally exert whatsoever resistance was within their power and would continue to do so with ever increasing effect.

These programs were a cross section of literally thousands of Rotary “China Day” programs held during the month of February in 1942. In appreciation, The Rotary Club of Chungking (重慶扶輪社), Republic of China, sent a radiogram to Rotary International on 19 February 1942:

Chungking Rotary Club expresses hearty thanks and appreciation for your encouragement of the Chinese government and people in the common struggle against aggression, by sponsoring China Day programs throughout the United States and Canada. – Peter Kiang, President

“China Day” showed something else, too: that Rotary clubs can act swiftly and in concert, even on short notice. That may be worth remembering. This is a real and lively example of “advancement of international understanding, goodwill, and peace through a world fellowship”.

Chinese Ambassador to the United States Dr. Hu Shih (胡適博士) telegraphed from Washington to Rotary International in Chicago:

I wish personally and on behalf of the Chinese people in express deep appreciation for international Rotary China Day programs as inspiring contribution to unity of United Nations. It is in such spirit of unity and comradeship that we shall march forth to complete and final triumph.

***** ***** ***** ***** *****

About Tom J. Davis



Tom J. Davis, Rotary Club of Butte, Montana, U.S.A.



31st President, Rotary International 1941-1942

Tom J. Davis was Counsel in Montana for Safeway Stores, F. W. Woolworth Company, Soo Line Railway, Northwestern Mutual Fire Association, Northwest Casualty Company, and for other business and industrial corporations. He was born in Weir City, Kansas, was graduated from the University of Michigan Law School, and had twice been honored with degrees of Doctor of Laws.

Tom had been a member of the Rotary Club of Butte since 1915, and was a Past President of that Club. He had been active in Rotary International as President (1941-1942), Vice-President, District Governor, Rotary Foundation Trustee, and as chairman and member of numerous committees. In 1945, he was one of Rotary International's consultants to the United States delegation at the United Nations Conference on International Organization.

Among the many offices held by Tom in community, state, and national organizations were the following: member of the Executive Committee, Montana State School of Mines; member of the Board of Trustees of Linfield College, McMinnville, Oregon, and of Rocky Mountain College, Billings, Montana; member, Regional Executive Committee, National Council, Boy Scouts of America; Director, Butte Chamber of Commerce; Director, Butte Y.M.C.A.; Chairman, Salvation Army Advisory Board of Butte; Director, Butte Boy Scouts Council; President, Northwest Society for Crippled Children; President Montana Society for Crippled Children; Director, Montana Children's home and Hospital.

Tom was a Past President of the Montana State Bar Association and was a former member of the President's Loyalty Review Board of the United States Civil Service Commission. He was the holder of the Honorary Legion of Honor conferred by DeMolay, and the International Service Cross of the Salvation Army.

***** ***** ***** ***** *****

About Hu Shih (胡適)



Charter President of The Rotary Club of Hong Kong (香港扶輪社創社社長), Sir William Hornell (康寧爵士), Kt, CIE, *HonLLD (HKU)*, MA (*Oxford*), Vice-Chancellor of the Hong Kong University (香港大學校長) wrote and delivered the following citation during the 26th Congregation (1935) of The University of Hong Kong where Hu Shih was conferred the degree of Doctor of Laws (*honoris causa*):.

Dr. Hu Shih needs no introduction. He is the father of the literary renaissance in China. The full significance of this movement History will in time recall. In the annals of his country's history Dr. Hu Shih's name has already been written in ink that will not fade. If the future of China is, as I believe it to be, one of the world problems of today, then surely this University will go down in posterity for the honour it is today conferring on one of the living forces of a changing China.

But this University has a more immediate cause for gratitude to Dr. Hu Shih, for he has helped and is helping us to organize our Chinese studies on the right lines. We have often been reminded that Hong Kong is not China and upbraided for being foolish as to believe that any serious student would come here to study Chinese. Our reply is to refer to the preamble of our Ordinance and to insist that this University, being more than a technical or professional college, cannot and will not ignore the culture of the great country to which the majority of its students belong. Dr. Hu Shih's presence here today is a testimony to his conviction that this University can and will play its part, however humble, in the cultural rebirth of China.

Dr. Hu Shih (17 December 1891, Shanghai - 24 February 1962, Taiwan), was a Chinese philosopher, essayist and diplomat. Hu is widely recognized today as a key contributor to Chinese liberalism and language reform in his advocacy as an important leader of Chinese thought who helped establish the vernacular as the official written language (1922). He was also an influential propagator of American pragmatic methodology as well as the foremost political liberal in Republican China (1912–1949), advocating building a new country not through political revolution but through mass Chinese education.

He was influential in the May Fourth Movement (五四運動) (1919), one of the leaders of China's New Culture Movement, and in 1939 was nominated for a Nobel Prize in literature. He was a president of Peking University (北京大學) (1946-1948). He had a wide range of interests such as literature, history, textual criticism, and pedagogy. He was also an influential redology scholar and held the famous Jiaxu manuscript of 《Dream of the Red Chamber》 (《紅樓夢》甲戌本) for many years until his death.

Rotary Today

By Tom J. Davis

President, Rotary International

The President transmits two statements adopted by the Board of Directors at its recent meeting in Chicago.

ROTARIANS are realists as well as idealists. The hundreds of letters which I as President of Rotary International am privileged to receive, attest that fact. So, I believe, do two statements unanimously adopted by the Board of Directors of Rotary International at its recent meeting. Both of these statements will be reviewed by the coming Rotary Convention at Toronto next June and in fact one of them is proposed by the Board as a Resolution for adoption by the Convention. Without attempting to prejudge any action by the Convention, I feel that the importance of these statements warrants bringing them to the attention of all Rotarians now.

The first statement, as adopted by the Board, amplifies and extends the famous pronouncement, *Rotary Amid World Conflict*, adopted at the Havana Convention in 1940, and reads as follows:

Rotary and a World at War

The membership of Rotary International consists of Rotary Clubs. These Clubs are autonomous within the limits of the Constitution and By-Laws. The Clubs of Rotary International are composed of individual members with qualifications set forth in the Constitution. The basic principle upon which Rotary is built is service rendered by Rotary Clubs through the activity of their individual members.

The Board maintains its conviction that the full attainment of the Rotary ideal, "Service," can only be achieved in countries where there is liberty of the individual, in freedom of thought, speech, and assembly, freedom of worship, freedom from persecution and aggression, and freedom from want and fear. Where this liberty does not exist Rotary cannot live.

The Board of Directors of Rotary International emphasizes the belief that every Rotarian will be a loyal and serving citizen of his own country and that as such he will do everything within his power to bring this war to a speedy end.

Rotarians the world over are urged to prepare themselves and the people of the communities in which they live to do their part in helping to build a post-war world reconstruction program free from persecution and revenge.

In this statement the Board has attempted to set down what Rotary Clubs and Rotarians believe. It is clear, it is definite, it is forthright.

However, in our fellowship it has been frequently said that Rotary is not merely a state of mind—that he who serves must act; and that Rotary undertakes to inspire men to realize fully their individual capacity for patriotic citizenship in their states and nations.

Thus we come to the second statement, in the form of a resolution similar to one adopted by Rotary International during the first World War. It pertains to applying Rotary's Ideal of Service—more specifically what we term Community Service—to the new opportunities created by war. Ever since July, 1937, when hostilities broke out in China, an increasing number of Clubs have been discovering outlets for patriotism [see page 46]. To encourage them and provide them with helpful coöperation the Board proposes action as follows:

Clubs in National Service

Whereas in the present disturbed, unsettled, or belligerent condition of all countries in which there are Rotary Clubs it is advisable to encourage patriotic service by Rotarians and Rotary Clubs wherever they may be located,

And whereas the Clubs of all countries are looking to the central organization of Rotary International for coöperation and leadership in their patriotic work,

It is resolved by Rotary International, assembled in its 33rd annual Convention, that in the conduct of the affairs of this organization, its officers, in addition to their general service to all Rotary Clubs as individual Clubs, shall be permitted and expected to make themselves of service in particular to the member Clubs in any nation, such service to be rendered at such time and in such manner as may be approved by the Board of Directors of Rotary International, and providing further that the spirit of such service to the member Clubs may

be reflected in the editorial conduct of the organization's official publication, and

It is further resolved that during the present emergency the Secretariat of Rotary International with the approval of the President shall respond to calls for service as a clearinghouse or center of communication for the Clubs of each nation in which there are Rotary Clubs when it seems advisable to do so in conformity with the wishes of the Clubs or their Governments or recognized quasi-official organizations.

The Board agrees that in the interim between the January, 1942, Board meeting and the 1942 Convention, the officers of Rotary International and international Secretariat shall function in matters of national service in harmony with the provisions of the foregoing Proposed Resolution.

I call special attention to the concluding paragraph of the foregoing statement for it provides *immediately* for a clearinghouse of information and help for Rotary Clubs engaging in "national service" activities.

AND now may I refer back to the final paragraph of the first statement, *Rotary and a World at War*. It not only deals realistically with present conditions, but it looks forward to that post-war day when Rotary will be needed even more than now. Then our entire world will be in an unhappy plight comparable to that of my own country when at the close of its great civil war the immortal Lincoln declared:

With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and his orphan—to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.

There is a time to fight for home and heritage, for ideals and traditions, and common decency—and that time is now. But the time will come when our task will be to construct a peaceful and enduring world order.