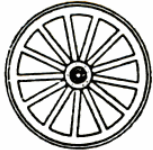


*Building the structure that made Rotary great*

# THE FIRST 25 YEARS

by Harry A. Stewart



FOR MANY YEARS, this quotation from Ralph Waldo Emerson hung on the wall of the office of Paul P. Harris: "He who has a thousand friends has not a friend to spare." It was in quest of friends—friendship—that Paul, at the turn of the twentieth century, began to think in terms of bringing business and professional men together for fellowship and for mutual benefit.

The seed of this idea came to rudimentary fruition on February 23, 1905, when Paul and three friends gathered for what was to be the first meeting of the first Rotary club. Over the years that seedling of friendship has been nurtured, developed, and propagated, and has multiplied and radiated to 153 countries and geographical regions of the world. The idea that started in the mind and heart of one man has matured into a prestigious worldwide organization.

In discussing forces at work in business at the time Rotary came into existence, Chesley R. Perry, first secretary of Rotary International, said: "Giants of business were fighting over trade territories; competition was ruthless, and not only big business but all sorts of businesses, large and small, were then under the suspicion of being conducted on the basis of get all you can get and get it first. Into such a world Rotary was born..."

The four participants in the February meeting and those who soon joined them were for the most part young men (Paul Harris was 37) who were striving to establish themselves in business or profession. Paul called them "men of ordinary walks of life; . . . natural products of the times and subject to its usual frailties . . . all were friendly and congenial . . . each represented a recognized honorable vocation different from that of the others." These young men were impressed with the idea that friendship and business could go hand in hand in strengthening both—and, not incidentally, to the individual business or professional benefit of those who participated.

Thus, the first Rotary club was formed to provide an opportunity for fellowship and friendliness coupled with a basis for exchange of business between and among its members.

The concept of Rotary as a mutual benefit arrangement may have contributed heavily to its early popularity and growth not only in Chicago, but in its extension to other cities. However, in the unfolding of the story of Rotary, the idea of service to oneself and one's fellow club members in a business sense gave way to the higher ideal

of service and helpfulness to others in all aspects of life—and eventually service to all mankind.

The basis of one man from each separate and distinct business or profession was appealing; it afforded an atmosphere where discussion could be free from fear of competitors, where information could be obtained about other businesses and professions, and where the spirit of helpfulness in a business way was focused on each member as a representative of his vocation.

The early Chicago Rotarians soon realized that their interest in their fellow Rotarians provided opportunities for helpfulness to others, and emphasis changed from "getting" to "giving" as they learned that business benefits flowed appropriately to those who demonstrated their interest in helping others.

As other Rotary clubs were formed, some Rotarians were troubled by the candid emphasis on business "getting" and outside criticism of the selfish and self-serving nature of Rotary clubs and their members. The clubs attempted to clarify the matter for themselves and others. The Rotary Club of Seattle, Washington, U.S.A., the fourth club organized, developed a statement of objects in which it emphasized service to the community and particularly the promotion of high ethical standards in business.

To give expression to their outside service interests, the Chicago club adopted a third object: the advancement of the best interests of Chicago, and the spreading of the spirit of civic pride and loyalty among its citizens.

The first manifest interest of the Chicago club in community service was its support of efforts to have public comfort stations installed in city hall. This was followed by a wide variety of community service projects. Without being aware of it, the early Rotarians were beginning to shape the characteristics and principles of the movement and organization that was to follow.

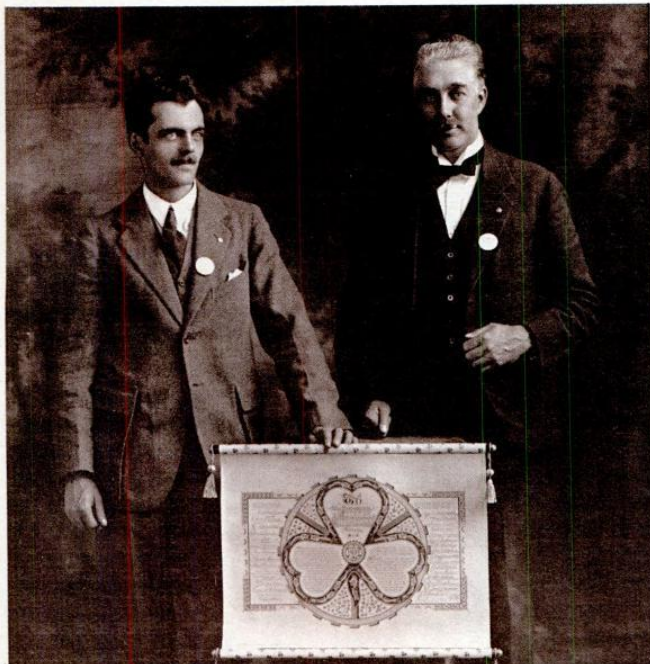
The year 1908 was significant for Rotary. A young man of 36 by the name of Chesley R. Perry joined the Rotary Club of Chicago and immediately immersed himself in its

*Upper left: At the 1925 Cleveland convention, officers of the Rotary Club of Dublin, Ireland, first club in the British Isles, invite R.I. to hold its 1927 convention there.*

*Upper right: Rotary's first motto, emblazoned on a peace sword, is gracefully brandished by a Chicago Rotarian's wife at a 1921 Rotary pageant in Chicago's Orchestra Hall.*

*Center left: In 1916, Rotary became Spanish-speaking, with the admission of a club in Havana, Cuba. Here, Cuban Rotarians present their flag to Rotary at a 1922 Chicago club luncheon.*

*Bottom photo: Rotary's service idea flowered early. Here, in 1910, Chicago Rotarians deliver provisions to needy families "back of the yards." Then club president Will R. Neff is at right.*



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philosophy and activities, particularly in the area of extension. He was destined to make vital contributions to Rotary and its development. Founder Paul Harris was to say: "If I can, in truth, be called the *architect*, Ches can, with equal truth, be called the *builder* of Rotary International." Ches served as secretary of the National Board of Commissioners established for the organization of a national association of Rotary clubs. He did much to bring about the first convention (Chicago, 1910) and served as its chairman. Following the convention he was elected secretary of the newly formed National Association of Rotary Clubs. The organization benefited from his tremendous energies, his devotion, and his guiding hand for the next 32 years.

In 1908, the second Rotary club was formed in San Francisco, California, U.S.A., because of the interest of Chicago Rotarians, principally founder Paul Harris, in sharing the idea which had become so successful in Chicago. Formation of clubs in other cities soon followed and, by 1910, there were 16 clubs from coast to coast in the U.S.

Until then the individual clubs had been independent, though some did follow the pattern of the Rotary Club of Chicago. Feeling the need for unity of purpose and some uniformity of procedure for organizing additional clubs, the existing clubs assembled in convention in Chicago, where Chairman Chesley R. Perry declared: "We are here ready to do our part of the world's work, anxious to have a share in the great civic uplift of our day and desirous of establishing and maintaining the highest of business standards. . . . You have important work to do in establishing the fundamental laws of this association. May all your mental faculties be attuned to a harmony of action which will live and grow and become the greatest exemplification of the spirit of cooperation the world has ever known."

The convention formed the "National Association of Rotary Clubs." Paul P. Harris was elected president and a constitution and by-laws were adopted with these objects:

1. To extend and develop Rotary principles by the organization of Rotary clubs throughout America.
2. To unify the work and the principles of the affiliating Rotary clubs and to promote their common good.
3. To arouse and encourage civic pride and loyalty.
4. To promote progressive and honorable business methods.
5. To advance the business interests of the individual members of the affiliating clubs.

Arthur Frederick Sheldon, the president of a school of salesmanship, became a member of the Rotary Club of Chicago in 1908. He viewed business as a science and as a service to society. In addressing the first convention, he used the slogan of his school, now familiar to all Rotarians as "He Profits Most Who Serves Best."

In addition to the formidable task of formulating and agreeing upon a constitution and by-laws for the budding association, the 1910 convention discussed many matters relevant to the times and to the future. Definitions of the Rotary idea and expressions regarding the future of Rotary were all optimistic.

Civic work by Rotary clubs soon came under consideration, and inevitably, the question of financing the new



Rotary's pioneer 'boys work' paved the way for such latter-day groups as Interact, Rotaract, RYLA, and other modern youth projects. This float appeared in a 1922 Chicago Boys Week Parade.

The R.I. secretariat had several Chicago homes before settling in Evanston in 1954 (see pages 24-25). This R.I. office scene dates from the late 1920's. Former magazine staffer Clyde Kelly is at right.



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association. Until now, dues and fees for the association and the clubs had been random.

There was also a suggestion for ladies' auxiliaries to Rotary clubs; classification and membership were discussed, as were publicity, extension, increasing club membership, and the organization of new clubs.

After the exciting and challenging first convention, the association stood on the threshold of a burgeoning movement whose dispersion and influence could not be foreseen, though many Rotarians had visions of hundreds, perhaps thousands of Rotary clubs spread around the world. Rotarians who participated in the "charter" convention were not men of experience in the new business and social phenomenon of which they were a part. They were young in years and young in Rotary—none having been members for more than five years and some for a year or less. Yet they recognized Rotary's worth and possibilities and devoted themselves to the creation of a framework that would endure.

From more or less isolated groups of men indulging in a fascinating new idea, an association of clubs had been drawn together in common purposes and principles. Their effort to achieve organizational cohesiveness and direction and effective action required much introspection as to a definition of the objectives of Rotary, its international extension, maintenance of high standards in membership qualifications, and development and encouragement of practical expressions of Rotary's ideas by the clubs and their members in their vocations, in their communities, and ultimately, internationally. The sound administration of this growing association of clubs grew ever more complex.

During the next five years a number of events and actions strengthened the fledgling association in the practical expression of its idealism. By 1911 there were 28 affiliated Rotary clubs in the U.S.A. and eight others, including one in Canada and one or more in Great Britain, which were organized but not yet affiliated. Rotary was about to become "international."

The first issue of "The National Rotarian" was published, in newspaper form, in January 1911, by Secretary Perry principally to provide a vehicle for a message, "Rational Rotarianism," which Paul Harris wished to send to every Rotarian. A second issue followed prior to the 1911 convention in Portland, Oregon, U.S.A., leading the convention to instruct that a monthly periodical of a standard size be published and that Secretary Perry be the editor and business manager. At the Portland convention a civic committee appointed in the previous year recommended for adoption in the club constitution and by-laws a proposed article which first expressed a Rotary position on public affairs to the effect that matters affecting the common welfare could be considered at meetings for the information of members that they might as individuals intelligently exercise proper influence in the community and that when requested, clubs might assist organizing public movements of sufficient merit.

In light of the affiliation of the clubs in Canada and Great Britain and the preliminary steps underway to organize Rotary clubs in other countries, the 1912 (Duluth, Minnesota, U.S.A.) convention changed the name of the organization to the "International Association of Rotary Clubs."

After having served two terms as president of the association, Paul P. Harris was elected "President Emeritus."

Until 1912 clubs had developed their own constitutions and phrased their own objects. In a continuing effort at unity and method in the association and its constituent clubs, a Rotary club model constitution and by-laws were recommended. The objects:

1. To promote the recognition of the worthiness of all legitimate occupations and to dignify each member's occupation as affording him an opportunity to serve society.

2. To encourage high ethical standards in business and professions.

3. To increase the efficiency of each member by the exchange of ideas and business methods.

4. To promote the "scientizing" of acquaintance as an opportunity for service and an aid to success.

5. To quicken the interest of each member in the public welfare and to cooperate with others in civic development.

Action of the 1912 convention resulted in the adoption of the cogwheel as the emblem of the association and the approval of its use on lapel buttons, pins, and stationery in royal blue and gold, the association colors. It was decided that memberships in local Rotary clubs should be considered personal memberships of individuals and not of their firms or corporations. Immediately following the convention, the board of directors provided for a uniform membership card and shortened the name of the official publication to THE ROTARIAN.

In early 1913, disastrous tornadoes and floods swept across the middlewestern United States. A relief fund was raised by voluntary subscriptions to assist the sufferers—the first concerted service activity of the member clubs of the association. Rotary appeared to be determined to rid itself of the selfish attitude which had seemed to predominate in the beginning. President Glenn C. Mead, in his report to the 1913 (Buffalo, New York, U.S.A.) convention said: "Rotary can never attain its full perfection as long as a vestige remains of the notion that Rotary clubs exist primarily for the exchange of business among members."

The rapid growth of clubs, internationally as well as nationally, gave rise to thoughtful consideration of the impact of growth on the effectiveness of the organization and its member clubs.

Recognizing that weakness might come from rapid growth, Ches Perry observed: "As Rotary grows in membership, the necessity for more definitive principles and more positive adherence to them becomes more essential for, while a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump, there may be a diffusion that leads to impotency."

With the organization and development of several clubs in the British Isles, others on the verge of organization in Germany, Austria, France, and Switzerland, and preliminary contact being made elsewhere, including South Africa and Australia, the international dimension of Rotary grew and demanded attention. The clubs in Great Britain and Ireland had been affiliated, and relations between them and the clubs in North America were excellent. Nevertheless, the British clubs were separated by an ocean from the center of the associa-

tion and fast communication was a major problem.

Following the Buffalo convention, word came that the British Association of Rotary clubs (B.A.R.C.) had been organized by the eight clubs in Great Britain. At the 1914 (Houston, Texas, U.S.A.) convention, the B.A.R.C. was recognized and welcomed.

However, contact between Rotary International and its member clubs in Great Britain and Ireland was limited because of conditions created by world war. The British association gradually took charge of extension, encouragement of the clubs in community service work, and the general development of Rotary in the region.

The 1914 convention adopted a resolution "for celebrating annually the anniversary of the birth of the first Rotary club." Clubs were urged to join with each other in such celebrations—the first official encouragement for holding inter-city meetings. There was also a resolution "to ask all Rotary clubs to permit visiting Rotarians to pay for their own luncheons," and an agreement to adopt a uniform Rotary flag.

Promotion of high ethical standards in business and professions was assuming an important place in the principles and programs of Rotary. "A Code of Ethics for Businessmen of All Lines" was adopted at the 1915 (San Francisco, California) convention. Its 11 points were preceded by this preamble:

"My business standards shall have in them a note of sympathy for our common humanity. My business dealings, ambitions and relations shall always cause me to take into consideration my highest duties as a member of society. In every position in business life, in every responsibility that comes before me, my chief thoughts shall be to fill that responsibility and discharge that duty so that, when I have ended each of them, I shall have lifted the level of human ideals and achievements a little higher than I found it."

Two important constitutional changes were adopted at the 1915 convention. Provision was made for a board of five directors consisting of the president, the first, second, and third vice-president, and the immediate past president. Instead of regional vice-presidents, 19 district governors were elected as officers of the association by the convention, one for each of 15 districts in the United States, three in Canada, and one in the British Isles.

Provision was also made that clubs organized thereafter were required to adopt the standard local constitution approved by the board of directors and could make no change in it without the written consent of the board.

A convention report stated that "the 1915 convention will take its place in Rotary history as the time when Rotary principles became more clearly interpreted and Rotary practices more sharply defined and as the time when the task of blending these two into one harmonious working platform was successfully started."

At the end of its first decade and its first five years as an association of clubs, Rotary was on its feet and moving forward. A little uncertain, perhaps, as to its ultimate destination but striving diligently with courage and confidence to build an enduring institution.

No longer were a mere handful of men sharing Rotary views. Now there were 257 Rotary clubs: 13 in Great Britain and Ireland, 13 in Canada, one in Cuba, and 230 in the U.S.A., with an aggregate membership of 27,000 and



*Rotary once existed in lands from which it is barred today. This boatload of Rotarians in Harbin, Manchuria, was photographed in 1930. Perhaps someday the spirit of Rotary may pervade all nations.*

*'Rotary wives' have always been important forces in the movement's success. Women's auxiliaries were formed as early as 1910, and wives attend many Rotary social and business functions.*



promise of further international extension.

With the affiliation of the Rotary Club of Havana, Cuba, it was anticipated that Havana Rotarians could assist in extension already being undertaken in Central and South America. Organizational steps were underway in Australia and South Africa, and preliminary ones in China and India. As Rotary spread into more and more parts of the world with different social, economic and political circumstances, complexities in the maintenance of a truly international association of clubs with common purposes and objectives demanded attention.

A Committee of Philosophy and Education reported to the 1916 (Cincinnati, Ohio, U.S.A.) convention its efforts to "write down" the facts, principles and ideals of Rotary.

The resulting four educational pamphlets, collectively called "A Talking Knowledge of Rotary," were the beginning of Rotary literature.

A number of Rotary clubs had become actively interested in working with boys. At the 1916 convention a resolution was adopted calling for the appointment of a "standing committee on the subject of work among the boys." Thus began a long and concerted Rotary interest.

Community service activities were being undertaken by Rotary clubs everywhere and in a variety of ways. Different points of view were also developing. Some clubs felt that activities should involve only individual Rotarians—others thought that real effectiveness could come only from corporate club action. The 1917 (Atlanta, Georgia, U.S.A.) convention adopted a resolution to the effect that—

"Rotary clubs should continuously survey the field of community life in order to ascertain community needs. Whenever organizations already in existence can satisfactorily perform such work, they should be encouraged . . . when existing institutions need strengthening Rotarians should give aid and encouragement . . . and a Rotary club . . . should do those community services that cannot be done so well by organizations or institutions already in existence. . . ."

At the 1917 convention, President Arch Klumph called attention to the possibility of a future endowment for Rotary; "Carrying on, as we are, a miscellaneous community service, it seems eminently proper that we should accept endowments for the purpose of doing good in the world, in charitable, educational or other avenues of community progress; or such funds could be well used for extension work. I know of no more commendable use for the vast millions possessed by men in this country than that certain sums might be endowed to Rotary for the purpose of establishing Rotary clubs in all the nations of the world."

The endowment fund initiated in the following months was the forerunner of The Rotary Foundation.

World War I had been going on for nearly three years before the U.S.A. joined with its allies. There were some doubts as to whether the 1917 convention should be held but plans went ahead with stimulating effect as American clubs joined British clubs in war efforts.

In the convention address, President Klumph observed that after the war "we will face our greatest opportunity by bringing into the folds of Rotary the flags of every civilized nation."

In 1918-19, was the first meeting of the International Council, a conference of the board of directors and the district governors which would later become the international assembly.

At the war's end in November, 1918, clubs faced the challenge of reconstruction, particularly in international extension. Inquiries about forming Rotary clubs came from many countries, and social and economic conditions provided ample opportunities for post-war community service activities.

At the 1919 (Salt Lake City, Utah, U.S.A.) convention Dr. Charles E. Barker, of Grand Rapids, Michigan, U.S.A. spoke on the subject, "A Father's Responsibility to his Son." So impressive was his presentation that it was arranged for him to speak to Rotary clubs and public meetings sponsored by Rotary clubs, and as a result of a

convention resolution, boys work was declared a major activity for Rotary clubs and a boys work department was established in the secretary's office.

With the growth of Rotary programs and activities, costs also grew. At the 1920 (Atlantic City, New Jersey, U.S.A.) convention, per capita dues were raised from \$2.00 to \$3.00. The 1920 convention proceedings book included a brief manual of procedure, the beginning of the current comprehensive manual.

To the 1920 convention had come an invitation to hold the 1921 convention in Edinburgh, Scotland. Notwithstanding the obvious difficulties in planning and conducting a convention across the sea from the bulk of the Rotary population, the board of directors saw many advantages, including the opportunity "to cement closer the bonds of friendship between the people of the North American continent and those of Great Britain and Ireland." The invitation was accepted.

With more than 2,500 in attendance, the Edinburgh convention was a milestone in the maturation of Rotary. "It is the culmination of all that has gone before in the growth of international Rotary," said President Estes Snedecor, "This convention is Rotary's greatest achievement."

In his message, President Emeritus Paul Harris observed: "To all Rotarians the convention of 1921 has great significance. To many minds it will seem the parting of the ways. Yesterday our Rotary was a child; today in strength and vigor, it steps out into the world."

To emphasize the international thrust and influence of the association, a new section was inserted in its objects: "Fourth: To aid in the advancement of international peace and goodwill through a fellowship of business and professional men of all nations united in the Rotary ideal of service."

A resolution to provide a permanent home for the headquarters of the International Association of Rotary Clubs was not adopted, but the wheel design of 24 cogs and six spokes *was*—as Rotary's official emblem.

Rotary entered continental Europe in 1920 with the formation of a club in Madrid, Spain, to be followed shortly by another in Paris, France. Already in the Philippines, India, and China, Rotary expanded in Asia by the organization of a Rotary club in Tokyo, Japan. A club in Mexico City, Mexico, was added to the Ibero-America clubs in Cuba, Puerto Rico, Panama, Uruguay, and Argentina. Rotary was now well-established in the British Isles, with clubs in England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. It was also growing apace in North America, in the U.S.A., Canada, and Hawaii. There were now 758 clubs with about 56,800 members.

A movement to aid crippled children was developing, particularly in Ohio, Michigan, and New York, U.S.A. In 1920, the board had approved the organization of the "Ohio Society for Crippled Children," originated through a Rotary district executives conference.

To the 1922 (Los Angeles, California, U.S.A.) convention President Crawford C. McCullough said: "Rotary . . . needs but the simplest form of organization, for the strength of the whole movement must always nest in the

[continued on page 106]

● Harry A. Stewart joined the R.I. staff in 1936. Hired by first secretary Ches Perry, he also worked with founder Paul Harris. From 1972-79, he served as Rotary's general secretary. A Rotarian since 1951, Harry is now a member of the Rotary Club of Evanston.

## The first 25 years . . .

[continued from page 39]

truths upon which it is founded and these in turn must find their primary expressions through the deeds of living men. The primary force to carry Rotary ideals into action is the unit Rotary club."

After two years of study and drafting, first by the constitution and by-laws committee, then by a special "Committee of 31" representative of all districts, a draft of the constitution and by-laws was adopted at the Los Angeles convention, putting the association on a solid organizational basis.

In another convention action, the name of the association was changed to "Rotary International."

The British Association of Rotary Clubs presented a proposed constitution and by-laws defining the administrative powers for its territorial unit under the new name "Rotary International—Association for Great Britain and Ireland."

United States President Warren G. Harding, addressed the 1923 (St. Louis, Missouri, U.S.A.) convention, saying:

" . . . if I could plant Rotary in every community in the world I would . . . guarantee the tranquility and the forward march of the world.

"Statesmen have their problems," he said, "and governments have theirs but if

you could plant the spirit of Rotary . . . and turn it to practical application there would not be so much wrong with the human procession."

The St. Louis convention took important actions including an increase in per capita dues and a statement of policy on boys' work. An "Outline of Classifications" was completed and issued to clubs for their guidance in classification matters. Of greatest moment, however, was the adoption of Resolution 34 "to reaffirm the policy of Rotary toward objective (community service) activities and to formulate certain principles for the future guidance of Rotary International and of Rotary clubs."

In 1923, an earthquake in Japan prompted Rotary clubs everywhere to raise more than \$40,000 to help Tokyo Rotarians give aid not provided by other relief funds.

The 1924 (Toronto, Ont., Canada) convention was the first to be held in Canada. Business methods, community service, and extension received the greatest attention.

The convention discussed a proposal for a deliberative and legal body to meet annually and enact legislation necessary to the government of R.I.

In 1925 a branch of the secretariat opened in Zurich, Switzerland, to enable the secretary to keep in closer contact with

European clubs and to promote the organization of new clubs there.

At the 1925 (Cleveland, Ohio, U.S.A.) convention registration exceeded 10,000 for the first time—10,216 Rotarians and guests attended from 30 countries. Of 2,096 total clubs, 1,843 (88 percent) were represented.

The next five years was a period of continued growth, adjustment, and refinement of administrative procedures, the development and expansion of activities—and some "growing pains." Rapid extension to areas where there were few Rotary clubs made communication difficult. A series of regional conferences was initiated: in Hawaii in 1926 for clubs in countries bordering the Pacific Ocean; in Tokyo, Japan, in 1928 and in Sydney, Australia, in 1930.

Organization of clubs in countries whose language was other than English created the need for translation of Rotary literature. With volunteer help, translations were made in Spanish, French, Italian, Czech, Danish, Swedish, Finnish, Hungarian, Norwegian, Dutch, Japanese, Yugoslav, and German.

Over the years a substantial body of convention resolutions and board actions had been recorded. To reaffirm and simplify them, the 1929 (Dallas, Texas, U.S.A.) convention adopted a digest of all resolutions adopted from 1911 to 1924 and



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still in force and effect.

The erstwhile endowment fund was renamed The Rotary Foundation and provision for its operation and administration included in the constitutional documents. Low-pressure efforts to develop funds were undertaken. By 1930, Foundation funds amounted to about \$67,000.

In 1928, the convention empowered, authorized, and directed the board to acquire a site or building in Chicago—for a headquarters building owned by Rotary International—provided it would not necessitate an increase in dues or a special assessment. But it would be more than 25 years before R.I. did indeed have its own headquarters building—in Evanston, Illinois, U.S.A.

With the close of its silver jubilee convention in Chicago in 1930, Rotary had completed its first quarter century. It had been a period of birth, growth, development, expansion, definition, and organizational and administrative refinement. In those 25 years it had:

- grown from four members in one club to 3,349 clubs, with more than 150,000 members in 62 countries on six continents;
- made a transition from a self-centered group to an organization of clubs and men oriented to and practiced in service to others;
- established and promoted high standards of business practice including the adoption of an ethical code for all businessmen and leadership in writing codes of correct practice for specific business and professional undertakings;
- conceived and developed its constitutional documents and the organizational and administrative procedures embodied therein and within that framework pre-

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served the autonomy of the member club;

- articulated its objects in broad avenues of service;
- established The Rotary Foundation of Rotary International;
- devised and adopted an emblem;
- acquired two mottoes—"Service Above Self" and "He Profits Most Who Serves Best;"
- established and maintained the principle of classification of business and profession as the basis for membership in a Rotary club and provided for weekly meetings and for regular attendance to a

prescribed degree as prerequisite to continued membership.

Throughout its existence, Rotary has emphasized the individual. Speaking at the 1930 convention past President Harry H. Rogers said: "Probably the greatest accomplishment to date is the development of the individual Rotarian. There are thousands of Rotarians taking a larger part in their trade or professional association, in chambers of commerce and all kinds of community work because of the training and inspiration of Rotary. Old men have become young again. Grouches have been reclaimed and teamwork inaugurated.

The timid, through tedious processes, have been led to leadership."

And Past President Almon E. Roth said: "Whatever the level of its ethics or the extent of its organization, Rotary is an aggregation of individuals, and stands or falls upon the degree to which those individuals translate its principles with effective and worthwhile action."

Thus at the end of its first 25 years Rotary stood ready for the future: well-organized and well-administered as an organization, with a pattern of growth that promised continued reaching out to all parts of the world. Its principles were well-founded and defined—stated objects that gave a clear view of the road ahead—and perhaps most important, the manpower represented in 150,000 service-minded men of goodwill in all corners of the world, was seeking and finding ways to give practical expression to Rotary's ideal of service. ☉

[This is the first of three articles chronicling Rotary's three quarter-centuries. The second article will appear in April, the third in June.]

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*H. M. Griffin*

Extra copies of this commemorative issue of **THE ROTARIAN** are available for \$1.00 (U.S.) per copy. Address orders to **THE ROTARIAN**.

1905-1929

# 'A Start in Life'

The Rotary movement's genesis came when an idealistic young lawyer from small-town America confronted the urban wilds of Chicago.



◀ Paul P. Harris  
at age 28

BY JIM BENES



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**W**hile en route to Iowa...the boy from a Vermont village had spent a week in Chicago where the unrest and wickedness of the bustling Western City possessed him with a weird fascination.”

— Paul P. Harris

It was a gray, rainy day – but with temperatures in the 40s and 50s not particularly cold for 27 February in Chicago – when 28-year-old Paul P. Harris got off the train from New York and walked into his future. Biographers tell us that the would-be Illinois lawyer and founder-to-be of Rotary stood on the station platform that day in 1896 and worried, wondering if he would find success in Chicago.

Harris was not unfamiliar with this burgeoning metropolis on the

edge of the prairie. He had attended law school at the University of Iowa, and during his journey there he had spent a week in Chicago, where every cross-country traveler had to change trains.

He also had visited that gleaming “White City,” the World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893. But unlike so many other visitors, who regaled their friends and associates with descriptions of that marvel of marvels, Harris has little to say about the world’s fair.

On this day, the city that Paul Harris looked out on was still recovering from the hangover of the great party it had thrown for the world. It was a city that was smoky, sooty, and stinky. It was noisy, grim, and gritty. It was in the throes of an economic depression. Harris would later write:

“The city, as a result of the preparations for the Fair, had been overbuilt

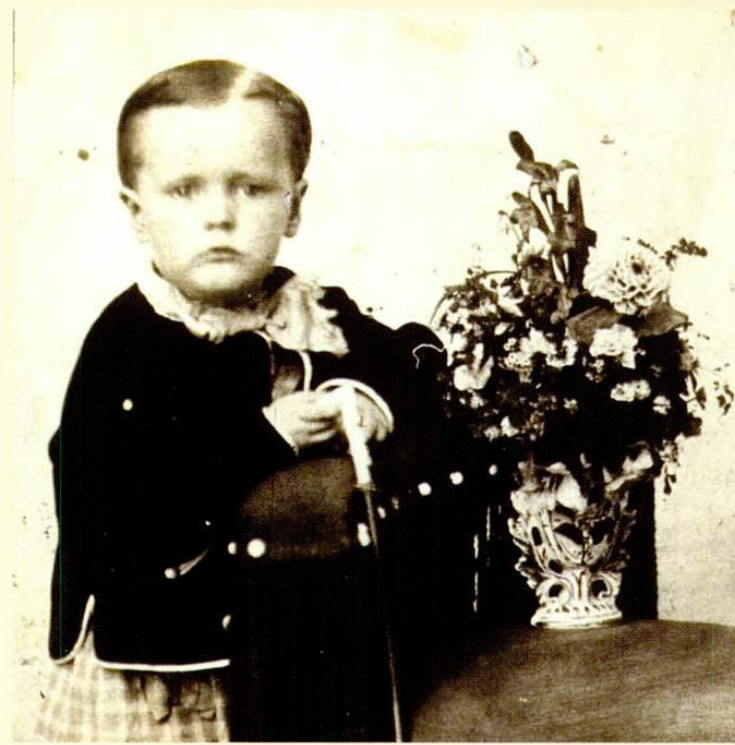


▲ Once it ended, the World’s Columbian Exposition, held in Chicago in 1893, left a part of the city overbuilt and ripe for decay.

in all directions. The consequences were tragic, and the spectacle of closed stores, theaters, hotels, apartment buildings, rooming-houses, as well as the prevalence of “To Rent” signs, was sorely depressing.”

Why Chicago then? It certainly wasn’t because Harris hadn’t been anywhere else. After gradua-

### THE EARLY YEARS



### ‘Road to Rotary’ began long before Chicago

**A**lthough he was born in Racine, Wis., on 19 April 1868, Paul Harris spent most of his childhood living with his paternal grandparents in Wallingford, Vt. *My Road to Rotary*, his autobiography, credits this rural New England, USA, town – “the friendliness of its folks, their religious and political tolerance” – as the impetus for his eventual founding of Rotary.

Harris completed high school in Vermont, studied at Princeton University, and, in 1891, received his law degree from the University of Iowa. Resolved to see the world for a few years, Harris subsequently worked as a reporter, an actor, a cowboy, and a seaman, among other professions. Finally, in 1896, he settled in Chicago to begin his career as an attorney.

— MATTHEW BROWN

◀ Paul Harris at age three. Most of his childhood was spent in rural New England, where he learned to value friendliness and tolerance.

tion from law school, Harris wandered for five years, doing everything from acting on stage to working as a purchasing agent in Europe to helping save the victims of a great flood in the Mississippi Delta.

He was ready and willing to try Chicago because this was the place to be in the 1890s. It was a place of big ideas, big accomplishments, and seemingly boundless opportunities for a young man of energy and ambition. A lot of other people shared the same ambition and dream. During the 1890s, the population of Chicago grew from one million to 1.6 million – 600,000 new souls in one decade, and Harris was just one of them. He reflected:

*“There was no reason whatever for the selection of Chicago as the field of endeavor except its reputation for social unrest; rather a flimsy reason for the selection of a city in which to live. Yes, there must have been some romance left.”*

There was indeed social unrest. During his visit to Chicago while on his way to the university, Harris had taken an interest in, and seen, Haymarket Square, the scene of the 1886 riot and bloodshed following several days of labor strikes over the issue of the eight-hour work day. Harris undoubtedly was aware of the 1894 Pullman strike and its bloody suppression.

And today, as he stood on the station platform pondering his new life in Chicago, the newspapers of the day told of how the steamfitters' union was threatening a strike, which could become a general strike of all workers in the building trades. At issue was the use of non-union personnel by a Chicago contractor doing work at a mental institution (an “insane asylum” is how the *Chicago Daily News* referred to it) in downstate Anna.

## THEY SAID IT

### ▶ On Paul Harris

“One day, that boy will make his mark on the world.”

– Howard Harris, grandfather

### ▶ On the call to service

“An organization that is wholly selfish cannot last long. If we, as a Rotary club, expect to survive and grow, we must do some things to justify our existence. We must perform a civic service.”

– Donald M. Carter,  
Rotarian, 1906

### ▶ On Rotary's first magazine

“Well, if here isn't *The National Rotarian* – I thought it never was coming out – and in a new dress – magazine style and size; well, well!”

– Chesley R. Perry, editor  
and first general secretary  
of RI, 1911

### ▶ On Ches Perry

“It has been said that no man is indispensable. I don't believe it. I know such a man.”

– Frank L. Mulholland, 1914-15 RI president

### ▶ On building Rotary

“If in truth I can be called the architect, Ches can with equal truth be called the builder of Rotary International.”

– Paul Harris, RI founder

### ▶ On Rotary's future

“I analyze Rotary's future growth and success as comparable to the science of airplane motivity. The plane must keep going at a rapid speed to stay up. If it marks time, it falls. Just so with Rotary.”

– Arch C. Klumph,  
1916-17 RI president



### ◀ Arch C. Klumph

**Harris was ready and willing to try Chicago because this was the place to be in the 1890s.**

If Harris had picked up a copy of that newspaper, he most likely would have seen an ad that today seems prophetic:

“A Start in Life,” proclaimed the ad for the American Trust and Savings Bank in big, bold type on page two of the *Daily News*. “Every young man and woman in Chicago should lay away a portion of their earnings every week. It may not be much, but it's surprising how the sum will grow.”

Some of the stories in the papers of that day and the next echoed the broad themes that would concern Harris in later years.

A page one story in the *Daily News* discussed social reform and concern for young people. It indicated that Mayor George B. Swift was throwing his support behind a city appropriation to establish an industrial school for boys at the

House of Correction, something proponents argued would convert an institution from a state of uselessness to one of good for the entire community.

The story went on to describe Chicago's youth crime problem – how, on average, 50 boys were arrested each day. “Under the present system the lad sent to the bridwell [sic] is thrown in with adult criminals. This companionship in crime makes the boy a criminal.”

By the summer of 1899, three and a half years hence, Chicago reformers would be successful in establishing the first juvenile court system in the world, which would separate young offenders from hardened criminals.

On the environmental front, work was underway to build the Sanitary & Ship Canal, which in 1900 would result in ▶

► 1905-1929

an engineering marvel: The reversal of the flow of the Chicago River, thus taking garbage and filth away from Lake Michigan and Chicago's source of drinking water. This would mean a vast improvement in the health of all Chicagoans. In 1891, bronchitis and pneumonia killed 4,300, typhoid fever 2,000. Every year in the early 1890s, 10,000 to 12,000 children under five died in Chicago.

Like today, scientific discoveries and applied technology were matters of great interest – perhaps even more so because they came then at a pace more measured than in our dizzying times. In the *Daily News* was a photograph of “the best picture taken by the Roentgen Process.” In other words, an X-ray of a dead bird with a broken thigh. Wilhelm Conrad Roentgen had discovered X-rays only the year before.

Chicago was indeed an exciting place to be in the 1890s. The Loop elevated line would be completed in 1897. The transportation, gas, and electric utilities were competing with each other

**Harris found himself seeking out like-minded businessmen for fellowship.**

**THEN AND NOW**

In 1913, the Unity Building at 127 North Dearborn Street in Chicago (right) rose above its neighbors. Eight years earlier, the first Rotary club meeting took place in Room 711 of this building. Today, that stretch of Dearborn Street is known as Rotary Club of Chicago Way, an honorary designation. The Unity Building was demolished in 1989.



for franchises to serve the expanding city. Chicago was fast becoming the rail hub of the nation, and during the decade of the 1890s, industry boomed:

grain, lumber, furniture, meat-packing, garment-making, steel, toolmaking, publishing.

It's no wonder that so many people were pouring into Chicago,

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**10 PROMINENT ROTARIANS**

► **King Albert I of Belgium,**



*Rotary clubs of Brussels, Belgium, and San Francisco, Calif., USA*

King Albert ascended to the throne in 1909 and assumed control of his country's armed forces from 1914 through World War I. He led the nation's reconstruction following the war.

► **Sir Norman Brearley, aviator,**  
*Rotary Club of Perth, Australia*

The pioneer of Australian commercial aviation, Brearley joined the Royal Flying Corps during World War I and was wounded in France.

After returning home, he founded West Australian Airways, which was later to become part of Australian National Airways.

► **William Jennings Bryan,**  
*statesman and orator, Rotary Club of Miami, Fla., USA*

A champion of various populist causes, Bryan staged three unsuccessful runs for the U.S. presidency. He served as secretary of state under President Woodrow Wilson and ended his career serving as a prosecuting attorney in the highly publicized Scopes trial, debating whether schools should teach evolution theory.

► **Thomas A. Edison, inventor,**  
*Rotary Club of Orange, N.J., USA*

At his research laboratory in Menlo Park, N.J., Edison invented the phonograph, the incandescent light bulb, and the motion picture projector. He held patents for more than 1,000 inventions.

► **Warren G. Harding, U.S. president,**  
*Rotary Club of Washington, D.C., USA*



Harding was one of the United States' most beloved presidents until his term ended prematurely with his death in 1923. He had given his last major address one month earlier, at the RI Convention in St. Louis, Mo., USA.

one-third of them foreign-born and in search of a new life. But that brought its own problems as the city became fragmented. Communities tended to form based on ethnicity, race, or class, with little room for outsiders. Harris found himself seeking out like-minded businessmen for fellowship.

### A man of optimism

On the day that Paul Harris arrived in Chicago, the *Chicago Tribune* printed an editorial concerning political corruption, which then was popularly known as “boodling.” The *Tribune’s* concern was not so much with boodling as it was with the fact that a recent editorial in the *New York Sun* had suggested that corruption was unusually widespread and accepted in Chicago. While it questioned the character of the *New Yorker* who wrote the *Sun* editorial, the *Tribune* did not exactly refute the writer’s claim:

“Nevertheless it is true that the light and airy way in which the subject of boodling is dealt with in some quarters is not very edifying. A degree of shamelessness is

**The young Harris plunged into this teeming, thrashing city with gusto. He called his early life in Chicago his ‘Bohemian days.’**

exhibited which must be rather startling to people who think boodlers should at least pay some attention to the conventionalities and pretend to be honest.”

Harris was well aware of the corruption in politics and in the business world. He later wrote of his early days in Chicago:

“Generally speaking, business was in a bad way. Practices were not in accord with high ethical principles, with respect to consumers, competitors, or employees. The doctrine of caveat emptor (let the buyer take care of himself) was applied to the consumer. Ill-will and distrust of competitors were intense to the point of being destructive. To cripple a competitor was legitimate, if not commendable.”

But Harris was a man of optimism, a man who counted the misdeeds that gave Chicago such a shoddy reputation as only the surface disturbances on a great river of good deeds that ran deep. Harris applauded people like the social reformer Jane Addams, who founded the Hull House settlement on the West Side, and the evangelist Dwight L.

Moody, founder of the Moody Bible Institute.

He was aware of the Municipal Voters’ League, organized in 1896 to combat political corruption. It turned out droves of angry voters for a city council meeting in 1898, at which a vote was expected on Charles T. Yerkes’ attempt to get an unprecedented, exclusive 50-year franchise for his traction (streetcar) companies. Yerkes had passed out bribes freely, but when some of the bribed aldermen spotted the nooses the public had strewn over the balcony railings, they had a change of heart. Yerkes’ proposal was defeated.

This also was the age of what U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt labeled “the muckrakers” – journalists who would dredge up society’s ills and corruptions and bring them into the light so they could be dealt with. One such muckraker was Upton Sinclair, whose novel *The Jungle*, published in 1906, described conditions in Chicago’s meatpacking plants, the filth that got into the human food chain, and the despicable ▶

▶ **Sir Harry Lauder**, *entertainer, Rotary Club of Glasgow, Scotland*

The first singer in Great Britain to sell a million records, Lauder worked tirelessly to raise money for war-related charities during World War I and entertained troops in France. He was a popular speaker at Rotary clubs during trips to the United States.

▶ **Charles A. Lindbergh**, *aviator, Rotary Club of St. Louis, Mo., USA*

Lindbergh achieved worldwide fame as the first person to fly solo across the Atlantic Ocean in 1927. Following the historic flight, he toured the United States and Latin America in his plane, the *Spirit of St. Louis*, and promoted commercial aviation.

▶ **Thomas Mann**, *novelist and critic, Rotary Club of Munich, Germany*



The author of *Death in Venice*, *The Magic Mountain*, and other well-known works, Mann received

the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1929, largely for his 1901 novel *Buddenbrooks*. He was one of the founding members of his club.

▶ **John J. “Black Jack” Pershing**, *U.S. Army general, Rotary clubs of St. Louis, Mo.; Lincoln, Neb.; and San Antonio, Texas, USA*

A highly disciplined military leader, Pershing commanded the American

Expeditionary Force in Europe during World War I and also served as the U.S. Army’s chief of staff from 1921 to 1924.

▶ **Billy Sunday**, *evangelist, Rotary Club of Des Moines, Iowa, USA*



Professional baseball player-turned-preacher, Sunday staged hundreds of revivals in big cities around the United States, drawing an estimated total of 100 million people. A proponent of Prohibition, he was immortalized in the song “Chicago” in the line “the town that Billy Sunday could not shut down.”

## MAKING HISTORY

**23 February 1905:** Lawyer Paul Harris, coal dealer Silvester Schiele, merchant tailor Hiram Shorey, and mining engineer Gustavus Loehr convene the first Rotary club meeting.



**1910:** 60 Rotarians and their wives attend the first convention in Chicago. Delegates encourage Rotarians to "promote honorable business methods."

**1912:** Rotary moves beyond U.S. borders and admits a club in Winnipeg, formed in 1910, unbeknownst to U.S. Rotarians.

**1916:** With the birth of Club Rotario de la Habana, Rotary enters Latin America.

**1917:** RI President Arch C. Klumph calls for "endowments for the purpose of doing good in the world." Kansas City Rotarians make the first contribution – US\$26.50 – to what would become The Rotary Foundation.

**1927:** Charles Lindbergh crosses the Atlantic Ocean, and *The Jazz Singer* is the first "talkie."



**1905:** International Workers of the World is formed.

**1906:** Donald Carter joins Rotary and immediately shifts the focus to service, calling for the "advancement of the best interests of Chicago."

**1908:** At the St. Francis Hotel in San Francisco, a group of 10 of the city's top business leaders start the second Rotary club.

**1911:** *The National Rotarian* debuts, with an essay, "Rational Rotarianism," by Paul Harris. The magazine's title is shortened to *The Rotarian* in 1912.

**1914:** Archduke Ferdinand is assassinated and World War I begins.



**1917:** The United States enters World War I.

**1920:** Station KDKA, Pittsburgh, transmits the first commercial radio broadcast.

**1927:** Danish Rotarian Sven Knudsen initiates a youth exchange project between Denmark and the United States. The idea catches on quickly.

**1929:** On 24 October, "Black Thursday," the stock market crashes.



Hundreds of millions lose their jobs in the Great Depression.

living conditions and the poverty of the workers. It and other exposés would lead to the eventual establishment of the federal Food and Drug Administration.

### The seed is planted

The young Harris plunged into this teeming, thrashing city with gusto. He called his early life in Chicago his "Bohemian days," when he sampled and delighted in the city's many cultures and cuisines, including Italian, Greek, German, Hungarian, and certainly Bohemian as well. He attended a smorgasbord of religious services, including Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, Baptist, Quaker, Jewish, and Theosophical. He moved frequently, residing in and getting to know 30 different parts of the city during his 15 years of bachelorhood. He was a young man expanding his horizons.

He joined the press club and dined with Chicago's literary and newspaper lights of the 1890s. One of them was Opie Read, author of the 1893 novel *The Colossus*. Duke University professor Kenny J. Williams later characterized that work as dealing "with the idea that the city is a powerful force subduing all but permitting those willing to acknowledge its existence the ability to succeed within its parameters. The price is high as people forfeit not only their humanity but also their souls."

Young Harris was not willing to forfeit his humanity or his soul. His upbringing in small-town Vermont had left him with core values of honesty and integrity. He deplored the dog-eat-dog competition around him in Chicago's central business district, and he refused to join in. He longed to meet and associate with people having the same values as his.

"I was dreadfully lonesome. I pondered the question of increasing my

## TEST OF TIME

## A century of ethics

The earliest Rotarians really had no choice but to make business ethics a priority. They joined the club for two reasons: to make friends and to make business contacts.

If their business practices left anything to be desired, they weren't likely to keep many of those friends for long. Today's Rotarians maintain those principles, but with higher goals in mind.

In its early years, Rotary served as a respite for its members from the rampant corruption and fraud of the day. After a few years of conducting business with their fellow club members, Rotarians understood that one of the organization's great strengths was the unusually high ethical standards of its members. Many believed that those standards should be embedded in Rotary's identity.

In 1910, the newly formed National Association of Rotary Clubs created a Business Methods Committee, and in 1912, RI President Glenn Mead proposed that the committee carve out a code of business ethics for "the advancement of business morality." Three years later, the Rotary Code of Ethics was adopted during the RI Convention in San Francisco.

The code's impact was significant, even beyond Rotary itself, as evidenced by the findings of a University of Chicago study.



▲ The 1915 RI Convention in San Francisco, where the Rotary Code of Ethics was adopted.

"At least 145 national industrial codes of correct practice which have been adopted since 1922 [were] directly a result of the influence of Rotarians," researchers wrote in *Rotary*, a work published in 1934.

Through the years, Rotarians have continued to promote those high ideals through a variety of means, such as The Four-Way Test, Vocational Service, classification talks, and other methods of coupling Rotary membership with business and professional standards. And today, 100 years later, business

ethics remains a cornerstone of the Rotary movement and as relevant as ever. The 2004 Council on Legislation adopted a resolution which emphasizes that "Rotary clubs continue to build upon their significant record of attracting and seeking out individuals who exemplify the high ethical standards of Rotary as we move into the 21st century and into our second 100 years of service."

The roots of Rotary have stood the test of time.

— ANTHONY G. CRAINE

*acquaintance with young men who had come to Chicago from farms and villages, who knew the joys of friendliness and neighborliness. ... Oh [how I missed] the green fields of my New England Valley and the voice of a kindly old friend."*

Harris' longings began to be answered in the autumn of 1900. He was the dinner guest of another attorney, Bob Frank, at Frank's home in Rogers Park on Chicago's far North Side. After dinner, the

two men took a stroll around the neighborhood. Harris was impressed by the friendliness and neighborliness of the various tradespeople, who greeted Frank and his guest with a smile and a handshake. They were so unlike the rude business people downtown. Here was what Harris had been seeking: a unity of commerce, friendship, and goodwill.

*"The thought came to me why not in big Chicago have a fellowship*

*composed of just one man from each of many different occupations, without restrictions as to their politics or religion, with broad tolerance of each other's opinions? In such a fellowship could there not be mutual helpfulness?"*

The seed of what would become the Rotary Club of Chicago – and eventually Rotary International – had been planted. It would sprout on the evening of 23 February 1905. ▶



On that evening, Harris was having dinner with Silvester Schiele, a coal dealer, business acquaintance, and friend. Schiele had roots similar to those of Harris. He had been born in a log cabin in Clay City, Ind., in 1870. He had slept in an attic where the logs couldn't always keep out the winter snows. He had to break the ice in a pitcher to get water to wash in the morning.

He had met Harris shortly after the latter had set up shop, stopping by the young lawyer's office to ask advice about how to collect a debt. The two had become such close friends over the years that for a time they even shared a room at the New Southern Hotel.

On this evening, Harris suggested the formation of a businessman's club. It was something the two had talked about before, but now Harris suggested that this would be a different kind of club. It would be one that would emphasize acquaintance and fellowship among members, each of whom would be from a different profession. Thus there would be no competition between any of the members, and each could support and promote his colleagues' businesses. Everybody would gain. Today, we call the idea "networking."

Schiele liked the idea. The two walked over to the Dearborn ►

▲ The first four Rotarians (from left): Silvester Schiele, Paul Harris, Hiram Shorey, and Gustavus Loehr.





◀ Chicago was a restless, growing metropolis in the early years of the 20th century, leaving businessmen like Paul Harris and the first Rotarians feeling a little lost and in need of companionship.

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## CONVENTIONS TO REMEMBER

### 'Visions of how things must be done'

**B**y 1910, with 16 Rotary clubs scattered across the United States, members agreed that the time had come to form a national association. That August, delegates from 14 clubs met to hammer out the details at the first Rotary convention, held in Chicago. Attendance (60) was modest by today's standards, but by all indications, the participants brought as much enthusiasm as the thousands who gather at Rotary conventions do today.

That first convention shaped Rotary in ways that remain evident today. Chesley R. Perry, whom Paul Harris described as the "builder" of Rotary,

was elected secretary of the new association; he would hold the post for 32 years, guiding Rotary through its formative years with a steady hand and unflinching dedication. Delegates discussed creating a publication to communicate news from the association to the clubs; this was the groundwork for the establishment of *The Rotarian*.

Many of the early conventions were characterized by firsts. The gearwheel logo was adopted at the 1912 convention in Duluth, Minn., USA. The first code of ethics was adopted at the 1913 gathering in Buffalo, N.Y., USA. The first convention held outside the United

States took place in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1921.

From the earliest days, Rotary's leaders understood the impact the convention would have on the future of the association. In a call for full participation in 1912, Perry wrote: "We must have every club represented, even those across the waters; we must have the biggest men in the country there, the most eloquent speakers and the brainy, broad-minded philosophers of modern life, men who are doing things and having visions of how things must be done henceforth and hereafter."

— A.G.C.



▲ Rotary Club of Chicago members line up with suitcases in front of a "Rotary Club Special" train to promote the first Rotary convention, held in Chicago in 1910. Early Rotary conventions went a long way toward shaping today's extensive international organization.

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Street office of mining engineer Gus Loehr to discuss it further with Loehr and with tailor Hiram Shorey, who was also present. Enthusiasm for the concept grew, and the four friends drew up a list of other business friends who might be interested. Two weeks later, the four had become seven for a meeting at Harris' office.

Two weeks yet again, and the group had become eight for a meeting at Schiele's coalyard. It was at this meeting that they decided to elect officers, and although Harris, as organizer, might have been the obvious choice to most of them, it was he who suggested that their host for the evening, Schiele, be the first president of the club. He was elected by acclamation, as were the other first officers of what would become Rotary: Shorey as recording secretary, real estate broker Bill Jensen as corresponding secretary, and printer Harry Ruggles as treasurer.

It would be Ruggles, a few months later, who would start one of Rotary's happiest traditions. Schiele would later recall: "We were seated at a small, long table, discussing Rotary and other matters, but a lull in the talk came. When it threatened to be prolonged Harry Ruggles burst out, 'Hell, fellows, let's sing!' And sing we did, led by Harry in his vibrant style. We continued singing at each meeting after that. Other organizations took up singing too. Before we knew it, the habit had spread around the globe."

It was at the third meeting of the club that names were considered for the organization. Several were considered, including "Booster Club," "Round Table Club," "Lake Club," and even "Blue Boys," but Harris records that he suggested "Rotary," because meeting places were rotated among the members' places of business.

Harris dreamed of Rotary clubs springing up in other cities, in the United States and around the world.



▲ Construction of public washrooms in downtown Chicago was among the earliest Rotary service projects.

#### An idea whose time had come

The Rotary Club of Chicago was little more than a year old when patent attorney Donald M. Carter joined. He had been invited into the club by glass ornament maker Frederick H. Tweed, himself a new member in December 1905.

Carter asked Tweed what the purpose of the club was. Tweed told him it had two purposes: the promotion of the business interests of its members and the promotion of good fellowship, and those purposes were spelled out as objectives in the club's constitution.

That wasn't good enough for Carter. He told Tweed such a club could have great possibilities, if only it would perform some ►

## THE PIONEER CLUBS

### First in line

Everybody knows (or should know) that the first Rotary club was born in Chicago on 23 February 1905. But where were the rest of the early clubs – the pioneers of Rotary – created? Below are the 16 clubs that pre-date the National Association of Rotary Clubs of America, formed in August 1910.

Club	Date
Chicago, Ill., USA	23 February 1905
San Francisco, Calif., USA	12 November 1908
Oakland, Calif., USA	5 February 1909
Seattle, Wash., USA	15 June 1909
Los Angeles, Calif., USA	25 June 1909
New York, N.Y., USA	24 August 1909
Boston, Mass., USA	27 December 1909
Tacoma, Wash., USA	3 February 1909
Minneapolis, Minn., USA	18 February 1910
St. Paul, Minn., USA	19 February 1910
St. Louis, Mo., USA	22 February 1910
New Orleans, La., USA	23 February 1910
Kansas City, Mo., USA	15 May 1910
Portland, Ore., USA	25 May 1910
Lincoln, Neb., USA	6 June 1910
Detroit, Mich., USA	25 July 1910

kind of civic service for people other than its own members. At Tweed's suggestion, Carter wrote up a proposed amendment to the constitution, which Tweed had his secretary type up. Then Tweed proposed it to the club. The members overwhelmingly adopted a third objective: The advancement of the best interests of Chicago and the spreading of the spirit of civic pride and loyalty among its citizens.

Many Rotarians know the stories of the club's first efforts in the line of service:

► Club members took up a collection to buy a horse for a preacher-

**'Hundreds of small cities and towns, all but dead so far as civic consciousness was concerned, took on new life.'**

— PAUL HARRIS

farmer who could not afford a replacement after his steed had died.

► The club pushed for, and succeeded in getting built, the first public washrooms in downtown Chicago. This came at a time when women in need had to use facilities inside department stores and men were forced to seek relief in taverns.

► On a cold day in 1908, a member who encountered a shivering and ragged newsboy on his way to a meeting brought the boy in with him. The lad left with a woolen sweater, a shirt, a hat, a muffler, a pair of gloves, even

socks, and about US\$5 in cash (which was worth around \$100 in today's money).

Harris dreamed of Rotary clubs forming in other cities, in the United States and around the world. At first, many Chicago Rotarians had their doubts that the club's ideals and purposes could be extended to other cities. So Harris took it upon himself to write to contacts he had made in college and during his five years of wandering before settling in Chicago.

It wasn't until 1908, however, that Rotary began to spread. And it wasn't the work of Harris' correspondence that did it. It was the work of Manuel Munoz, Harris' friend and one-time roommate. During a business trip to San Francisco, Munoz interested lawyer Homer Wood in the idea of Rotary, and in a very short time San Francisco had the country's second Rotary club. Other West Coast clubs followed: Oakland, Seattle, and Los Angeles. On the East Coast, clubs in New York and Boston became a reality shortly thereafter.

Meanwhile, the movement and its good works continued to mushroom, as Harris described in his book *My Road to Rotary*:

*"Hundreds of small cities and towns, all but dead so far as civic consciousness was concerned, took on new life after they organized their Rotary clubs. Clean-up campaigns were inaugurated, Boy Scout troops were given leadership and support. Boys bands were organized. Languishing chambers of commerce were revived and new ones started. Boys camps were established. Rotarians were more than propagandists; they frequently constituted the entire working force. Those who could not contribute money, contributed labor. Rotarians in small towns became jacks-of-all-trades during the construction of camps. ►*

## FROM THE ROTARIAN

### The philosophy of Rotary

*Excerpted from the January 1912 issue of The Rotarian*

The earnest thinker and philosopher sat opposite me in the dining car, and fixing his steady and inquisitive eyes upon me, he propounded this inquiry: "Perry, what do you consider to be the philosophy of Rotary?" I didn't feel prepared, at that moment, to discuss that question with the father of the Rotary idea, but he made me discuss it with him just the same, and since then I have given a great deal of thought at odd moments to the question which was and still is on Mr. Harris' mind. I have analyzed the establishment and growth of the first Rotary Club (Chicago) and of many others. Orally and in correspondence I have discussed the matter with other Rotarians.

There is no question in my mind but that the Rotary movement has developed into a greater and grander example of fraternal cooperation than anyone conceived possible or even thought of in the earliest days of the first club. As oftentimes a child with plain and unattractive features and awkward and ungainly form has developed into a man of splendid physique and noble cast of countenance or into a woman of perfect figure, graceful carriage, and most beautiful face, so,



▲ Chesley R. Perry

although Rotary may have started as a simple and more or less selfish endeavor to get additional business for those who were its first charter members, it has grown and developed into a marvelous great universal movement with elements of altruism, sparkling with beautiful gems of the philosophy and science of service to fellow man and society.

— Chesley R. Perry, secretary of the National Association of Rotary Clubs; founding editor, *The Rotarian*

## PROFILE

## James Wheeler Davidson: the Marco Polo of Rotary

**B**y 1928, Rotary had expanded rapidly to many parts of the world, but a significant gap existed across Asia. When Rotary's leaders turned their attention to establishing clubs between Europe and Japan, they called on James Wheeler Davidson to do the job.

By the time Davidson had joined the Rotary Club of Calgary, Alta., Canada, in 1914, he was already a seasoned traveler. He had accompanied Admiral Robert E. Peary on an expedition to the North Pole in 1893. Later, he worked as a reporter in Japan for the *New York Herald*, then joined the U.S. Foreign Service as consul general in Shanghai.

Davidson had journeyed to Australia and New Zealand in 1921 on behalf of Rotary. Although the trip was intended simply to spread information about Rotary, Davidson's enthusiastic approach resulted in four new clubs being formed during the 21-day trip, earning him his reputation as a Rotary trailblazer.

At age 66, accompanied by his wife, Lillian, and his daughter, Marjory, Davidson set sail for Turkey in August 1928. For 30 months, Davidson pushed eastward, conducting face-to-face meetings with community leaders, prominent businessmen, and heads of state. The first club he organized was the Rotary Club of Athens, Greece, on 14 December 1928. Charters for 22 more clubs would follow, including Bangkok, Cairo, Jakarta, Rangoon (now Yangón), and Singapore.

Lillian Davidson documented the trip with a series of articles that were published in *The Rotarian* and later turned into a



▲ James Wheeler Davidson with his wife, Lillian, and their daughter, Marjory, traveled across Asia for 30 months, promoting Rotary and helping to charter new clubs.

book called *Making New Friends*. In one dispatch, she wrote about a night spent lost in the desert outside Baghdad, Iraq, during a ferocious sand storm – at a time when foreigners were prohibited from traveling after dark because of the recent murder of a missionary. “It was an experience so unusual and so enriching that we frankly rejoiced over it for we have seen the desert in its purring as well as its snarling mood and

because of this, life seems just a little fuller.”

The family endured illness and a serious car crash but made it home safely in March 1931 after a 150,000-mile trek. Not long after the trip ended, Jim Davidson's health began to deteriorate, and he died on 18 July 1933. But his legacy continues, as 13 of the clubs that he helped to charter remain active today.

– A.G.C.

► 1905-1929

*Anyone who could drive a nail could qualify as a carpenter, while druggists and grocers became bricklayers and plumbers when occasion demanded. The women served appetizing lunches and eventually won for themselves the endearing term of Rotaryans. There never had been such doings since barnraising days."*

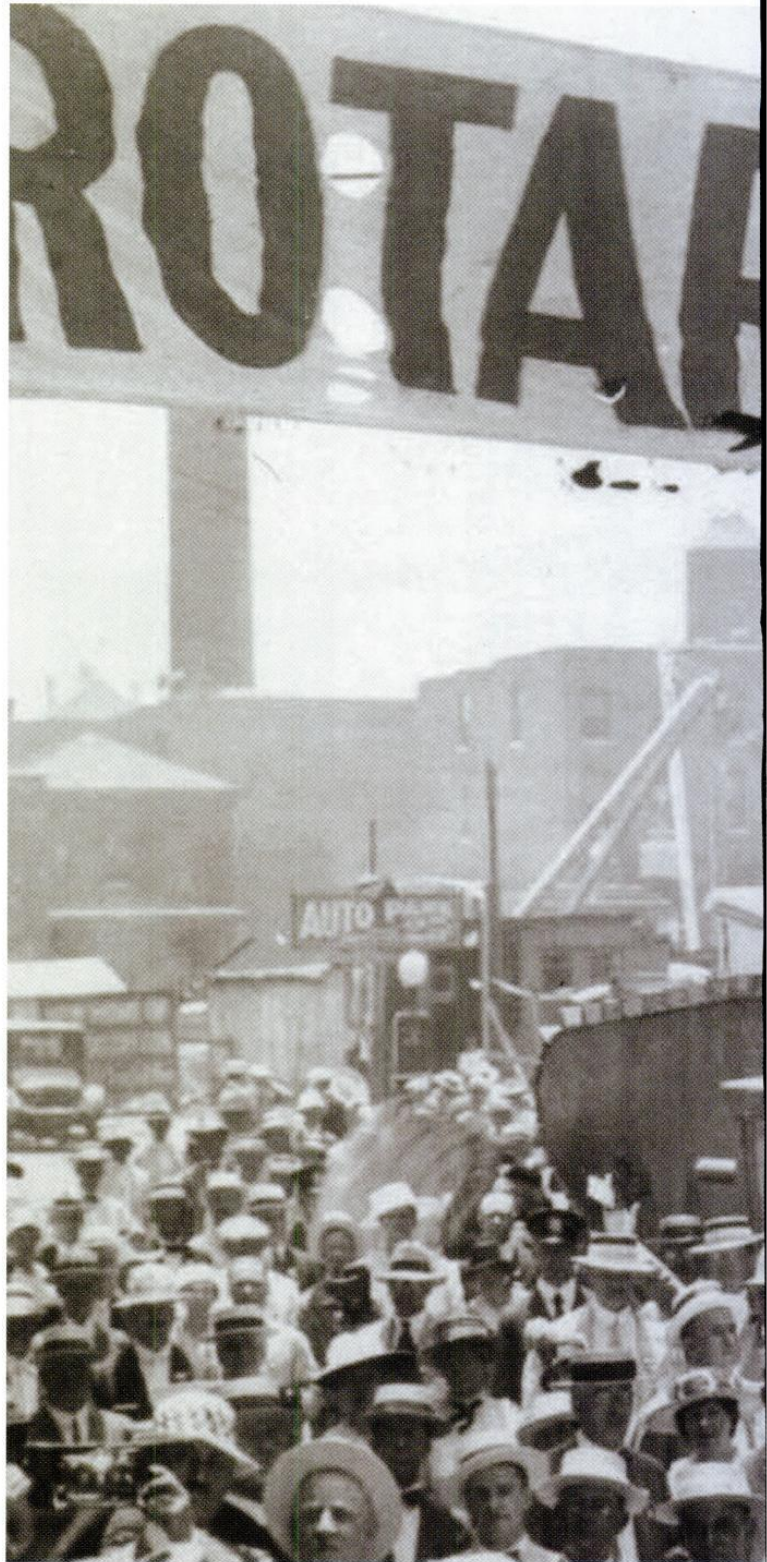
Service had indeed become an integral part of the Rotary experience, and Rotarians devoted themselves to helping others in myriad ways. During World War I, the Rotary Club of Chicago's War Service Committee helped servicemen and their families. The club organized victory parades and feted returning servicemen with lunch and the theater. Club members worked to help soldiers and sailors readjust to civilian life and to help them find jobs. As Rotary expanded, its members found other outlets for service: giving relief to the victims of wars and natural disasters, organizing drives for public works projects like the coast-to-coast Lincoln Highway, or setting up funds to help immigrants.

Service is one of Rotary's great legacies – a practice that caught the imagination of members and of other organizations. As Rotary's emphasis shifted during the period of 1910 to 1920 from boosterism to service, it inspired other groups to sprout and grow. Kiwanis International (1915), Lions International (1917), and Zonta International (1919) all were established with similar approaches to service, and they continue their great works today.

Children have always been a major beneficiary of Rotary service. In the early years, clubs raised funds to assist disabled children, providing them with opportunities for education, access, and health care not always available to the disabled in those days. ►

During World War I, the Rotary Club of Chicago organized victory parades and worked to help soldiers and sailors readjust to civilian life and find jobs.

► Rotarians gather around a tank at the 1918 convention in Kansas City, Mo., USA.





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**ON THIS DATE**

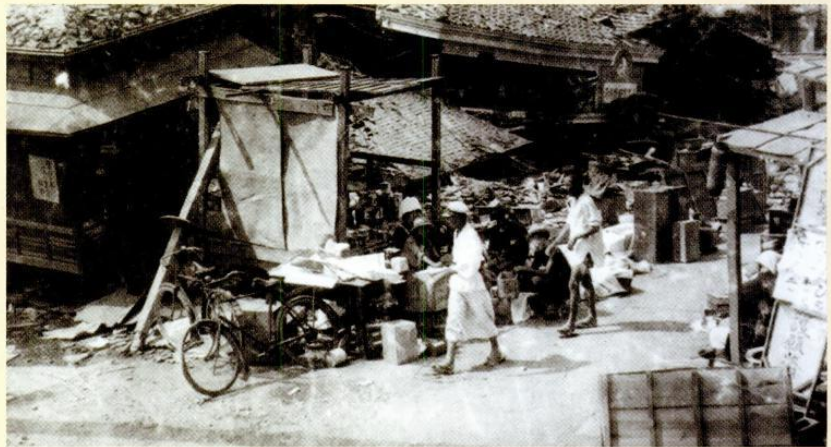
**1 September 1923**

One of the most devastating earthquakes in history shook the Tokyo-Yokohama metropolitan area, killing some 140,000 people. More than half of the brick buildings were destroyed, and hundreds of thousands of homes were knocked down or burned in the ensuing fires.

In a letter to RI General Secretary Chesley R. Perry, the secretary of the Rotary Club of Tokyo, Watari Kitashima, related some of the experiences of club members, including a dentist named Dr. Chiwaki, who was at home during the earthquake.

"He said the first thing he knew after the shock was that his head was sticking out above the roof and all the members of his family were under the crushed house, but he was fortunate in rescuing himself and his family," Kitashima wrote.

One member lost his wife and child, another lost his wife, while a third lost two children in the disaster. Many club members lost their businesses and



homes, and others reported rescuing family members from the rubble.

The *Japan Times and Mail* published an article describing how Rotary clubs from around the world sent aid to Japan, in addition to the US\$35,000 contributed by Rotary International. The article included the story of the Tokyo club's past president, named Yoneyama. His office had burned, but in the ashes he found a Rotary club

▲ The 1923 Tokyo quake killed 140,000 and destroyed hundreds of thousands of homes.

badge, given to him by an American friend. The badge was unscathed. Yoneyama showed it to his fellow Rotarians at a club meeting.

"Like this little badge," he said, "the Rotary spirit lives and shines through earthquake and fire."

— A.G.C.

Often the Rotary work would inspire entire communities to become involved, raising awareness not just of individual cases but of the struggles of disabled children in general.

After his 18-year-old son Homer was killed in a streetcar accident, Rotarian Edgar F. Allen of Elyria, Ohio, USA, was told that the boy's life could have been saved had there been a hospital in the town. As a result, Allen sold his lumber business and devoted his time to raising money to build a new hospital. It included a wing where disabled children were treated. Allen became aware of the way such children were often hidden from public view. He worked tirelessly to get his own club and others to work for disabled children.

**By 1930, service clubs were a worldwide phenomenon with millions of members, and Rotary had firmly established its role as the leader.**

Rotary clubs responded, forming city and state organizations. Allen founded the National Society for Crippled Children in 1919, the first organization of its kind. This led to the creation of the International Society for Crippled Children in 1921, which in 1967 became known as Easter Seals.

Another facet of Rotary's work with children was "Boys Work," a concerted effort by Rotary clubs to turn around the lives of the many boys whose lives had taken a turn for the worse. With so many clubs supporting Boys Work projects, the 1916 Cincinnati convention approved the formation of a standing committee to promote the work throughout Rotary. Clubs organized Boys Weeks, supported Boy Scout troops, and backed vocational training classes. This

tradition of caring for young people continues today in the many youth-oriented Rotary programs and projects, including Youth Exchange, RYLA, and Interact.

The movement also went international. Clubs were organized in Canada, Great Britain, and Ireland in 1912; in Cuba in 1916; in Uruguay in 1918; in the Philippines in 1919; in Spain in 1920; and in Australia and South Africa in 1921.

By the end of 1920 there were 758 Rotary clubs with 70,000 members. The combined membership of all the service clubs was more than 300,000. By 1930, service clubs were a worldwide phenomenon with millions of members, and Rotary had firmly established its role as the leader, with its pioneering commitment

to ethics, humanitarian service, and world understanding. Countless millions of people have since benefited from these clubs.

In just 25 years, Rotary had grown to an international movement that attracted prominent people from all walks of life. Its ranks included world leaders, such as U.S. President Warren G. Harding. Other leaders in the United States, Europe, and Latin America held honorary memberships. Army generals, including Sir John Monash of Australia and John J. "Black Jack" Pershing of the United States were Rotarians. Industrialists such as Piero Pirelli of Italy were welcomed into Rotary, and aviation pioneers Charles Lindbergh of the United States and Sir Norman Brearley of Australia were honorary Rotarians. A Nobel Prize-winning author, Thomas Mann of Germany, and a beloved entertainer, Sir Harry Lauder of Great Britain, also belonged.

Rotary was not just changing communities, it was changing the world.

And it can all be traced back to the idea and organization started by one man, Paul Harris. Near the end of his life, he looked back:

*"My reward has been exceedingly great. To have friends all over the world is a great blessing. To know that these friends are also friends of each other is a satisfying thought. The salutation, 'Good Morning, Paul!' which gladdened my heart in boyhood days in my valley is now the greeting of my fellow Rotarians and continues to be sweet music in my ears, whether it be spoken by rich or poor, young or old."*

Today, in 32,000 clubs around the world, Rotarians continue to greet each other as friends, gladdening hearts and inspiring fellowship and good works. From the inner cities of the United States to the remotest villages of Africa and Asia, communities

benefit from the ideals that led a small band of Chicago businessmen to take the time to assist their less-fortunate neighbors. In universities around the globe, Rotary-funded scholars grapple with solutions to the conflicts that stand in the way of the international understanding that the earliest Rotarians hoped to foster. The principles and sentiments that led to the formation of the

**Rotary was not just changing communities, it was changing the world.**

very first Rotary club remain as vital and relevant to human existence today as they did 100 years ago. ◀

*Jim Benes is morning editor at WBBM Newsradio 780 in Chicago. He is the author of Chicago Christmas: One Hundred Years of Christmas Memories. A new edition of the book will be released later this year.*

## IN THE NEWS

### Rotary's critics

As Rotary's influence increased, criticism of the organization – and of the larger service club movement – was often sharp. Some of the barbs came from the world's leading literary lights, among them G.K. Chesterton, H.L. Mencken, Sinclair Lewis, and George Bernard Shaw.

"Where is Rotary going?" asked the playwright Shaw. "It is going out to lunch."

To some outside Rotary, its synthesis of apparently contradictory aims – service and business ethics on the one hand, making a profit and boosting other members' businesses on the other – smacked of hypocrisy.

Chesterton's poem *Rotarians* (1927) includes this stanza:

The speaking at the Rotary is Praise  
devoid of Proof  
The talking at the Rotary turns mostly  
on the oof  
But both require an Emblem; and a  
Wheel is just the thing  
When you argue in a circle and do  
business in a Ring.

Mencken, editor of the *American Mercury*, described the typical Rotarian as "well-fed, well-dressed, complacent and cocksure, he remains almost destitute of ideas."

Lewis, the first American Nobel laureate in literature, lampooned Rotary and other similar organizations in his novels *Babbitt* (1922), *Elmer Gantry* (1927), and *It Can't Happen Here* (1935).

Leland D. Case, editor of *The Rotarian* from 1935 to 1950, was able to make



▲ RI President Frank L. Mulholland (left) and author Sinclair Lewis

amends with some of the Rotary bashers, most famously with Lewis, whom Case visited at his summer home in Vermont in 1936, unannounced. The April 1951 issue of *The Rotarian*, in a passage unsigned but presumably written by Case, made mention of Lewis following his death the previous January:

"When we suggested that through the pages of *The Rotarian* he take a broader look at Rotary and its worldwide activities, he did so and had the grace and forthrightness to respond immediately with a handwritten letter saying, 'You have made me approve of Rotary.' Later on he became a contributor. That is a footnote to his career that we now take pleasure in recording, and for the first time in these columns. But we would couple it with a recollection of a remark made by Paul Harris, Founder of Rotary. It was that by sharp satire on the 'babbitry' of an organization seeking through trial and error to develop its program, Sinclair Lewis had done a great service to Rotary."

– A.G.C.