

## "Service Above Self"

*"The history of Homewood Rotary is more than just the story of*

*a service club; it's the history of a community."*

### **Long, Long Ago...**

Every Rotary Club in the world can trace its lineage at least indirectly back to 1905. Paul Harris' singular idea sparked not just an organization, but a movement that now spans the globe, counting well over one million members on six continents. Homewood joined that movement in its 31<sup>st</sup> year when Bill Michaels, Chicago Heights Rotarian and Governor of what was then District 40, suggested to Chuck Alexander and Sid Lee of the Harvey Club that they explore the possibilities of expansion into the growing town that sat astride the Illinois Central Railroad. They, in turn, approached W.H. Taylor, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, and past president of the club in Harvard, Illinois.

Immediately enthusiastic, Rev. Taylor ran into a road block. Some of the local businessmen were rather reluctant because of the previous failure of other types of local clubs. Familiarizing them with the unique organizational structure of Rotary International and its principles, they decided to proceed.

### **1936**

#### **Our First Year**

It's said the first meeting of Rotary One in Chicago was held in the back room of a tavern. Homewood's first organizational meeting was held in the back room of the Cordt Funeral Home, then located at the southwest corner of Ridge and Martin. The date was February 26, 1936.

Our first year began with a charter night ceremony held at the Glenwood Manual Training School on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 1936. Below is a list of those first members, present that night to help receive charter #3961.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Classification</u>
John W. Blair	Coal, Retail
William H. Clothier	Groceries, Retail
Fred A. Cordt	Funeral Director
Frank P. Cowing	General Law
Edward Didier	Dry Goods, Retail
Elmo Dillon, M.D.	Physician & Surgeon
Fred Gold	Building Materials, Retail
George J. Hartman	Recreation – Billiards
Fred Hoyer	Decorating Materials
Harry E. Iler	Education, Elementary
Arthur Earl Johnson	Electric Equipment
John E. Kurtz	Garage & Service Station
George M. May	Jewelry, Retail
George H. Meyer	Insurance, Life
Walter V. Muszynski	Drugs, Retail

Wesley Vernon Pipher	Construction Service
Dr. Eric A. Rhind	Medicine, Dentistry
Holger Schroder	Baking, Retail
Arthur F. Senior	Electrical Industry
Adolph A. Sommerfeld	Finance
Albert Stolzenback	Meat, Retail
Wilford Hall Taylor	Religion – Protestant
Col. Paul E. Williams	Education
George Locke	Plumbing

An eclectic group to be sure, but a group that hit the ground running. Not long after charter night, members attended their first District Conference, held in Chicago Heights on May 13 & 14, 1936. Registration fees were \$3 per member (the fee for ladies was only \$2), and included such highlights as: a tour of the Owens-Illinois Glass Works, a bridge luncheon with prizes, dinner with vaudeville entertainment on Wednesday night, and the Thursday night Governor's Banquet and Ball held at the Olympia Fields Country Club. Of the twenty-four original members, sixteen attended the conference. The Club also sent two delegates to the International Convention in Atlantic City. More importantly, in May the Club admitted a pair of George's as its first new members: George Alexander (a candy maker), and George Thies (a banker).

### **The 1930's** *Getting Going*

After a successful first year, the Club spent the rest of the decade getting off the ground.

In the District 40 report for the month of March, 1937, club attendance was 86.28%, placing Homewood behind Rock Island and Evanston, but ahead of Freeport, Moline, Rockford, Joliet and Chicago.

Also in 1937, the club organized a very successful hobby show for the youth of the area.

Taking the Rotary spirit of club extension to heart, the Club sponsored the new club in Blue Island in May, 1937 and brought a contingent to their Charter Night ceremony of more than 50 members and spouses.

By Sept, 1937, membership had reached 31.

In 1938, the Home Talent Show (3 evenings of singing, music, readings and dancing) was held with the proceeds going to help finance the local Boy and Girl Scout troops.

### **The 1940's** *War & Peace*

With war's dark shadow looming close over the horizon, just as the rest of the nation mobilized for the struggle that was to come, the Club retooled its own activities to reflect the times. Projects either started or assisted were:

Establishment of the Civil Aeronautics Patrol at the Washington Park Airport, then located at the corner of 187<sup>th</sup> Street and Halsted.

Letters accompanied by photo's of Homewood and surrounding areas were sent around the world to local servicemen in an attempt to bring a little bit of home to some far flung shores.

A clothing drive resulting in the shipment of 522 bundles to the liberated nations of war torn Europe.

In an attempt to provide some normalcy and a much needed distraction for the young on the home front, the Club formed a committee to provide recreation and sports for boys and girls. This committee eventually evolved into the long standing Homewood Youth Council.

A War Service Committee was established under Community Service to oversee such activities as War Stamp drives, scrap metal and rubber drives, and blood drives.

The 1943-44 Club Budget included such items as: the purchase of War Bonds, gifts for servicemen, bicycle repair fund for local youths.

Not everything revolved around the war, however. Out of a desire to coordinate community Christmas programs and decorations, a business organization was formed by the Club to oversee the project. The short term effect was that Homewood was recognized as the outstanding village in South Cook County for spectacular Christmas decorations. The longer term effect, however, was much more lasting. The business organization eventually led to the formation of the Homewood Chamber of Commerce, an organization still functioning and very vital today.

Despite all the worthwhile projects the Club was involved with, the highlight of the decade unquestionably occurred on November 15, 1943. Rotary Founder Paul Harris made a visit to Homewood. He shared with the Club that despite all the travel he'd undertaken, and his big city contacts, at heart he was still a "small town boy", who loved nothing better than home cooking and warm fellowship.

### **The 1950's** ***The Return To Normalcy***

With a hot war in the past, and a cold war brewing, focus turned to the domestic front, though not entirely.

Member Paul Cook traveled to the 50<sup>th</sup> state to attend a meeting of the Rotary Club of Honolulu, where he was honored for his work with Phi Delta Kappa, Professional Education Fraternity by the University of Hawaii. Presenting the award was Olympic swimming champion Duke Kahanamoku.

The Club purchased a floodlight for a new fire truck, and walkie-talkies for the fire department.

In 1951, baseball came to Homewood. In keeping with the long standing tradition of supporting youth athletics, the Little League Baseball Association of Homewood was formed, with the Club acting as a sponsor of one of the four initial teams.

Through the efforts of member Art Senior, the Izaak Walton Park was founded. The still surviving association serves as a wilderness center in the heart of the South Suburbs.

In keeping with the memory of the Charter Night held at the Glenwood School, the Club kept the thread of connection in tact. Returning to the school for the annual Ladies' Night, a new American Flag and Regimental Standard were presented to the school's Color Guard.

The 1953-54 year kicked off with a contest to rename the bulletin. Dozens of names were submitted, with the winner being the "Spokes"Man, (a name that survived for 45 years until the name was changed to the more 'correct' "Spokes" Person).

The Cold War was very evident when the Club held a luncheon meeting at the newly installed Nike missile base, ending in a tour of the facility.

Club extension was again evident when, in keeping with the spirit of Rotary, the Rotary Club of Lansing was organized and chartered in 1958. Robert Fiske, a former Homewood member became Lansing's first president, accepting the charter presented at a ceremony held at the Glenwood School.

The decade ended on a melancholy note when a fire at Surma's Restaurant, the Club's meeting place, destroying irreplaceable records, flags and memorabilia.

### **The 1960's** ***Strife & Triumph***

A decade of both deep civil strife and great civil triumphs, started off sadly. Rev. W.H. Taylor, the moving force behind the organization of the Club, passed away. He was memorialized in a meeting for his 25 years of dedicated service.

In 1962 – 63, Sandy Sandburg became the first Club member to serve in the capacity of Governor, District 644. Governor Sandburg was honored with a "This is Your Life" program at the annual Ladies' Night, featuring very special guest Nitish Laharry, President of Rotary International.

In 1964, the annual luncheon visit to the Glenwood School was reinstated. This is a relationship that has grown and blossomed over the years (see 1999 – 2000 for further details).

In what was a highlight of the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration, the Club played host to the District Conference. Held at the Dorchester Club in Dolton, it was a lot of work, but all reports indicate it was well worth while.

The decade ended with some extensive travels. The 1966 International Convention in Denver was attended by a contingent from Homewood of 50 people (members and their families). An extra car was added to a special convention train just for Homewood. In 1967 five Members and their spouses attended the International Convention in Nice, France. An assembly of 36 Members and spouses journeyed to Hawaii for the 1969 International

Convention. And a group of thirteen attended the 1970 Convention held in Atlanta, Georgia.

The Club was tapped for a second District Governor when Abbot "Duke" Spalding served in that office for District 644 in 1969 – 70.

While this has nothing to do with Homewood, 1968 ended on an interesting note for all Rotarians, and on a triumphant note for all of mankind. A Rotary Pin (or at least the man who wore it) was in orbit around the Moon. Frank Borman, a Houston Rotarian, commanded the Apollo 8 mission that was the first manned mission to orbit the lunar satellite.

### **The 1970's** *A Time Of Change*

Education was the by-word that kicked off the decade. Career Exploration Night was initiated at Homewood Flossmoor High School. The name was later changed to Career Day, an event the school still operates.

A scholarship program was begun when four scholarships (totaling \$1,400.00 and increasing over time) were presented to four H-F High School Students.

Most change is for the good, some not so. In an attempt to help alter a change that wasn't for the better, the Club purchased a film on Marijuana for the Homewood Police Department to use for school education.

1970 proved that money isn't the only way a person can make a contribution. Thirty-three Members contributed 187 man hours creating 194 jigsaw puzzles that were distributed to shut-ins in the area, and to patients at the Shriner's Hospital for Crippled Children. The project continued through 1972.

After twenty years, club extension was again on the mind when the Club sponsored the organization of the Rotary Club of Oak Forest, which received its charter on October 1, 1975

The decade ended in 1979 with a "Dr. Helge Janson Day", honoring both the oldest member of the Club, and the man who had the longest record (until that time) of perfect attendance. Dr. Janson joined the Club not long after it was chartered, serving in all offices, including Vice President when Paul Harris visited the Club in 1943, and remained active until his very untimely death. With all the projects he participated in and spearheaded over his long tenure, no other person embodied the meaning of Rotary more than Helge Janson.

### **The 1980's** *Fresh Starts and Great Expectations*

The Student Exchange program, a long time staple of Rotary International and adopted by the Club in the 1960's, gained a renewed foothold in Homewood.

During the decade, the Club hosted (amongst others): Laurence Lassartesse from France, Alex Azevedo from Brazil (he learned English by watching television, and earned a place on the H-F High School basketball team), Petra Aarnio from Finland, Vic Loreano of the Philippines, Billy Jedwab hailed from Brazil, Sandy Tolua a Samoan from New Zealand, Julie Billingham from Australia, Mette Kjobsted came over from Denmark, and Ivonise Dos Santos exchanged from Brazil. All these delightful students brought back a better understanding to their homelands of their new American friends and families.

Health care played a very important role both domestically and abroad. It was the decade of PolioPlus. Dr. Ed Mandel instituted a .25 tax on all drinks consumed by Rotarians, and with the enthusiastic support of the Club, distributed contribution cans through out the area with the proceeds going to PolioPlus. His efforts saw him named special District PolioPlus Representative to Rotary International. By 1988, the Club had reached 56 new Paul Harris Fellows with the contributions going to PolioPlus.

Dr. Sol Rocke brought health care overseas when he led a VOSH trip to Zaire, Africa, in what would be the first of many journeys. During their brief stay, more than 3000 people were fitted with free eyeglasses. The impact was staggering, knowing that many of the recipients hadn't ever had clear vision.

Also abroad, Member and Past District Governor Sandburg volunteered for a HHH (Health-Hunger-Humanity) Foundation trip to the Sudan.

On the home front, 1982 witnessed the first annual Health Fair. Organized by Dr. Gary Nordbrock, the Fair was used to offer health screenings to the people of the community with an eye towards garnering attendees who might not otherwise, or couldn't afford the tests offered. The Health Fair is still thriving (see 1999 – 2000 for further details).

In 1983 – 84, in order to raise “a big chunk of change” President Byron Hurd commissioned Past President Michael Krokidas (incidentally, a one-time resident of the Glenwood School) to put together a fund raising event. The committee worked hard on the ensuing raffle, with the net proceeds (\$15,000) being used by the Club for worthwhile community projects. The raffle survives today, funneling thousands of dollars to the Club for numerous causes.

The same year that fund raising efforts took off, the Club had its third District Governor in Al Thiernau.

In an effort to act on President Joe Doerfler's wish to come up with a good, large use of the fund raising efforts, the Club landed on a suggestion that satisfied all. A 12 passenger van was purchased and donated to the Homewood Flossmoor Park District for use mainly as Senior Citizen Transportation. The van is still in use, logging miles every year and contributing some hours acting as a shuttle for attendees at the Club's Health Fair.

**The 1990's**  
***And the Beat Goes On...***

The decade opened with Dr. Mandel being honored with his service as District Governor, the fourth Member of the Club to do so.

Begun during the year of President Roger Bovenkerk, the Homewood Rotary Foundation was officially chartered as a 501(c)3 organization nearly two years later. The inspiration of Martin Anthonisen (who would serve as the Foundation's first President) it was shepherded along through the extensive efforts and hard work of Martin and Art Welsh, the Foundation was formed so that the accumulated assets from fund raisers could be protected and used as needed. By-laws were written and approved, a board of directors elected, and the Foundation closed its first fiscal year with a balance of more than \$40,000.00, making the first year a smashing success. It was hoped that the corpus would continue to grow, in order for the Club to make more meaningful financial commitments to the community and abroad.

In 1992, in a joint effort with the Chicago Heights Club, a Christmas program was started for the boys of the Glenwood School (see 1999 – 2000 for further details).

Health Fair attendance, now under the direction of Dr. Tom Fleming, regularly approached or surpassed 1000 attendees. Tom was a dynamo, working dozens of hours to prepare for the event, and his untimely death left a void that the Club was very hard pressed to fill. In the same year, Member Fitz Blake also passed away far too soon. A brief year later, we lost Past Presidents Joe Sherrill and Joe Doerfler. Their passing has left our ranks sadder for the losses.

International projects occupied efforts, time and dollars but with great success. Under President Cliff Mora, a joint project was initiated with the club of Harare, Zimbabwe, to help secure a senior citizens facility in the African nation. A matching grant was applied for and approved, making the efforts doubly successful.

During President Glenn Swanson's year, the second project, also a receiving a matching grant, helped set up a literacy program in Cusco, Peru. Funds for the program were raised during the first Recognition Night, which honored Dr. Ruben Chuquimia, a native of Peru, chaired and coordinated through the hard work of Rick & Donna Thiernau.

A second Recognition Night two years later honored Dr. Sol Rocke, with the proceeds being split between our Foundation and the Grand Prairie Services. Both were unqualified successes.

There's so much more happening, and the beat goes on...

### **1999 - 2000**

#### ***A Year of Traditions, A Year of New Beginnings***

A surprising musical start kicked off the year when new President Nick Markionni concluded his installation dinner (held at the Calumet Country Club) by joining the brass quintet entertaining the assembly, in a rousing Dixieland number. The musical piece received a standing ovation (although

it was rumored the enthusiastic applause came because the number was over!).

The new board consists of:

President - Nick Markionni  
Pres. Elect - Mike Slevnik  
Secretary - Clint Johnson  
Treasurer - Barb Ramsey  
Past Pres. - Jerry Palm  
Directors  
Club Service - Peter Camin \*  
Community - Roger Bovenkerk  
International - John Blakey  
Vocational - Jim Mahan

\* Camin resigned early in the year, and was ably replaced as Club Service Director by Keith McLean, who hit the ground running.

In August, Members assisted the local Special Olympics with their bowling competition. It was remarked by one of the Rotarian Volunteers that, "Working the Special Olympics gives a sense of accomplishment different from any other. You would have to be hollow inside if you finished the day and didn't feel as if you had helped the participants accomplish something very, very special."

A tradition the Club proudly observes is that several meetings a year are held at the area schools. In the fall, that list included: Hart Jr. High (Homewood), Parker Jr. High (Flossmoor), Hillcrest High School (Hazel Crest), with a meeting at the Homewood Flossmoor High School scheduled for the spring. The annual luncheon meeting at the Glenwood School was punctuated with a tour of the school's new face lift.

In a slightly different variation, with a thought toward a possible permanent change in venue, the Club held two meetings at the St. Paul Community Church. One of the programs was a re-classification talk by long time member Art Welsh. Some of the secrets of Art's past were revealed to those members who weren't present when he gave his first talk at the old Sulky Club (which incidentally burned down not long afterward).

In December, in continuing a tradition begun by the late Ken Lint, the annual Christmas Party was held for the boys at the Glenwood School. The boys, many of whom don't receive any other gifts during the holidays, submit a list of the two items they would like most (within a set price range).

### **1999 - 2000**

#### ***A Year of Traditions, A Year of New Beginnings***

A committee ably chaired by Jerry Palm purchased, coordinated and wrapped the gifts (even Members who normally hate Christmas shopping enjoy this task). But there's more to it than just an impersonal spending of money.

Gathering in the school's dining hall for some entertainment (this year's was a Christmas sing-a-long), the boys and Rotarians then retired to the individual cottages for dinner (entirely donated by 1999 Homewood Rotary Citizen of the Year Joe Aurelio) and some gift opening. Having a chance to mix with the boys, many of whom are from troubled neighborhoods and torn homes, reinforces the possibly alien notion that people, basically total strangers, do care about their welfare and well being. The interaction provides the Rotarians present with the knowledge that a few dollars and a few hours can make a tangible difference in a child's life.

In a rebirth of what is hoped to again be an ongoing tradition, the club joined the Rotary Clubs of Chicago Heights, Park Forest and Matteson for two joint meetings. The inspiration of a Park Forest Rotarian, the meetings featured two very high profile speakers: United States Senator Peter G. Fitzgerald and U.S. Congressman Jesse L. Jackson, Jr.

Well attended and receiving very positive press coverage, the meetings were a testament to what hard work and cooperation can accomplish.

In January, Keith McLean and his enthusiastic committee kicked fund raising into high gear. Culminating in March with a fun filled drawing party, the annual raffle outstripped ticket sales from the previous two years.

One of the numerous projects the raffle helps to support was the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Health Fair. Co-chaired by Martin Anthonisen and Bob Wilson and held in cooperation with Ingalls Hospital, the event, with participation by most every Member in one form or another, offered more than 30 free and reduced cost health screenings to over 880 attendees in a five hour period.

Merging two club traditions (health care and international projects), a joint project was entered into with the Rotary Club of Las Heras, Argentina. With the intention of helping to upgrade conditions in the clinics in and around Mendoza in rural Argentina, the project qualified for an RI Matching Grant, which will double the dollars, and hopefully the effectiveness.

President Elect Mike Slevnik attended the international convention in Buenos Aires, and afterwards took a trip, along with Dist. Gov. Brian Andersen and his wife Caryl, to visit Mendoza, Argentina. They were treated like royalty, but more importantly, toured several of the clinics the Club helped fund.

Conditions were incredibly poor by our standards, but with the additional funds, equipment that was desperately needed was purchased. Because of Rotary, quality health care is now being provided to people, many of whom are children, are for the first time in their lives.

Coordinated by Michael Krokidas, an evening of fellowship was shared with the clubs of Chicago Heights, Park Forest and Matteson over the St. Valentine's Day weekend. More than 70 people gathered at the Prairie State College auditorium for a fine meal, friendly conversation, and a screening of the classic film musical "Brigadoon". It was an evening long to be remembered. Another joint fellowship event was held in the form of a dinner/murder mystery evening at the Bennett-Curtis Mansion.

The Homewood Foundation, led by President Jerry Bradley, continued to work hard, sifting through dozens of requests for funds, and finding ways to increase gifting.

John Blakey's International Committee was busy. They worked hard to ensure that Katherina May, our exchange student from Germany, enjoyed her year with us as much as we've enjoyed hosting her. Katherina's parents also visited, coming just in time to participate in the joint meeting that featured Senator Fitzgerald. Kate Szrom went to Japan as our outbound exchange student. And committee member Stan Lewy helped increase the number of Annual Givers and Paul Harris Fellows.

With the year winding down, and another preparing to be launched with a flying start, more projects are being planned and worked on.

The annual golf outing with the Chamber of Commerce and Lion's Club is coming in June.

A hand has been extended to help chaperone members of inbound GSE Team.

More involvement with the Special Olympics has been planned.

Chaired by Roger Bovenkerk, a committee is laying the groundwork for a Recognition Night to be held in the fall.

Jim Mahan and his Vocational Committee are working out the details to present a scholarship to the local community college.

There are so many projects that haven't been mentioned, and so many more to begin. Dozens of Members haven't been mentioned specifically by name, but their contributions aren't to be dismissed.

In addition, the Club was the recipient of four special awards during the course of the year.

***Village People Award:*** given to clubs in the district who successfully recruited five new members from February 1<sup>st</sup> through March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2000.

Conference 2000 Attendance Award – Second Place: presented to the Club for total attendance at the District Conference held in South Bend, IN. Nine Rotarian and five guests from Homewood attended the very fine event.

***Presidential Citation:*** presented to clubs who achieve completion of projects in eight distinct categories through out the course of the year.

Significant Achievement Award: the crown jewel that any club can receive.

Earned by fewer than 1% of all clubs, this award is presented by the President and Board of Directors of RI in recognition of an outstanding community service project, which in Homewood's case is the Annual Health Fair

This, however, is not the end of our history. It is merely a snap shot of one moment in time. There is so much more history yet to be written...

