

The First 50 Years of the Truro Rotary Club

BY R. TRUEMAN MACINTOSH

Club Historian, the Rotary Club of Truro

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The Truro Rotary Club No. 2314, with 16 charter members. was first organized on February 23, 1926, with the help of 25 Rotarians from New Glasgow and 15 from Halifax the latter headed by John C. Gass who was mainly responsible for bringing Rotary to Truro. At the end of the first Rotary year, the membership of the Truro Club had increased to 32. New members in that first year included Senator Fred M. Blois, who is still a member.

In July of 1926, the New Glasgow Club put on a Minstrel Show in Truro in order to help the fledgling hub-town Club with funds to start Rotary projects in the community. The show was a great success and included a street parade to drum up interest.

Soon the Club membership increased to 45 and remained near that number for many years. No major projects were taken up, but members took an active part individually in all community activities, such as the Town Council, Truro Electric Commission, Boy Scouts, Children's Aid, Board of Trade, Canadian Legion and many others.

In 1930 just after the death of Rotarian Harry Wellard, the Club supplied the Wellard Memorial Shield for annual musical competition in the Truro schools. It was won the first year by Willow Street School, and is still competed for annually.

Also, in 1930; the Club became actively interested in crippled children and made a complete survey and canvass in the town and county in the interest of a "Provincial Society for Crippled Children."

In the early thirties, annual club events were the entertaining of the County Council and from these stemmed the Rural-Urban meetings which have been held annually, and, sometimes twice annually, since. A Rural-Urban meeting is a regular meeting of the Club held in a rural community and to which are invited male residents of the surrounding area about equal in number to the Club membership, Rural-Urban meetings have been held at Stewiacke, Middle Stewiacke, Upper Stewiacke, Brookfield, Old Barns, Clifton, Great Village, Bass River, Debert, Valley, and Tatamagouche.

In 1938 the Club set up the first library in Colchester Hospital with 200 books for the use of patients. This has been maintained by the Ladies Auxiliary of the

Hospital who replenishes and adds to the supply of books each year on behalf of the Club.

In 1936 the Club decided to make crippled children's work a major project, and a complete survey was made of the town and county to find every case of a crippled child. This resulted in a clinic being held the following year at Colchester Hospital conducted by Dr. Tom Acker, of Halifax, to which clinic 30 youngsters were brought in from the area for examination. This, in turn, resulted in many recommendations by Dr. Acker for surgical operations or other corrective treatment. Many of these were needy cases where the Club could help with transportation, medical, hospital and surgical fees.

At that time, 12 individual Rotarians volunteered to each sponsor a child, to follow their cases through, and to see that they received all of the assistance required. Up to the present time, crippled children's work has continued to be the major project of the Club.

With the introduction of M.S.I. in Nova Scotia and free hospitalization, some of the expenses in regard to medical and hospital fees have been lessened and since that time the Club has been spending the money saved on other phases of work for children of needy families, principally dental treatment, provision of surgical equipment, special footwear, leg braces, and artificial limbs, drugs, and the support of the Camp for crippled children at Tidnish, on Northumberland Strait.

Not only does the Club pay the camp fees for needy crippled children from the Truro area but contributes to the cost of equipment for the Camp as well. The Rotary year 1974-75 saw some \$12,000 spent on all phases of crippled children's work. In addition the Club maintains a bank of wheelchairs, walkers, commode chairs, canes, crutches, and hospital beds for loan to the temporarily disabled of all ages in the community.

Through the years, from 1938 to 1971, twice-yearly clinics were held at Colchester Hospital, under the joint auspices of the Club and the Nova Scotia Society for the Care of Crippled Children, for the examination of crippled children of the area and prescription of treatment for their physical defects, by a team of specialists from the former Children's Hospital at Halifax. Since 1971, because this service is now being provided otherwise, the Club provides clinics for children with speech and hearing defects. The clinics reached a peak attendance in 1971 when 105 children were examined at the Spring clinic.

During the war years 1939-45 the Club took an active part in many services for military personal temporarily stationed in the area, one service being the provision of entertainment for patients at Debert Military Hospital.

The first Radio Auction was held on the evenings of April 20 and 21, 1948, and this was a tremendous success, realizing a net return of \$4,316. This has continued to be a yearly event and is the Club's main source of revenue for its variety of projects. Last year's Auction netted the Club slightly under \$10,000.

In 1956 the Club was granted a franchise by the Nova Scotia Society for the Care of Crippled Children to conduct an annual sale of Easter Seals. Half of the net proceeds of the Seals' sale is retained by the Club and must be used exclusively for crippled children's work, while the other half is remitted to the Society for its program in the province. The Club grossed \$7,187 from this source in 1975.

July 28, 1950 was a Red Letter Day for the Club when Arthur Legueux, of Quebec City, President of Rotary International, and his wife, visited the Club meeting on that day. They were accompanied by District Governor Ed Ford, of Halifax, a former member of the Club.

Another Red Letter Day was in the year 1959 when Club member Dr. George Smith was elected Governor for Rotary District 782, embracing the Atlantic Provinces at that time; this being the first time the Club had had a District Governor.

In June 1959, after meeting in the same place for 33 years the Scotia Hotel dining being closed with club commenced meeting in the White Spot Restaurant on Walker Street until December 1960, moving again to Bennie's Restaurant on Prince Street. Up until then Club luncheon meetings had been held on Fridays, but in the changing times a growing number of members began finding it difficult to make their attendance on Fridays and it became the desire the Club to change the meeting day to Monday. Because another service club already had use of the available accommodation at Bennie's on Mondays, the Club looked for other quarters and eventually moved to the Stonehouse restaurant where it remained until July 1975 when it moved again yet a fourth time to the Abenaki Motor Inn.

Besides crippled children's work, the club has found time for other youth work. In February 1949, the club underwrote the first Radio School Quiz Contest over CKCL which was afterwards entitled "Schools in Action" and which was carried on for 10 years.

In 1951 when the "Adventure in Citizenship" was first inaugurated by the Ottawa Rotary Club, the Truro Club was invited to send a selected high school student on the "Adventure" with the local Club providing transportation and other out-of-pocket expenses. The Club has continued to send a student on the "Adventure" each year since, offering the trip, in turn, to each of the high schools in the area for the past decade, with the student body in the designated school required to make the selection.

In May 1962, with the assistance of the Truro Police and R.C.M.P., the first Teenage Safe-Driving Road-e-o was held in Victoria Park under Club auspices and in which 29 boys participated. This was carried on by the Club each year until 1965 when it was taken over by the newly-formed Truro Junior Chamber of Commerce; this being one of their national projects.

In 1961 the Club took on the sponsorship of midget and minor football, outfitting teams with uniforms and putting up a trophy - the Rotary Bowl - for annual competition. This program is continued under Club sponsorship and in the 1975 season provided a well supervised sport for 125 boys.

Each year the Club sponsors an entrant in the "Queen Marigold" contest and entertains at luncheon the contestants in the 'Miss Nova Scotia' contest of the N. S. Provincial Exhibition when they are in town.

In 1959 the Club contributed \$2,300 for the erection of a steel wire fence around the Victoria Park swimming pool, a \$50,000 project headed by the Kinsmen Club of Truro.

In 1964 the Club obligated itself to a contribution of \$5,000 towards the cost of the Legion Memorial Stadium.

The Club was instrumental in 1966 in forming the Colchester County Services Council, now dormant, for the purposes of listing all the various organizations doing community work and making a directory for reference purposes to avoid duplication.

In November 1966 the Club voted a contribution of \$2,500 towards the capital cost of the erection of the Centennial Memorial Library, a \$350,000 project. A room was furnished in the new Colchester Hospital in 1965.

For many years, as part of its international service program, the Club entertained at least one of its luncheon meetings, students from foreign countries attending the Nova Scotia Agricultural College.

A contribution of \$300 was made in 1965 to St. Alphonsus Boys' School in Keereoung, Darjelling, India

An attendance contest was conducted for a period of six months in 1960 between the Truro Club and the Rotary Club of Streater Illinois. The Club winning the contest was to make donation of \$2.00 per member to the Rotary Foundation fund. This was not only to stimulate attendance, but to be an expression of international goodwill as well as boost the Foundation fund.

In 1965, the year of "Matched Districts", the Truro Club was matched with the Rotary Club of Skovde, Sweden. An exchange of films, tapes, and

correspondence was carried on during the year, and a great deal of interest in Sweden was created. Nova Scotia tartan ties were sent to each member of the Skovde Club and in exchange each member of the Truro Club received a miniature model of the international symbolic horse of Sweden.

As a help to the people of Northern Thailand, the Club members not only participated in a contribution to a flood control project in that country on a District basis by being content for a period of time with "austerity" luncheon fare at below regular cost - the differential between the cost and the regular price going to the Thai project, but also sent \$1,350 for a flood control dam to be erected on behalf of the Club and to bear its name as the donor. The dam was dedicated April 25th 1969 Each dam was to control 7,000 acres on which lived 1,900 families and 12,000 people. This idea originated with the Rotary Club of Southeast Bangkok.

Most pleasing to the Club was the selection of the Club's candidate, Stephen Burns, of Truro, who had applied for a Rotary Foundation Scholarship to look after expenses of one year of University study in Australia. He proved to be an excellent ambassador for Truro and Canada throughout, his travels in Australia. Incidentally Club assessed each of its members \$1.00 annually to help build up the Foundation fund.

In 1971 the Club was again honored with the election of Walter P. Mosher to the position of District Governor.

Four years ago the Club adopted a foster daughter, Jumirah, in Central Java, Indonesia through the Foster Parents Plan.

In 1974 the Club provided a grant of \$600 towards the capital cost of the Brookfield Sportsplex and over three years, commencing in 1975, will contribute \$3,000 towards the cost of the Centennial Swimming Pool. The money is earmarked for certain items of equipment for the pool, such as a Hoyer lift for paraplegics using the facility, and other such aids to, the physically handicapped.

Each year, for many years, the Club has annually contributed \$300 for treats for needy families at Christmas time, and last year provided some furniture for a new home for a burned out family.

The Club's contribution to Truro's Centennial year program was a boys and girls marching band, organized and trained by Club member Ron MacKay, in addition to its gift to the swimming pool. The band cost the Club \$3,131 to launch.

Other community organizations partly financed by the Club are the Truro Diabetic Association, in appreciation of its work for diabetic children, The Truro FISH Association, Truro Head Start School, and Colchester Community Day Care Center.

The Club in the past two years, and again this year has and will provide financial assistance for a Truro university student to go on a Crossroads International cultural exchange trip to a foreign country, and for an exchange of a high school student from Truro, to study in a foreign country for one year, with a student from that country who will be a guest at the Truro student's home for the period of his absence and attend school here.

During 1975 the Club was host to an overnight stop in Truro of a study group of business and professional men from the United Kingdom as an international service project.

In July 1926, the year that the Rotary Club of Truro was chartered, there were 2,396 Rotary Clubs in the world with an approximate membership of 120,000. On February 20, 1976, there were 16,696 Rotary Clubs in 151 countries around the world with an estimated membership of 785,000.