

**History**  
**of the**  
**Rotary Club**  
**of**  
**Key West**

**by**  
**Wright Langley**

**1991**

# **History of the Rotary Club of Key West**

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Groundwork to organize a Rotary Club in Key West began in May 1915 when International President J. B. Mulholland appointed attorney Jefferson B. Browne to act as chairman of an organizing committee. Browne, who three years earlier had written Key West The Old and The New, invited a group of community leaders for informal luncheon meetings in a Duval Street store between Front and Greene Streets.

The men organized March 17, 1916 and the club was elected to membership in the then International Association of Rotary Clubs April 1, 1916. Browne was elected the charter president of the Key West Rotary Club; Dr. Joseph N. Fogarty, vice president; attorney William H. Malone Secretary; jeweler Frank Johnson, treasurer and grocery store owner George A. T. Roberts, sergeant at arms. The club's charter number was 213. Members agreed to hold regular meetings the first Wednesday of each month at high noon.

In addition to the five officers, there were 26 charter members: George W. Allen, president of Florida First National Bank (Allen was also named the only Director in the club's initial application), Lawrence P. Artman, job printer; Egbert P. Ball, owner of the newspaper The Advertiser; William L. Bates, real estate; Stuart M. Brown, manager of Key West Gas Co.; Allan B. Cleare, auctioneer; Milton W. Curry, president of William Curry's Sons Co. hardware and ship chandlery; Dexter P. Dorgan, manager of Porter-Dock Co.; Marcy B. Darnall, owner of The Key West Citizen; Allison C. Elgin, agent for the Florida East Coast Railway; Frederick F. Hoffman, New York Life Insurance Co. agent; Louis Louis, dry goods store owner; Dr. Samuel D. W. Light, physician specializing in eye, ear, nose and throat; Dr. John B. Maloney, surgeon and owner of Louise Maloney Hospital; Arthur W. Mohn, president of Ruth Hargrove Institute; Carlos Mora,

professor of music at Ruth Hargrove Institute; Jose M. Navarro, tobacco leaf and scrap dealer; William R. Porter, managing partner of Porter-Allen Co. (fire and marine insurance); Nestor Recio, wholesale grocer; James Risk, agent for Mallory Steamship Co.; Eugene W. Russell, retail grocer; Norberg Thompson, cigar box manufacturer; Karl Thompson, Coca-Cola Bottling Works; Remigio Lopez-Trujillo, cigar manufacturer; and George A. Waite, gentlemen's clothing store owner.

Once the International Association of Rotary Clubs approved the club's application, the preliminary organizational meeting was held Wednesday June 15. Browne notified Chesley R. Perry, Rotary Association Secretary in Chicago, two days later of that meeting and told him they would adopt a constitution and organize permanently Saturday afternoon June 18. Browne wrote:

"We have the best men in the city in our club; not all of course, as the 'one man from each vocation rule' will keep some out; but those we have are of the best. The V. P. is Mayor, and State Senator; the secretary Ex Senator, and lawyer of the highest character; Mr. Allen of the Committee is President of the First National Bank, etc."

"We intend to make our club a strictly high class one."

Some founding members of the Rotary Club were instrumental in organizing the Key West Chapter of the American Red Cross. They signed a petition dated July 9, 1917 to form the chapter which was approved three days later by Guy E. Snively, Director of the Red Cross Southern Division in Atlanta, Georgia. The Club provided the leadership in forming the Key West Chamber of Commerce.

World War I was ravaging Europe in 1916, but it was not until April 6, 1917 that President Woodrow Wilson signed the war resolution passed by United States Congress. Later in the year Congress passed the Eighteenth Amendment, outlawing the manufacture, sale or transportation of alcoholic beverages. It was ratified by the states January 29, 1919 and resulted in Key West becoming a "rumrunning" center because of its nearness to Cuba.

After World War I, Dr. William R. Warren and Dr. Joseph Renedo were delegates to the International Rotary Convention in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1919.

In early December 1921, Rotary President J. Y. Porter, Sr. "raised the mischief" when he discovered the club's name was being used in connection with a minstrel show for the benefit of Boy Scout Troop 2 without his first seeing it to determine if anything should be censored. Although he was angered at being left out, he agreed to see a rehearsal before the show was scheduled to open December 10 at the Garden Theatre. The newspaper reported "Boss Rote" enjoyed the "Entirely New Minstrel Show" performed by Rotarians. "Go ahead--your show is worthy of Rotary support," Porter exclaimed. It has not been determined if Dr. Porter, Florida's first public health officer, protested in jest for publicity or was serious. Always supportive of the Boy Scouts, it was not until 1937 the club organized and sponsored Troop 52.

One of the club's first major projects in 1922 was clearing an area which was to become Bayview Park. Rotarians outfitted in overalls and blue chambray shirts spent two hot afternoons chopping down heavy underground and grass. Navy Captain and Rotarian Walter S. Crosley rounded up a detachment of Bluejackets and Marines to supplement the Rotarians. Thirty employees of the Key West Electric Company then headed by Rotarian Bascom Grooms also volunteered. After clearing the area, Rotarians posed for a photograph in front of the home of Rotarian Benjamin D. Trevor across Division Street(Truman Avenue) from the park. His sons, Jerry and Edwin Trevor, both became presidents of the Key West Rotary Club.

The energetic Rotarians took on a softball team composed of Navy and Army officers on the afternoon of January 17, 1923. Playing on the diamond of the old Army Barracks diamond(now Peary Court), the Rotarians defeated the officers 19-10.

In June 1924 the Key West High School newspaper, Monroe Tatler, noted the Rotarians entertained the senior class with a luncheon picnic in the Blimp



Hangar Wednesday May 28th.-- "Each Rotarian escorted a Senior girl to the table and each Senior boy escorted a Rotary Ann."

Allan Cleare, president of the senior class, thanked the Rotarians for their support and then Rotary president "Bugs" Warner passed an alarm clock to one of the girls and told them that whenever it alarmed the girl holding the clock had to make a speech. "The way in which that alarm clock went from each girl's hand was indeed amazing," the newspaper reported.

After much singing, talking, a wheelbarrow race and tug-of-war, a Miss Perez made an "alarm clock speech" considered "the best the Rotarians had ever heard" and Miss Eloise Lowe also made a speech greatly enjoyed by the audience.

Cuban Boy Scouts who had been visiting in the city were honored at a luncheon October 15, 1925 in Victoria Restaurant(today's Sloppy Joe's) by the Rotary and Exchange Clubs. The Cuban Scoutmaster thanked the clubs in Spanish for their kindness and said they hoped to return again soon. His comments were translated into English by Rotarian Sebastian Cabrera. The following week the Club honored Dr. J. Y. Porter, Sr. on his 78th birthday with talks, songs and huge birthday cake lighted with 78 candles. Captain Jack Maher commander of the Key West Barracks sang "When You and I Were Young Maggie" followed by "The Sunshine of Your Smile"--one of Dr. Porter's favorites. Judge Jefferson B. Browne recalled how Dr. Porter helped stem the spread of yellow fever in Jacksonville and how after World War I he had returned to his home to take charge of the Chamber of Commerce. The luncheon was attended by Dr. A. A. Murphree, president of the University of Florida, who praised the Rotary Club as steady social influence in the community.

A conservation-minded Club that same month of October 1925 endorsed a proposal to ban the shooting and trapping of birds and protecting the Key Deer. Dr. Porter pointed out the birds were good because they ate disease carrying mosquitos and insects. The resolution was sent to Monroe's state senators and was to include not only Key West, but the entire Florida Keys.

Frank W., Lovering, building contractor and former managing editor of The Boston Herald, gave the Club a stirring speech about the need to a City Planning Board to plan for the eventual pipeline(just authorized by the Legislature), parking and wider streets for the cars coming down the Overseas Highway; and increased school facilities.

"Plan for growth of that while yet you may---a distasteful job. But necessary," Lovering suggested. "Give ocean traffic a chance in your zoning map so that proper segregation will make a modern and a practical waterfront," he added, "...Be broad of mind and of vision."

The Key West Citizen of Thursday November 19, 1925 carried what appears to be the complete text of Lovering's address which was given to the Rotarians then meeting in St. Paul's Parish Hall.

During the December 3rd meeting, newly elected members of the city council---Mayor Leslie A. Curry and Councilmen Charles Smith, Miguel Munoz and Paul Albury along with the board of public works were guests of the club. "All asked for a bigger and better Key West," The Citizen reported.

Developer Malcolm Meacham, who had recently bought a large portion of the island including the present-day airport, spoke briefly of his plans. He was also to develop Key West's first airport, Meacham Field(now Key West International Airport). Pan American World Airways began regular passenger service from Meacham Field to Havana January 16, 1928.

The Monroe County High School football team and Coach Peter Christiansen were the guests of the Rotary Club at the next meeting December 10. Floyd "Diz" Roberts was the captain of the team which had just recently been organized under the leadership of Rotarians George Perpall and Capt. John Maher.

In spite of Christmas Eve falling on the day of the Rotary Club meeting, the club decided to meet and had the smallest crowd of the year even though there were many out-of-town Rotarians and guests. There was a great deal of discussion about the opening of the Overseas Highway and the meeting concluded

with members wishing each other "A Very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!".

On Saturday April 2, 1927, The Key West Citizen headline on the front page heralded: "Founder of Rotary To Be Entertained Here On Monday." Paul P. Harris, founder of Rotary International and the first president of that world wide organization, and his wife were to arrive from Havana on the passenger ship Governor Cobb. While in Key West they were to be guests of Rotary president Andrew R. Miller and his wife at their home, 1401 Duval Street. That Monday afternoon on April 4th Mr. and Mrs. Harris were welcomed to Key West at the pier by a large delegation of Rotary members and their wives along with city and Chamber of Commerce officials. A reception was held at the home of the Millers from 4 to 5:30 p.m. The Citizen reported the Millers were assisted in receiving by Mr. and Mrs. Robert Spottswood, vice president of the Rotary Club, while Mrs. Bascom Grooms poured tea and Mrs. Melvin Russell presided at the punch bowl.

"The Miller home was decorated in gold and black, Rotary colors. The centerpiece was the Rotary seal, marigolds were the flowers used; and silver candlesticks carried gold candles," the newspaper stated. The reception lasted until the guests caught the late train to Miami. Mr. Harris will spend two weeks touring Florida and addressing Rotary Clubs in larger cities.

In the newspaper on Tuesday April 5 which reported the departure of the Harrises, the president of the Rotary Club announced that "all Rotarians will be expected to appear at the weekly luncheon Thursday in overalls and to put in the remainder of the day of loading rubbish." Three civic groups, Woman's Club, Chamber of Commerce and Rotary Club, and the city had joined forces to "Scour Duval For Rubbish Thursday."

The newspaper reported the clean-up drive was a success--Rotarians manned some 20 trucks loaned by Key West businesses and individuals. "One truck and a number of Rotarians were assigned to each block on the (Duval) street and shortly afterwards, truck load after truck load of all sorts of rubbish was being hauled to the city dump pile at the incinerator where it was to be burned."

That same issue of the newspaper on April 7, 1927 reported that Robert F. Spottswood had been elected president of the Rotary Club and George Perpall, first vice president; W. W. Demeritt, second vice president; William Bates, treasurer and assistant secretary; L. Russell Warner, secretary; and George A. T. Roberts, sergeant-at-arms. When Roberts died three year his family noted his dedication to Rotary with the inscription carved on his tombstone "Service Above Self."

In the issue of The Citizen May 20, 1927 which reported Captain Charles Lindbergh had taken off to Paris, it was noted *Rotary Boy's Week Program Ends Saturday/ Parade This Afternoon And Track Meet Tomorrow At Barracks(Peary Court) Last Two Events On Occasion.*

The following week Rotarians heard an address about establishing a junior college in Key West by Dr. Joseph Roemer of the University of Florida. "Students are turned away every year by both state institutions," he said, adding that is why there is a need locally for a junior college. That program also featured Student's Day at the Rotary Club and some 30 graduating seniors and faculty members attended the meeting as guests.

Along with the Chamber of Commerce, the Rotary Club hosted a visit of Florida Governor John W. Martin and his wife June 18, 1927., During a luncheon meeting at newly opened La Concha, the Governor pledged his support to the Overseas Highway bridge projects and establishing a crawfish hatchery.

Always interested in hearing from out-of-town speakers, the Rotarians invited Ruth Bryan Owen down from Miami to speak on February 16, 1928. Daughter of famed politician and orator William Jennings Bryan, she painted "A glowing picture of Key West's future" at the meeting hosted by L. P. Schutt, manager of the Hotel La Casa Marina." She was later elected U. S. Representative from the district which included Monroe County.

At the club's meeting November 30, 1930, then Congresswoman Owen honored the club which she presented a gavel inscribed to "Key West Rotarians" and made of Florida orange wood by the cabinet makers of the U. S. Congress.

William H. Malone, charter secretary of the Key West Rotary Club, was a state senator in September 18, 1930 when he headed the program on a discussion of the U. S. Constitution.

Luis Machado, district governor in Cuba, and Mrs. Machado who had been visiting in northern U.S. resorts, arrived in Key West Saturday August 22, 1931 aboard the Florida East Coast Railway's Havana Special. During their short stop-over to catch the ferry Florida, they were guests of Rotarians W. L. Bates, J. Lancelot Lester, Robert Spottswood and Cuban Consul Jorge Ponce.

In Songs for the Rotary Club, Key West, Florida published in the 1930s, the booklet featured the "Rotary Song" on page 4 with the notation at the bottom of the page, "YOU CAN'T SING IF YOU HAVE A GROUCH."

During a Rotary meeting Thursday July 16, 1931, the club appointed a committee to draw up resolutions in honor of Harry Bright Boyer, the well liked meteorologist, who died the day before. Clubs members also offered the assistance of the club to the encampment of the Florida National Guard in Key West during August. Commander Ralph B. Spalding, officer in charge of the Naval Station, and F. B. Putnam, new manager of the American Express Company, were welcomed as guests of the club. Aquilino Lopez Jr., a third year law student at the University of Florida, was the guest of his father.

A few days after a band concert at Bayview Park attended by crowd estimated at over 6,000 residents and visitors, the officers and enlisted men of the 265th Co. C.A. C. Florida National Guard were entertained at a dance held in the Coral Isle Casino at the foot of Duval Street August 12, 1931. Over 400 persons participated, "including local young women who assisted in making the evening a delightfully pleasant one for the honored guests," according to The Key West Citizen. Caesar La Monica's regimental orchestra provided the music which lasted from 9 p.m. until 12:45 a.m. Rotarians W. L. Bates, Sebastian Cabrera, and B. Curry were in charge of the dance.

"Key West To See First European as Head of Rotarians," the front page headline of The Key West Citizen stated October 20, 1931. The story went on to

report that Sydney Paschall of England, president of Rotary International and the first person elected to that position from Europe, would be arriving November 20 from Cuba. A committee from the Club was preparing for the visit.

The club approved a \$25 donation to the local Red Cross Chapter and agreed to help the chapter canvass for business memberships at a luncheon meeting November 19, 1931.

Rotarians concluded their weekly meetings for 1931 on December 31 with a special presentation from Commander Louis J. Gulliver, commanding officer of USS Constitution--- Old Ironsides, which tied up at the foot of Duval Street that morning. Commander Gulliver told of the reconditioning of the ship which had welcomed nearly 500 people aboard for an open house within a few hours of her arrival.

Joe Diver, District Governor of Florida Rotary, from Jacksonville addressed the club December 17 and delivered what local Rotarians said was "one of the best" speeches on the duties of the club and Rotarians as parents. After lunch, a conference was held in the home of president Jerry Trevor, to review the club's activities for the year and plan for 1932.

Anna Perez and Howard England, Key West high School Students, who went on the Ruth Bryan Owen "pilgrimage" to Washington were guests of the club and gave a report on the trip April 28, 1932. It was agreed during a business session which followed to engage Arturo Boza, local cabinet maker, to make plaques for Rotary Founder Paul Harris and Sidney Paschall, president of Rotary International, to present at the convention in Seattle later in June. Boza had made two plaques of President Hoover which had been presented to the Chief Executive. The club also decided to hold the next meeting at Delmonico's restaurant.

Rotarians and the ladies of St. Paul's Church who served them lunch donated the entire proceeds from the meal June 2, 1932 to Mercedes Hospital( the Gato House on Virginia Street). Principal speaker for the meeting was Hubert Roberts, formerly a preacher in Key West and now a businessman in

South America. He talked on Rotary in general and said he would remain in the States to attend the international convention in Seattle.

The September issue of The Rotarian magazine featured a photograph of Arturo Boza with his beautifully designed wooden mosaic portraits of Rotary Founder Paul Harris and Sydney W. Paschall, past president of Rotary International. W. L. Bates, treasurer and assistant secretary of the club was also featured in the photograph entitled "Something unusual were the gifts of the Key West (Fla.) Rotary Club...." Bates had just reached 16 years perfect attendance. He went on to attain 20 years perfect attendance.

William W. Demeritt, chairman of the county unemployment relief committee, gave a report to the Club September 8, 1932 on the state relief program. By the end of the month, the unemployed signed up numbered: white men--473 married and 267 single; colored--180 married and 83 single; women--white--89 and colored 114. The registration provided the basis for financial support.

Tackling what was seemed a perennial problem of getting the Sheriff of Monroe County and Chief of Police to work together, Club president Clifford G. Hicks declared "I have heard that there is a great of laxity of co-operation between the police department and forces of the sheriff" as the two men attended the club meeting as guests September 29, 1932. Sheriff Cleveland Niles said that while such was the case he had tried a number of suggestions which had been rejected.

Police Chief Ivan Elwood replied that while the sheriff was correct the city only had one officer on duty at night "to guard the entire city and this one officer can not cope with the situation." Key West was being burglarized a number of "gangs" who were breaking into homes and businesses. Rotarians urged the sheriff and chief to work together and concentrate forces to curb crimes. Judge Jefferson B. Browne, the club's founder, opined that lawlessness was prevalent because so many unnecessary laws had been passed no one paid attention to the serious ones.

State Senator Arthur Gomez of Key West wrote to club president Clifford G. Hicks suggesting the Rotary Club take the lead in inaugurating a series of public hearings to get opinions on what legislation is needed. "Recognizing the Rotary Club as one of Key West's outstanding civic bodies, I am prompted to suggest a movement to be inaugurated under the auspices of your valuable organization," Senator Gomez's letter stated according to a newspaper report on Monday October 17, 1932. In an editorial a day latter, The Key West Citizen endorsed the proposal of the Rotary Club's leadership in this request.

During the meeting next week, the club entertained district Governor Jimmie Donn who was met by many Rotarians when he arrived at the train station. After giving an "excellent address" and thanking the club for the reception afforded him, Donn returned to Miami.

Edward Strunk Jr. urged his fellow Rotarians to support the establishment of the Everglades National Park during the weekly meeting December 15. The club voted unanimously to have the members write Florida's Congressional delegation urging their support of a bill to establish the park. It was reported the club had secured over \$400 in support of the local Red Cross Chapter.

When Edward Strunk, Jr. became president during the Depression of 1934 the club's membership was only 19, however, under his leadership 10 new members were added.

The Citizen of June 7, 1934 noted a special program conducted by Charles E. Smith, chairman of the club's Vocational Service Committee was enjoyed by the Rotarians. Sebastian Cabrera, president, conducted the meeting and announced the new officers would take office at the first meeting in July. The article reported that while attendance was small, the session was an interesting one and concluded with some of the club's favorite songs.

E. G. Thatcher, district governor of Rotary International, presented Key West Rotarian William E. Bates with an engraved cup for 18 years of perfect attendance February 21, 1935. Bates, then 74 years old, went on for two more years for a perfect attendance of 20 years.



In report to the District Governor dated July 20, 1935, president Melvin E. Russell (school superintendent) noted the club had 28 members and for a special project the graduating class of the High School attends a Rotary luncheon during commencement week.

Melvin E. Russell hosted a joint meeting of the board of directors and the aims and objects committee at his home August 20, 1935 at 8:25 a.m. He announced there would be an inter-city meeting in Miami Thursday September 5th and since most of the Key West Rotarians would be attending there would be no local meeting that week. "All to Miami!" was the slogan for the get together. Unfortunately the meeting could not be held because the famed Labor Day Hurricane of September 2, 1935 struck, killing hundreds and knocking out the Florida East Coast Railway in the Upper Keys.

Treasurer Bill Bates said he had a bone to pick with the Ladies Guild who served lunch because they charged 60 cents instead of 50 cents for each person. Directors agreed and unanimously passed a motion there would be no price increase unless authorized by the Board. Bates recommended and the Board voted "yes" to contribute \$10 each to the Crippled Childrens' Home, Salvation Army and Red Cross. The club had a cash balance of \$81.55 and \$94.00 in unpaid dues for a total of \$175.55 and obligations of \$155.00 leaving a balance of \$20.55.

When the matter of honorary membership was brought up, the directors reelected Jefferson B. Browne, the charter president and organizer of the Key West Rotary Club, and Admiral Walter Crosley as honorary members.

President Russell read portions of a letter from the Rotary Secretary in Chicago which complimented the club for the hospitality shown Governor Alf Marshall during his recent official visit to Key West. Acting Secretary Charles Taylor concluded the minutes with the personal comment: "There being no further business, meeting was brought to a close and a delightful luncheon was served by President Melvin, he acting in the capacity of a grass widower, and he certainly did a good job."

During the next meeting of the Board of Directors held September 16 at the home of treasurer Bill Bates, the Directors approved the following for membership into the club: Hollon Bervaldi, Claude Albury, Fred Dion, Bernie Papy, Sam Goldsmith, Warren Sawyer, Eduardo Carrera, A. C. Tanner, Clarence Thompson, C. O. Ackerman, W. F. Fripp, Lt. William Claus, Dr. E. H. Carnes, Victor Moffatt, Marco Mesa, G. H. Goshorn.

The following meeting held in the home of Secretary John C. Gekeler recorded an acceptance to have an Alumni Association speaker from the University of Florida on November 14. The only Rotarian with sons at the University was Bill Warren who had two Gators in the family, William R. and George Allen Warren. UF was also selling Scholarship Auto Tags for \$2.00 and four applications for licensees were taken by members.

Minutes of the Board for December 16 began: "The Board of Directors met at the new home (924 Flagler Avenue) of Eddie Strunk, where a fire was found burning in the grate for the comfort and welcome of the members, all of whom appreciated this mark of thoughtfulness on the host's part, it being a cool evening." It was suggested an inter-city meeting of Tampa, St. Petersburg and Key West be held during La Semana Alegre (February 2-8, 1936) when the Pirates of Penzance will be performed under direction of the Works Progress Administration(WPA).

During the Board meeting of January 20, 1936 held in the home of Club Service Committee Chairman Steve Douglas, the request of the Ladies Guild for a guarantee of 30 dinners per week was discussed. Ladies said they had been losing money because the club only guaranteed 25. "Bill(treasurer) will take care of the matter in his usual adroit way," the secretary noted. Directors also okayed the suggestion of Steve Cochrane Singleton, editor of The Key West Sunday Star, that a Rotary column be published in each issue.

The annual report dated January 1, 1936 noted the greatest community need during the past year was:" .... reestablishment of adequate transportation facilities with the mainland(parts of railroad and highway were destroyed by

storm). The Club financed a delegation to Cuba to obtain the assistance of Government and Commercial Agencies in having railroad rebuilt. A special committee of club also wrote letters to agencies in U. S. directly or indirectly concerned."

The February 17 Board meeting also centered on transportation with Director Charles Taylor voicing his concern that the air mail and passenger service needs to be improved since the planes can only carry four passengers. First class mail should also be carried on the planes since the bridges are still out. Director Eddie Strunk added that the lack of bus transportation on the ferries was "a serious detriment of Key West" since the railroad was not operating. "The problem of the high cost of foods in our city was discussed, " according to the minutes.

Apparently, the discussion was productive because at the March meeting it was reported Taylor had received favorable responses from Postmaster General James Farley and Florida's U.S. Senators. Strunk reported bus transportation began in late February. "The committee was commended upon the successful completion of its business," the minutes recorded.

After a report by Director Bascom Grooms on the hurricane damage to the Overseas Railroad, Strunk convinced the Board to endorse the idea of converting the railroad bridges to handle vehicular traffic. There were 39 members in the club at that time.

H. E. Day, president of the newly formed Key West Lions Club, wrote the Rotary Club a letter on May 17, 1938 thanking the members for "the many courtesies extended upon the occasion of the formation of the Key West Lions Club." Club president Charles Taylor had presented Day with a gavel to the Lions Club at its charter banquet on May 12.

Upon the urging of Stephen C. Singleton, executive secretary of the Key West Chamber of Commerce, the Club supported a resolution to bring a Merchant Marine Training School to Key West. The school never was relocated here, but

as World War II began in Europe President Franklin Roosevelt ordered new Naval Station facilities be constructed in the late 1930s.

The Club also sought to keep the Convalescent Camp for Civilian Conservation Corps(CCC) operating. Army Major General George Van Horn Mosley wrote in June 1938 that the camp had only closed for the summer--"just as many Florida hotels are closed...the camp will reopen in the fall, provided, of course, we can include it in our financial program, which is subject to a strict budget."

In an appeal to bring the Federally subsidized Florida Symphony Orchestra to Key West, the State's music director under the Works Progress Administration wrote to Club president Charles E. Taylor: "We have observed that you and members of the Rotary Club usually take a lively interest in any movement which extends greater opportunity to the youth and under-privileged, and which opens to them a larger field of opportunity in education and social betterment...."

Charles E. Smith and Sebastian Cabrera Jr. attended the 1938 Rotary International Convention in San Francisco as official delegates from the Club.

Organized in 1937 as the Rotary Troop, Troop 52 under Scoutmaster Victor Larsen met initially in the basement of the bandstand in Bayview Park. In one of its first out-of-town outings, the troop left Key West Monday morning, August 1, 1938 in a large government truck for a camporee in Bartow. The 18 Boy Scouts pitched tents the following night on a site owned by a large phosphate company and got ready for a 10 day outing. Larsen reported the Key West scouts made a good showing in the swimming meet "in spite of the fact that they found it hard to get used to fresh water in place of their well-known salt water."

Lt. E. R. McCarthy, Rotary Club member, said Key West would host scouts from Bartow and Miami the following week. Miami scouts will camp at the Naval Hospital grounds and the Bartow boys at the Naval Station. McCarthy said plans are underway in Key West to get scouting on a "permanent and solid

basis.....the principal advantage being the halting of growing situation of certain youngsters in this city being involved in crime activities."

Considerable seaweed buildup along South Beach prompted Rotarians to take unanimous action at their luncheon meeting January 12, 1939 to clean up the area. Jerry Trevor and W. R. Fleck were appointed to hire a man to clean up the popular beach at the end of Duval Street.

The International Convention was held in Havana in 1940 and in 1942 Toronto, Canada.

Boy Scout Troop 52, the Rotary Club troop, hiked to Stock Island for a weekend camp out, according to The Citizen of January 2, 1946. Some 25 Scouts and leaders met at White and Division(Truman Avenue) Streets at 2 p.m. on Friday and by 4:15 they had hiked to a special camp site on Stock Island. They built a bonfire, cooked out and passed tests for advancement and merit badges.

The following month on February 22, the scouts of Troops, 50, 51 and 52 held a three day "camporee" on West Summerland Key at the old Civilian Conservation Corps(CCC) Camp. Key West Mayor William Demeritt, chairman of the Overseas Road and Toll Bridge Commission, arranged for the Scouts to use the camp. The Scouts spent a great deal of time cleaning up the camp where was to become the Monroe County Scout Camp Site.

On the Rotary Club's 30 anniversary, Earl R. Adams was elected president of the Rotary Club of Key West at the luncheon meeting April 4, 1946. Edwin Trevor was elected secretary and Charles Smith re-elected Treasurer.

Following World War II, the club spearheaded a movement to have Monroe County purchase from the War Assets Administration the area now known as Clarence Higgs Memorial Beach for \$28,000 on November 4, 1947. Charley Toppino and Sons agreed to enlarge the beach area with sand and in return the county sold him the rock at 30 cents a yard.

The Rotary Club launched a new program to send a rising senior at Key West High School to Girls' State in Tallahassee. Merili Hilton, later wife of

Rotarian and Key West Mayor Charles "Sonny" McCoy, won the honor of being selected as the club's first sponsored senior during the summer of 1947.

On February 20, 1948 The Citizen noted, the club held Ladies Night at La Concha hotel. Norma Dopp, wife of Rotarian Robert Dopp (president 1949-1950), was president of Rotary Ann at the time of the banquet.

During the Armed Forces Day Parade on May 20, 1950, the Key West Rotary Club sponsored a float spotlighting Rotary International with four lovely, young Key West ladies dressed in full length white dresses on the flag bedecked platform.

Retired Major Earl Dillion, chairman of Key West Red Chapter, appealed to Rotarians to donate blood desperately needed for those serving in Korea, according to The Key West Citizen of December 1, 1951. Dillion said blood was in such short supply in Korea that soldiers on the front line were compelled to give blood. Dillion then read a letter from his son who was stationed in Korea-- "This is no police action. This is war!"---wrote his son. Rotary president Joe Pearlman responded by appointing Jeff Knight, Rev. Ralph Rogers and Chet Cold to organize the club to donate blood.

At the same meeting held in St. Paul's Parrish Hall, Mrs. Everett Cox, president of the Monroe County Cerebral Palsy Association, requested the Rotarians' support to establish a clinic in Key West. She said the association hoped to raise \$3,000 by January.

The front page of The Key West Citizen on July 2, 1954 featured a photograph of Edwin F. Trevor, District Rotary Governor, congratulating Paul J. Sher who had been installed as president of the Rotary Club during the regular luncheon meeting held in La Concha Hotel. Trevor is the only local Rotarian ever elected District Governor. District 243 then included 33 Rotary Clubs from Key West to Ormond Beach including Lake Okeechobee according to Trevor.

In 1961, the Key West Rotary Club helped organize the Rotary Club of Marathon. Less than four years later, Ham Hannah of the newly organized club

was elected District Governor. Then in 1991 Robert Jordan of the Marathon Rotary Club was elected District Governor of Rotary International District 6990.

The Club celebrated its 50th anniversary in April 1966 with a "gala cocktail party and dinner held at the Trade Winds Supper in the Holiday Inn." More than 100 Rotarians and guests heard pioneer member Joe Pearlman recall some of the club's history. Cleve Allen of Coral Gables was the guest speaker that night and Jeff Knight Jr. the president of the Club during its golden anniversary.

Although Allen was the keynote speaker, The Citizen reported Pearlman "stole some his thunder" by recalling the history of the Rotary Club and how when it was formed in 1916 there were only two other Rotary Clubs in the state-- Jacksonville and Tampa. Tampa was the sponsoring club for Key West.

While returning Vietnam veterans were "overlooked" by many Americans, the Rotary Club invited four U.S. Marines who had been wounded and were recuperating at the U.S. Naval Hospital in Key West to the club luncheon-meeting January 26, 1967. The four Marines were photographed at the Rotary Club meeting with Duke Freeman, club secretary and representative on the Chamber's Military Affairs Committee, and Ray Schoneck, club president.

To start of the "Parade of Palms" rolling along North Roosevelt Boulevard, the Rotary Club donated \$344 in January 1971. Club President Charles E. McCoy Jr. presented Mrs. Roy J. Roos, president of the Garden Club, with a check which paid for 20 of the 192 palm trees with the extra \$4 for the fertilizer fund.

Officers and Directors of the Key West High School Interact Club, sponsored by the Rotary Club, were guests at the club meeting March 18, 1971 held in the Country Club. Tom Roberts, the club's faculty advisor, told Rotarians, "You should be proud of these young people. They are involved in projects to help others in school programs, athletics and in the community extracurricular activity."

Susan Aumack, Interact president, reported the club had sent Christmas baskets to servicemen in Vietnam, held a clothes drive to help the needy, helped raise funds to send the KWHS band to Washington and offered prizes to boost baseball game attendance.

When members heard the Key West Cemetery was overgrown with weeds and needed sprucing up in the fall of 1981, they worked on four weekends to shape up the cemetery with most of the members bringing their own clean up tools.

In 1986, the Club established an active Interact Club, sponsored a District Conference at the Casa Marina and of its 102 members 13 were Paul Harris Fellows. The projected income budget for the 1986-87 fiscal year was \$68,415.00.

In the club's annual report dated July 1988, the following major accomplishments over the past year were noted: raised funds for Polio Plus, sponsored Key West's only Fourth of July fireworks display(a tradition which began in 1979), sponsored the Sunrise Rotary Club in Key West, continued the annual scholarship of \$4,000 and established the Key West Rotary Foundation. There were 100 members in the club that year.

On Saturday April 6, 1991, the Rotary Club celebrated its 75th anniversary with a banquet at Holiday Inn Beachside. Charles "Sonny" McCoy was master of ceremonies and Ralph Renick, former TV Channel 4 newscaster and anchorman was the keynote speaker. Both men delved into the highlights of the club's history.

The Club wound up its 75th birthday with 98 members who generously supported the spectacular Fourth of July fireworks on White Street Pier, sponsored a \$6,000 college scholarship for a high school senior and eight-\$50 and two- \$100 Citizenship Awards, donated money to over 16 local charities and youth organizations, supported as a major sponsor of D.A.R.E.--Drug Abuse Resistance Education and continued to bring the top people of the community into the Rotary fellowship.

Key West is one of 47 clubs with 2,600 members in District 6990 which comprises Monroe, Dade and Broward counties and Grand Bahama Island in the



Bahamas. In addition to the Sunrise Club in Key West, other Rotary clubs in the Florida Keys are located on Big Pine Key, Marathon, Tavernier and Key Largo.

The club has fulfilled the 75 year-old pledge of founding president Jefferson Browne that the Rotary Club of Key West will attract the top men of the community and be a first class club!

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