

THE HISTORY OF ROTARY CLUB OF ST. THOMAS II

Rotary came to the Virgin Islands with the chartering of the Rotary Club of St. Thomas in 1957. At that time St. Thomas and other clubs in the Caribbean were un-districted. Because of the close proximity to Puerto Rico, the St. Thomas and St. Croix clubs were placed under the Puerto Rico District in 1968. These clubs petitioned Rotary International to return them to their un-districted status, citing language and cultural barriers.

In 1969, a "Group P" was established and the two St. Croix clubs, St. Thomas, Tortola, and later St. Kitts were placed under the administrative supervision of Past President Patrick M. Rice of St. Thomas. This sub-grouping continued until District 404 was established in 1974 with Dr. John Watts of Grenada as the first District Governor.

District 404 was composed of clubs in Jamaica, Cayman Islands, Haiti, and the Bahamas in the north down through the Virgin Islands, the Windward Islands, Guyana and Surinam in South America. Geographical distances and travel related problems made administration of so vast an area most difficult.

In 1981, the District was again divided and a new District 405 was established. 404 retained 28 clubs with Anguilla and St. Maarten being the southern limit of the District. With the continuing rapid expansion of Rotary International, on July 1, 1991, District 404 was re-numbered becoming District 4040. Then on July 1, 1992, the District was again re-numbered becoming District 7020 which we now recognize as our District today.

About 1975, several members of Rotary Club of St. Thomas began urging the organization of a second club to permit improvement in attendance by make-ups. Efforts in this direction were unsuccessful until Rotary International changed its policy of geographical separation to one, permitting clubs to share the same geographical area.

During 1978 President Costas Coulianos released the following seven members from Rotary Club of St. Thomas, three of whom were Past Presidents, and charged them with establishing a second club. PP Macon M. Berryman, Leslie Cooper, Thomas J. Lawrence, PP Dr. Eric L. O'Neal, Rabbi Stanley T. Relkin, PP Patrick M. Rice, and Jack Weinberger. At that time, Dave Maas, the founder and Past President of Rotary Club of St. Thomas was residing in North Carolina but continuing the practice of law on St. Thomas part of the year. Dave was an honor member of the club and was asked to assist in this organizing effort. Thus Dave served as Organizing President and Macon as Organizing Vice-President.

In the spring of 1979, at the request of Costas Coulianos, Dave Maas called a meeting to explore the possibilities of starting a second club. The result of that meeting was the Rotary Club of St. Thomas II with Macon M. Berryman the founder and Dave Maas the Club's first President. Patrick M. Rice was affectionately called the Godfather of the new club, with the official position as Secretary.

The other charter members included Kendrick Bragg, Darwin Creque, Joe Davis, Sr., Bob Davis, Hank Feuerzeig, Steve Gegus, Frank Mclaughlin, Aubrey Nelthropp, Leo Penha, and Dick Spenceley for total of 18 members. Jack Weinberger passed on before the new club was chartered.

The first provisional meeting for Rotary II was held on April 4, 1979, at the Virgin Isle Hotel. Wednesday noon was chosen as the meeting day and time, and lunch cost members a mere \$7.50 back then.

The Rotary Club of St. Thomas II was chartered on April 14, 1979, and the charter was actually presented at the District Conference Banquet on May 19, 1979 in St. Thomas.