



THE FIRST 50 YEARS

According to legend, a chance encounter at sea on shipboard in the middle of the Atlantic led to the organization of Topeka's first Rotary Club. A seasick woman and her husband were seated at a table with Topeka businessman George Godfrey Moore. She couldn't eat; so, naturally, Moore felt sorry for her. Conversation, however, soon turned to "this and that" with the Topekan learning that the husband, a necktie manufacturer from Des Moines, was an enthusiastic Rotarian. Formed by Paul Harris in Chicago in 1905, Moore became determined to establish a chapter in Topeka.

Whatever the truth, it is nevertheless a wonderful story. But—it was bound to have happened, sea voyage or no sea voyage. In the fall of 1913 Topeka civic leaders—many of whom would become Rotarians—engaged the Russell Sage Foundation of New York City to study social conditions in the capital city, specifically: public health (water and sewer service); delinquency and correction (jail conditions); municipal administration; and industrial conditions—causes which in one form or another are advocated by Rotary to this day.

In a sense the Topeka Improvement Survey of 1914, conducted by the Russell Sage Foundation, and the establishment of Rotary in Topeka that same year were part of the progressive movement then sweeping the nation. I.e., the need for community improvement and betterment. As well, Rotary arrived in Topeka as part of a "strong nationwide movement that was organizing men's luncheon clubs of various descriptions in many communities." The time was right.



Hotel Throop, Topeka,
NW Corner of 4th and Kansas

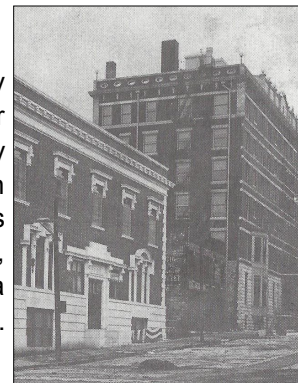
Back home in Topeka, George Moore contacted druggist John Brunt, attorney Robert Stone, department store owner W.W. Mills, the city's two pre-eminent newspaper publishers Arthur Capper (the Capital) and Frank MacLennan (State Journal), and others to meet July 1, 1914, at the Throop Hotel and begin the process of forming a Rotary Club for the Kansas capital. Two weeks later, on July 17th the interested parties met at the National Hotel to write a constitution and establish by-laws. According to the 1964 50th anniversary history:

The entrance fee was set at \$5. Should the membership reach 50 members the fee was to be doubled. The dues were established at \$25 per year. Membership was open to any white adult male person of good moral character, who was engaged as proprietor, partner, corporate officer, agent or manager in full charge in any legitimate

business or professional undertaking. Meetings were to be held semi-monthly "at such time and place as the Directors shall designate...."

Members of the Kansas City, Missouri, Rotary Club assisted the Topekans, and they obtained their charter from the International Association of Rotary Clubs on October 1st; Club number 130. By the end of the year, accomplishments of the young body included: a subscription of \$500 for Washburn, support for a municipal farm, donation of books to the TB Sanitarium at Norton, and establishment of a successful Ladies Night. Group singing proved a major and fun activity at the regular meetings, but, perhaps the most intriguing rule: members who addressed another member with a formal title (e.g., "Mr. So-and-So" or "Dr. So-and-So") were fined two bits (\$.25). Money so raised was either given to waiters or used to buy cigars.

The December, 1914, national *Rotarian Magazine* recognized the Topeka club noting it was "made up of the live wires of the town." Regarding that municipal farm idea,



Elks Club, National
Hotel in background,
NW Corner of
7th & Kansas

the Topeka Rotarians proposed abolishing the city and county jails as reformatory institutions, using them instead exclusively for punishment of persistent offenders, and to send the other unfortunates to a municipal farm where they could be “started on the right path instead of being in a hellhole of frightful sanitary conditions, no work and poor food.”

Three years after its founding, America entered World War I in the spring of 1914. Among their many activities, along with other Rotary clubs in the region, Topeka Rotarians raised \$2,500 for a community building in Manhattan where soldiers from Ft. Riley could find “clean recreation” (this structure still stands in downtown Manhattan). At a luncheon in March, 1918, Scots comedian Harry Lauder entertained the Rotarians and their wives with bagpipes and songs. Yet, he also touched on the horrors of the war in the fields of France.

Rotary continued growing, alongside the city, in the 1920s and then faced the challenges of the '30s and the Great Depression. They gave to such projects as aid to tornado victims in Liberal and to an orphans home in Atchison. On the international level, the club sent contributions to families suffering from the effects of war in Europe and to China, also facing a humanitarian crisis, through the Shanghai Rotary Club. Keeping abreast of events, during World War II they heard from speakers back from the South Pacific and a pilot who crashed in Nazi-occupied France.

According to the history of Topeka Rotary's first 50 years, the group participated in numerous community, state, national, and international projects. Among them:

- Boys' Camp, held annually at Camp Jayhawk in the 1950s which provided a week of camping experience for less privileged youngsters in Topeka.
- Sons and Daughters Party, which began in 1943 as a father-daughter luncheon and became a festive event at Christmas.
- Formation of the West Topeka Rotary Club which broadened the scope of the Rotary ideals in Topeka.
- The Institute of International Understanding, which the Club co-sponsored, brought a lecture series to the community with experts on the problems in different regions of the globe.
- The Rotary Man of the Month Award honored a Topekan who made an outstanding community effort.
- At the Kansas Free Fair in September the Club entertained 4-H members in attendance.
- Rotarians provided leadership to the annual Community Chest and United Way campaigns.
- The Junior Rotarian program brought high school students to luncheons.
- Rotary scholarship to Washburn University.



GEORGE GODFREY MOORE

The first president, George Godfrey Moore was born in 1872 in Philadelphia and arrived in Topeka by the end of the century. From 1899 to 1903 he worked on daily newspapers—*The Rocky Mountain News*, the *Kansas City Journal* and the *Topeka Daily Capital*. In 1903 he entered the life insurance field, found it to his liking and worked for various companies until 1920 when he organized the National Reserve Life Insurance Co. in 1920 and opened its 10-story headquarters at 10th and Kansas a few years later. He contributed funds to Washburn College for its athletic field which was named in his honor—Moore Bowl. Many Topekans will remember the stately, columned home he built located on the southwest corner of 10th & Gage (since removed to another site). In many ways, Moore was to Topeka Rotary what Paul Harris was to Rotary itself.



TOPEKA 1914-1964

When the Topeka Rotary Club was formed in 1914, Topeka, a city of 45,000 people, had just gone through a mini-building boom which changed its skyline. New buildings downtown—mini-skyscrapers!—included the New England, Mills, and Gordon (Karl's) buildings, plus the south segment of the 10-story Santa Fe Building (now Landon State Office Building). Prosperous neighborhoods were added to the mix, among them Elmhurst and Kenwood, with their neat rows of bungalows and 2-story houses.

In the first half of the 20th century Topeka possessed a diverse economy. Besides being the state capital and home to the "mighty Santa Fe," its Shops and operations, myriad activities centered on the Kaw: publishing with the Capper newspaper and farm journal empire, numerous insurance companies including National Reserve Life and Security Benefit, six hospitals—Jane C. Stormont, Christ's, St. Francis, Santa Fe, Security Benefit, the State Hospital, and the newly established Menninger Clinic—and multiple number of small manufactures like Capitol Iron Works.

On both sides of the river, agricultural based industry hummed. This involved seven flour mills; several produce houses including Sam Lux and O.A. Fleming; condiment works among them Byron Willcuts XXXX brand horseradish and Otto Keuhne's Silver Leaf line of pickles, vinegar, cider, catsup, mustard, and salad dressing; Kansas' largest chicken hatchery; several major packing houses among them Seymour (eggs), and Hill's (horse meat); and Wolff's Packing Plant which dispatched 75 cattle and 1,000 hogs every day, five days a week.

Due to its economic diversity, Topeka did not suffer as badly as some eastern and northern cities from effects of the Great Depression. True, times were tough for many and on occasion dust obscured the sun; however, the decade of the '30s began and concluded on positive notes regarding education. In 1931 the city showed off its new, million dollar high school in all its Gothic splendor and in 1941 voted to make Washburn College a municipal university.



Topeka may have been seen by some people as insular or provincial (whether true or not), World War II definitely changed that. Besides seeing many of its sons (and a few daughters, too) off to war or national service, the Kansas capital found three important institutions at its doorstep: an Army Air Base south of town, the Winter General military hospital on the southwest, and a big government tire plant (run by Goodyear) on the north side. In turn, this created a housing shortage that continued for years after the war.

The 1950s saw a growing number of suburbs ringing the city and in 1957 the annexation of an older neighborhood, Highland Park, gave the capital city a population in 1960 of 119,484 (in 1950 it was 78,791).



Everything seemed to be going well for Topeka: it had cracked the 100,000 mark in population, urban renewal was cleaning up slums near the downtown, a modern shopping mall (White Lakes, 1964) and businesses were strung out along south Topeka Blvd., a world-renown mental health facility was located on the Westside, and its local high school (Topeka High) had been declared in *Time* as one of the best in the nation (1957).

This was the high-water mark until the evening of the massive F-5, June 8, 1966 tornado, when everything changed. And Topeka would change.

ROTARY MISCELLANEOUS

A story from long time secretary Cecil Howes, on the problem of translating from one language to another: It seems an English Rotarian had the early Rotary motto "He profits most who serves best" translated into five European languages. He then sent the translations to five European universities requesting that they translate it back into English. One of the first returned read: "He who grabs first gets most"!!!

Frank Ripley recalled a Ladies' Night Meeting where the men assembled in one room and the women in another across the hall. "When it was time to go into the dining room a line proceeded from each of the rooms so that a lady from one...met a man from the other" in no special order "and thus became dinner partners." All were nice people but it made for an awkward situation since many did not know one another and were separated from their spouse. This arrangement did not prove to be very popular...and was soon abandoned.

According to Frank Ripley, one year a number of Protestant ministers gave the invocation at successive meetings, each trying to top the another (thus going on and on and on). Then came the day when it was the Rt. Rev. Msgr. Eugene Valley's turn. As the pastor from Assumption Church rose from his chair, he began speaking but once fully erect, Msgr. Valley began to sit down. By the time he was seated he had concluded the invocation!



Thomas Williamson

The 50th anniversary history of Topeka Rotary proclaimed local architect Thomas Williamson as "Mr. Topeka Rotarian." Becoming a member in 1918, he was the Topeka president in 1922, District Governor in 1953-54, and attended 18 International Conventions and numerous conferences. He and his firm are best known as architect for the Jayhawk Hotel, Jayhawk Theatre, and, of course, the Topeka High School.

No favoritism. Both publishers of Topeka's two major dailies, the *Daily Capital* and *State Journal*, were Rotarians: respectively Arthur Capper and Frank MacLennan.

Topekans are rightly proud of the Topeka High School, one of the most beautiful in the nation. Several key Rotarians in 1930 were involved in its development: A.J. Stout (school superintendent); W.N. Van Slyck (THS principal); Thomas Williamson (THS architect); and Chester Woodward (school board president).

Honorary Topeka Rotarians in 1930: the Hon. Arthur Capper, U.S. Senator; the Rev. Charles M. Sheldon, pastor of the Central Congregational Church; Dr. Parley Womar, President Washburn College; and the Hon. George T. McDermott, United States Court of Appeals.

Washburn College's most famous football coach was Ernest E. "Ernie" Bearg. Early in his career, at Illinois, he had mentored Harold "Red" Grange, the "galloping ghost." From 1925 to 1928 he coached the Nebraska Cornhuskers. Then in 1928 he came back to his alma mater, Washburn, as head football coach until 1935. His record was 37-30-7 which included a loss to Army at West Point, 0-19. Bearg is on the Rotary roster for 1930.

Rotarian Dr. Henry S. Blake oversaw development of a portable refrigerator to transport whole blood during World War II, a device which saved countless lives on the battlefield.

Older Rotarians may remember *State Journal* editor Arthur J. Carruth whose column "Under the Whispering Willow" was a staple for decades in the *Saturday Journal*. "High class" gossip!

LOOKING BACK ON THE PAST 50 YEARS

In presenting the second half of our Club's 100 year history, the focus is on the stories and activities that members have recorded that carry out our motto, *Service Above Self*. Rotary has been organized around avenues of service that include (1) Club Service, (2) Community Service, (3) Vocational Service, and (4) International Service; an additional avenue was recently added, (5) Youth Service. Club Service is doing the things that make our club strong and viable. Community Service is providing service to those in need in our local community, for example our Sole Mates project providing shoes to deserving grade school students. Vocational Service focuses on honoring the many professions and vocations of Rotarians, calling on Rotarians to use their expertise to further the activities of Rotary, for example the sponsorship of Vocational Day at Washburn University Tech. And International Service involves working with our district and Rotarians in other countries to provide educational and humanitarian services in other lands, for example offering health services in Panama. Youth Services include working with young people participating in programs including Youth Exchange, Interact, Rotaract and RYLA.

On the pages that follow our club members were given the opportunity to share their experiences as they have traveled their Rotary path with the Rotary Avenues of Service and the Four-Way Test having been their guides. It's the 100th Anniversary Program Committee's hope that these stories and events will give you the opportunity to not only appreciate the accomplishments of the past 100 years but also reminisce some of the experiences as well.

RoTOPEKA



publication was immediately put forth and members were asked to come up with a name "which is original and catchy". The winner of the contest would receive "a prize of a six-months' free ride in the rotary chariot." Not real sure what that meant. The winning entry was the Rotopeka and it continued publication until the creation of our ClubRunner website in 2010.

THE ROTARY FAMILY EXPANDS

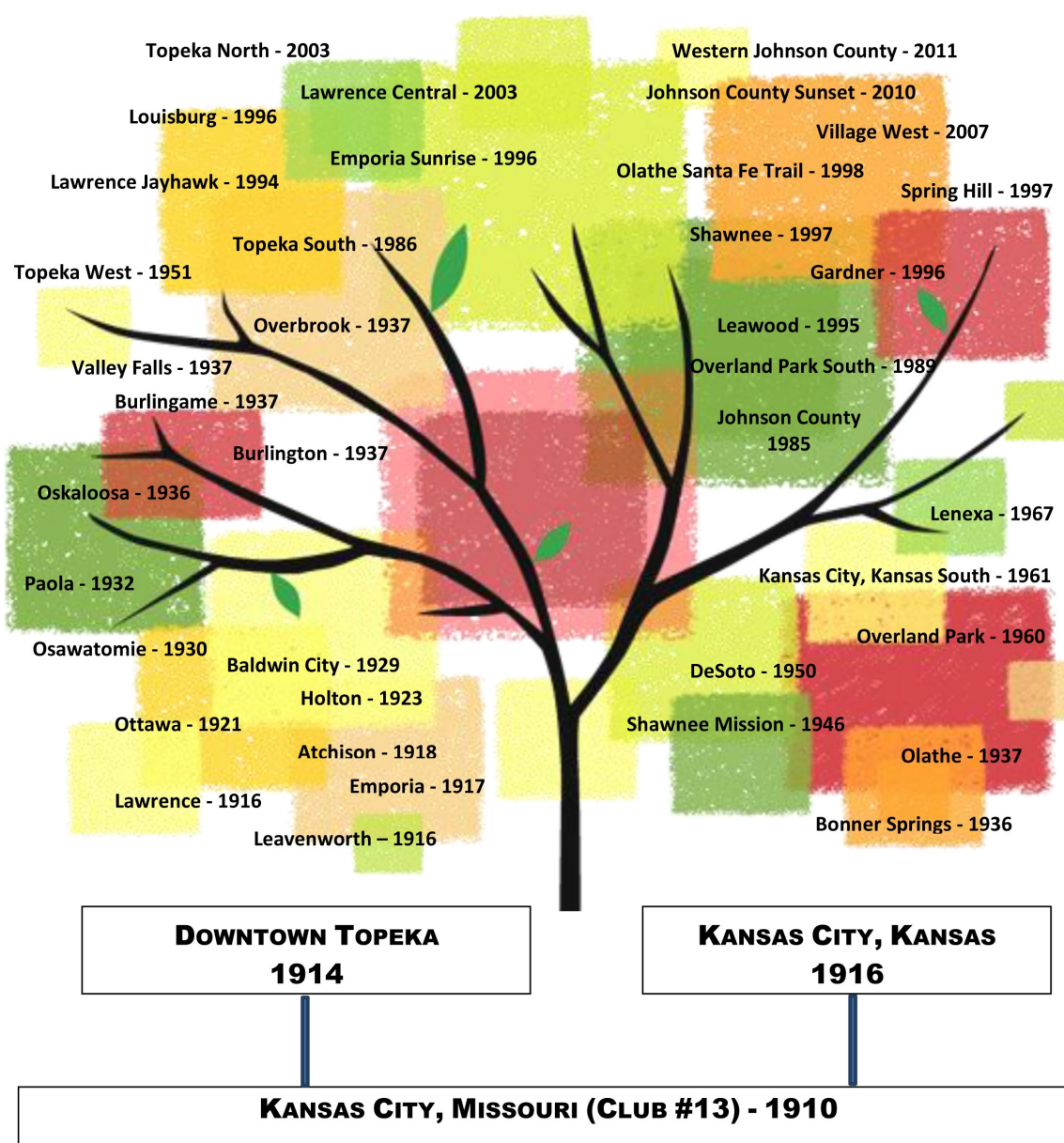
In 1950, our club made plans for the organization of a second Rotary Club in Topeka. Surveys of the new neighborhood business areas showed that there were many businessmen of Rotary caliber whose talents could further Rotary objectives. Accordingly, a committee was named to contact the prospective members, and Club No. 7690, known as the Rotary Club of Topeka West, was formed. District Governor Will Gibbon presented the charter to the new group on February 15, 1951, in the presence of many "Downtowners" together with representatives from 30 other clubs in the district.

In 1985 it was again determined that Topeka had the necessary outstanding citizens and another Rotary Club was established in Topeka. Working with the West club, a committee was formed with the first organizational meeting being held Sept. 18, 1985. The new club, Topeka South, received its charter on February 28, 1986 by District Governor Gene Amos. With the help of other Topeka Rotary Clubs we chartered the Topeka North Rotary Club in 2003. District Governor Gregg Peterson presented the charter. Our member Don Hogue recommended Pat O'Donnell for membership and he was the charter president. Dr. Kathy Gross, a charter member, was

THE ROTARY FAMILY EXPANDS, CONT.

honored with a Paul Harris Fellow for her work in formulating the Super Tortilla Project. There were twenty plus charter members. The Topeka North Club distributes dictionaries to all the third graders in the Seaman district, sponsors an educator appreciation banquet, provides two scholarships to graduating seniors and sponsors a very active Interact club.

The Downtown Topeka Club also assisted with the charter of the Lawrence and Leavenworth Clubs in 1916, the Emporia Club in 1917 and the Holton Club in 1923. With assistance from the Lawrence, Leavenworth, Emporia and Holton Clubs, fourteen more clubs were chartered.



WOMEN IN ROTARY

Prior to 1987 Rotary was a “male only” bastion. However; in 1978 the Rotary Club of Duarte, California, invited three women to become members. As a result, RI withdrew the charter from the club for violation of the Rotary International (RI) Constitution. After a nine year court battle, the California Supreme Court and U.S. Supreme Court held that Rotary Clubs do have a “business purpose” and are in some ways public-type organizations. This action in 1987 allowed women to become Rotarians in any jurisdiction having similar “public accommodations” statutes. The RI constitutional change was made at the 1989 Council on Legislation, with a vote to eliminate the “male only” provision for all of Rotary.

Three women were admitted to our club in 1987. Joan Wagnon joined on September 1 and was the first woman to join. Nancy Perry followed on November 1, and Zula Bennington Greene, known by her newspaper columnist name as “Peggy of the Flint Hills”, joined December 1. Joan and Nancy were later to serve as club presidents. Since this time women have become members and leaders of clubs throughout the world. Women now account for 33 percent of our current club membership.

ROTARY ANNS

Women, however, did play a part in Rotary prior to 1987. Up until that time wives of male members were affectionately known as “Rotary Anns”. The Rotary International publication “The ABC’s of Rotary, tells the story this way.

“This designation was never one of disparagement but rather grew out of an interesting historical occasion. The year was 1914 when San Francisco Rotarians boarded a special train to attend the Rotary Convention being held in Houston. In those days few wives attended Rotary events, and until the train stopped in Los Angeles, the only woman aboard was the wife of Rotarian Bru Brunnier. As the train picked up additional convention-bound delegates, Mrs. Ann Brunnier was introduced as the Rotarian’s Ann. The title soon became “Rotary Ann”. Since the clubs of the West were inviting the Rotarians to hold their next convention in San Francisco a number of songs and stunts were organized that would be performed in Houston. One of the Rotarians wrote a “Rotary Ann” chant. On the train’s arrival at the Houston depot, a delegation greeted the West Coast Rotarians. One of the greeters was Guy Gundaker of Philadelphia, whose wife was also named Ann.



Ann & Henry “Bru” Brunnier

During the rousing demonstration, someone started the Rotary Ann chant. The two petite ladies, Ann Brunnier and Ann Gundaker, were hoisted to the men’s shoulders and paraded about the hall. The group loved the title given to the two women named Ann. Immediately the same term of endearment was used for all of the wives in attendance, and the name “Rotary Ann” was here to stay.” Or so they thought . . . until September of 1987

JOAN WAGNON, FIRST WOMAN MEMBER (9/1/1987)

By Joan Wagnon

When Jim McHenry, Jr. asked me if I would like to join the downtown Rotary club, I immediately said, “Yes.” Little did I realize how my decision would impact my life and our club. Jim was clear with me that he had been watching the court decisions that were forcing Rotary to add women to their membership and he thought it was time the downtown club acted. I asked him why he picked me to break the gender barrier. He explained that most of the social service agency heads were members --my counterpart at the YMCA, Jerry Robertson, and others. Since I was the executive director of the YWCA, a state legislator and active in the community, he thought it would be hard for the club to turn me down because of my credentials. And, he thought it was the right thing for Rotary to admit women. Then,

JOAN WAGNON, CONT.

months went by after I filled out the application, and I didn't hear anything. My busy life went on, of course, but one day Jim called to say the club officers wanted to interview me. So I met club president, John Knoll, and several others, including Mike Hall, for lunch. I don't remember any of the questions they asked, but the gist of it was they had decided to admit me and wanted to make sure I was prepared, that some of the members were not at all happy with the club's decision. It wasn't personal. They just liked things the way they were.

The first meeting I attended was a little tense. President John made the entire club stand and say the Four Way Test (they never did that back in those days). I worked hard at meeting people, sitting at different tables, volunteering (although the club didn't do much volunteering or service work at that time) and generally trying to fit in. Soon after, Nancy Perry, Peggy Greene, and two other women were admitted and things settled down. After Nancy Perry (who was the United Way Executive Director) became President, women were finally recognized not only as members, but as club leaders. Things went back to normal.

Some of my Rotary highlights were serving on the Board of Directors and helping develop a community service program; serving as President, 2007-2008 and attending the Rotary International convention in Salt Lake; organizing the visit of a Russian Delegation in 2011.

While it was perhaps inevitable that women would be admitted eventually, it was one of the smartest things Rotary ever did. Clubs had been struggling to maintain their membership base. Women were a new source of members, volunteers and leadership with new ideas.

I am forever grateful to Jim McHenry, Jr. for helping me find Rotary and to all those who helped me advance in the leadership. I am a better person for those experiences.

ROTARY CLUB OF TOPEKA CIRCA 1965

By Jim Seltsam

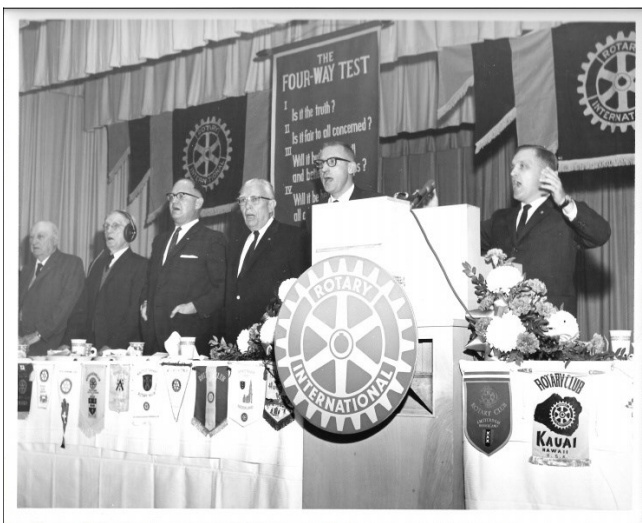
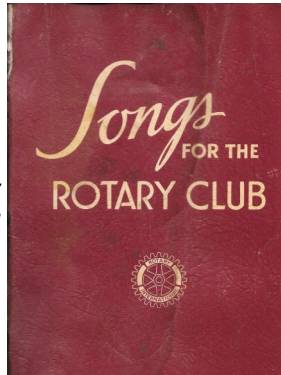
Fifty years ago the Rotary Club of Topeka, as it was known back then, simply because it was the only Rotary club in the city, met every Thursday for its noon luncheon at the Hotel Jayhawk in the Florentine room. The members were seated at long straight tables and were served a plated meal by waiters in white coats. The meetings were led by the president Rev. Ewart Watts or the vice president Leon Peterson and began with a prayer and the pledge of allegiance, after which Max Falkenstien would give the news of the day followed with a run-down of what the Kansas Jayhawks were up to. The club was known for its high profile speakers such as senator Everett Dirksen, Dr. Karl Menninger, the national rodeo cowboy of the year Jim Shoulders, Governor John Anderson Jr. and the athletic director of the University of Kansas, to name a few. Attendance at the meetings was mandatory. A member who did not maintain a 60 percent attendance record over a year's period, or was absent four times in a row without a makeup, received the dreaded "Red Letter" which was a request for his resignation. Upon becoming a member each person was assigned a classification unique to him identifying his profession. There were no two the same. It was known that the membership committee had to be very creative in its work with this task. When introduced as a new member he, together with his classification, was presented to the entire body.



Fifty years ago if you were seated at the head table, which was a raised podium, and looked out over the members, what you saw were suits and neckties, no sport shirts, no blue jeans, and at that time no lipstick or long hair. That was rotary in 1965..... What will Rotary be like in 2065?

SINGING ROTARIANS

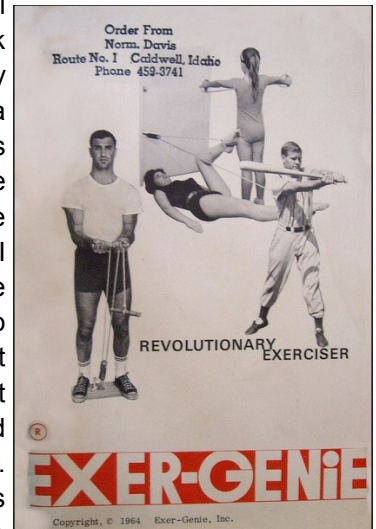
Every week Rotarians would open their Rotary song books and belt out the melodious strains of such tunes as "Hail! Hail! To Rotary," "Beautiful Dreamer" or "The Star-Spangled Banner". We still have one of those song books if anyone would care to step up as song leader!



THE INFAMOUS EXER-GENIE

By Jim Blackburn

When we were still meeting at the Jayhawk Hotel (a good many years ago) we had a speaker that was assumed to be connected with the Space Industry. I thought I was fortunate to be chosen to introduce him. It didn't take long to find out that he was not associated with the Space Industry. His only connection was that he had invented the



Exer-Genie exercising "machine" that was small enough for an Astronaut to use in a space capsule. He gave us a real sales pitch and some of us bought one sight unseen. As far as I know, none of us were ever asked to go into Space with the Astronauts. The actual Exer-Genie was a length of cord and a couple pieces of plastic or wood. Our Speaker turned out to be a very good salesman.

WE USED TO HAVE BANNERS GALORE

By Roy Browning

Members of the Rotary Club of Topeka literally travel round the globe. Back in 1970, and for several years following, the worldwide fellowship of Rotary was vividly and beautifully symbolized at each weekly meeting of Topeka Rotary, as a result of the talents and efforts of Tom Williamson. Tom, an outstanding/distinguished architect (one of his best-known achievements being "the architect of Topeka High School") was a great Rotarian. On various occasions he was referred to as: "Mr. Rotary". Back in those days, it was customary for members of Rotary to exchange club banners when visiting other clubs, just as it is today. Many of the 200+ Topeka Rotarians traveled to places across the U.S. and around the world (on business and leisure). Gradually, many, many multi-colored banners began to accumulate in the Rotary office. One day, in 1970, Past President Tom came to President Roy Browning, and volunteered to design a means by which the numerous club banners might be appropriately displayed. The result was a beautiful deep-blue tapestry which stretched across the west wall of the grand ballroom of the old Jayhawk Hotel- from the floor almost to the ceiling. The tapestry hangings were made in such a way that they could easily be displayed, and then taken down. Tom himself prepared the entire display of Rotary banners; and, presented it as a gift to our club. Each Thursday, thereafter, when Rotarians gathered for their weekly meetings, they were reminded, by this panorama of colorful banners, of the worldwide fellowship of Rotary. Unfortunately this display has since vanished.

MORE “INTERESTING” PROGRAMS

By Tom Gorrell

More on the Exer-Genie: The interesting thing about this story is that over the years the “super salesman” was able to repackage his presentation and slip it through the program chair, in violation of the no selling from the podium policy, for two more presentations to our club. So future program chairs, beware of program presenters representing themselves as being NASA consultants. I think I still have my Exer-Genie. If I can find it, I'll make someone a special deal on it.

We also had a program presented by an organization that went by the acronym COYOTE. This stood for Cast Off Your Old Tired Ethics, which is an American prostitute rights organization. Not sure how that program was sold to us.

Another program of note was when a physician was giving a program on erectile dysfunction. This happened before women were admitted into the club so we had an all-male audience except for one poor lady sitting at the head table with her husband who was being introduced as a new member. The presenter was quite descriptive and I'm sure the poor woman wished she could have been anywhere but sitting at our head table. Not sure if we retained that member.

LIONS AND TIGERS AND BEARS, OH MY!

Staci Williams, a member of our club, and her husband Lance, provided us with a program that was a little on the “wild side”. (No animals, including humans, were injured during the performance of this program)



IT'S A GREAT DAY TO BE A ROTARIAN!

By Blanche Parks

That is how I started every meeting as President of the Downtown Topeka Rotary Club. My journey into the world of Rotary began when I was a program speaker to the club in 1999. The topic was, the new "*Learning Quest 529 College Savings Program*". I developed, implemented, and was director of the program in the Office of the Kansas State Treasurer. The club was having a membership drive and at the conclusion of my presentation, I was asked by Joan Wagnon and Melissa Masoner, if I would consider becoming a member. I recognized many club members from other community organizations where I volunteered and knew I had the same values as many of them. I joined the Downtown Topeka Rotary Club and worked my way through the ranks to become president. What an honor! I love that this club is a true example of the Four-Way Test, Rotary principles and is the best Rotary in the **whole wide world!** Because of my wonderful experiences in the Downtown Topeka Club, I can say "**I am proud to be a Rotarian!**"

ELDON SLOAN CELEBRATES HIS 102ND BIRTHDAY AT ROTARY

By Gordon Lansford



When the club hosted Eldon Sloan's 102nd birthday party on March 26, 2011, the air was electric with excitement. There were balloons, friends and neighbors, and of course, a beautiful birthday cake. There was much to do about Eldon that day; with singing and well wishes, it was a great day. He was actively engaged in every conversation. And finally the time came for the microphone to be handed to Eldon for a few words, and those words told us all that Eldon was doing "just fine". His voice was crisp and clear as were his very relevant words to his Rotary friends. He spoke of friendship and fellowship and the tried and true Rotary Four-Way Test. Eldon Sloan was a true Rotarian. He had the strongest voice in the room that day and we hung on his every word. He was surrounded by family and all of his Rotary Friends. At the time of his death, December 16, 2012, Eldon had been a 58 year member of the Downtown Topeka Rotary Club.

ROTARY INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT RON BURTON VISITS CLUB

While in Bangkok at the RI International Convention, Downtown Topeka Past President Blanche Parks was introduced to RI President Ron Burton. They shared a connection to Washburn University, so she invited him to visit the Downtown Topeka Rotary Club. In July 2013, RI President Burton visited the joint meeting of all the Topeka Clubs and other District Rotarians as one of his first visits during his world-wide tour of clubs during his term in office.



During his July 2013 visit to Topeka, RI President Burton made the point that we need to share the blessing of Rotary with other people. His message was that it's not enough to just enlist new

members. New members must be mentored, engaged and be given something to do to keep them involved in Rotary. Our club's Red Badge program, instituted a year earlier, is certainly consistent with this message.

THE RED BADGE-BLUE BADGE PROGRAM

By Anita Wolgast

In April 2012 a special ceremony was held to officially kick off the Club's new Red Badge/Blue Badge program. All new members and sponsors for the Rotary year were recognized; the new members with a special red badge button and the sponsors with a sponsor pin. This Red Badge program is considered an introductory period for new members where they are asked to complete certain club activities to acquaint them with the club (New Member Orientation, Service projects, Greeter, Contribution to Rotary International Foundation and the local Topeka Rotary Foundation as well as the choice of a variety of Rotary activities). When completed, the Red Badge is traded for the Blue Badge of official membership.



TWO GENERATION OF ROTARIANS, THEN AND NOW WITH A THIRD IN QUEUE

By Al Williams Jr., and Kathleen "Kaki" Williams-Heit



My Rotary experience started about 35 years ago. Kathleen, my daughter, was about 5 years old; so I am reasonably sure I began taking her to the Christmas Party then. We have not missed a year together since, with the exception of the years she was out of town. This was the beginning of the father–daughter Rotary bond that has grown into an exceptionally meaningful experience for us. I thoroughly enjoyed my leadership roles in the Club and now I am a very proud father and grandfather as I watch Kaki become increasingly active in the Club. She has come up with some unique ideas and to listen to her outline those from the podium are very special moments for me. Rotary is such a wonderful outlet for one's charitable energies and gifts; and all the while we get the opportunity for personal growth. It is a wonderful experience for me to share with my daughter. - Al Williams Jr., Rotary President 2006

My Rotary experience is extraordinarily meaningful because I am blessed to share it with my father. The best part of my week is jumping into the car with Dad and sitting together at our weekly meetings. We banter with each other, some days it's about cup money, or the time I invited the entire Rotary club to my wedding reception... Oh the look on his face and the roar of laughter from the members! My first time addressing the Rotary Club from the podium was with trepidation that the microphone that cursed my father's presidency would surely curse me! Luckily he was on hand to give me moral support. I'm proud of my father and his legacy, especially his legacy as a Rotarian. He led this club as President with 100 percent commitment and honor. Under his leadership and with the work of others they began the program that has evolved to be what we know today as Career Day at Washburn Technical Institute which is a partnership with USD 501. He continues to fund the scholarships granted to students that will attend Washburn Tech. My father is a gentleman whose wit, support and kind heart never falters, he is a true Rotarian. I love and treasure our Thursday lunch dates with Rotary. I hope to continue to honor him and his legacy with my involvement in Rotary. Perhaps in a few years Morgan will be leading the next generation of Rotarians – after all it's in her blood! - Kathleen "Kaki" Williams-Heit



THE ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PARTY

By Larry Dimmitt

The annual Christmas Party has been a favorite Rotary family activity over the years. I remember how much fun our kids had getting out of school in mid-late December to come to the Ramada for the party. Santa was always there and there was always much singing and holiday entertainment. It was fun to see which family had the most members present at the party. The Jim Blackburn's and Dick Crawford's often competed for top honors, and picture taking with Rotarians and their kids was always a fun activity.



OUR SOCIAL EVENTS ALLOWED US TO LET DOWN OUR HAIR AND ROLL UP OUR SLEEVES



There were only Winners at Casino Night



We got our limit at Lake Texoma



Topeka Rotary Octoberfest in the NOTO District was a Blast!



There was a lot of "monkey business" going on as we prepared for our Red Carpet Gala Celebrating 100 Years of Rotary in Topeka.

FIRESIDE CHATS

At the informal "Fireside Chat" setting in members' homes the agenda was simply getting to know each other better as individuals.



INTERACT

Our club started an Interact Club (high school Rotary-sponsored club) at Topeka High in 2001-02. About 20 Interactors joined. They helped with the club's KanSmile dental health project, and raised money for an orphanage in Panama. In 2003, the Interactors traveled to Panama to present wheel chairs to crippled children there. Later, they also traveled to Tennessee for an Interact Conference, with Larry Dimmitt and Lois acting as sponsors from our club.

The Topeka North Rotary Club sponsors a very active Interact Club at Seaman High School. They have held various fundraisers for community and international projects.



ROTARY YOUTH LEADERSHIP ACADEMY (RYLA)

By Betty Schlossman

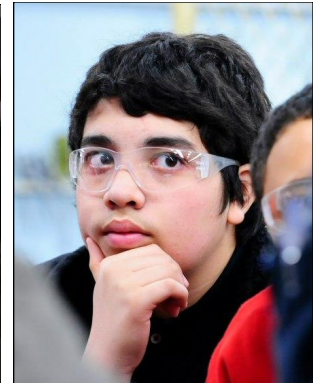
RYLA originated in 1959 in Queensland, Australia as a festival highlighting local youth in honor of a royal visit from Princess Victoria. It developed as a leadership program for youth and was officially adopted by Rotary International in 1971. Our program is focused on secondary school students and is usually a four day program. A variety of topics are presented each summer including leadership fundamentals and ethics, communication skills, problem solving and conflict management, and community/global citizenship. The Downtown Topeka Rotary Club usually sends four students. Since 2008 we have sent at least 30 students to RYLA. The club sent two students in 2014 which included our Rotary Exchange student, Claudio D'Eramo, from Italy.



CAREER DAYS AT WASHBURN TECH

Career Day at Washburn Tech is intent on **Inspiring** the youth of today and helping to **Transform** them into the leaders of tomorrow.

The Downtown Topeka Club pays for busses to transport all seventh grade students in USD 501 to Washburn Tech for a chance to see, touch and hear about high-tech, hands-on education that can lead to gratifying, high-pay jobs. Each student is given a Four-Test card and Rotarians explain that the Four-Way Test is used as a guide for good judgment in personal and professional relationship. Rotarians also explain about Polio and the work Rotary is doing to "eradicate Polio" from the world.



SESQUICENTENNIAL LICENSE PLATES

Club President Anita Wolgast and her team oversaw the development of license plates to celebrate the sesquicentennial of the state of Kansas January 29, 2011 which were offered district-wide. The sale of the license plates was a fund raiser, with all profits going to PolioPlus in the name of each participating club.



THE TOPEKA ROTARY FOUNDATION

The Topeka Rotary Foundation was incorporated in 1976 with the approval of the Rotary Club of Topeka membership. It was established to accept gifts, bequests and other contributions for educational or charitable purposes and to encourage and promote the well-being of humanity. The foundation generally donates its earnings to special projects, not to ongoing fund raising programs. Examples of past giving include: large print books for the Topeka Public Library, several projects for the Boy Scouts, trees for the numerous city parks and the Topeka Zoo, a winter sports camp at the Capper Foundation and a home winterizing program at the Villages and many other projects too numerous to mention. The Topeka Foundation has grown from a very modest beginning to having assets of over \$210,000.

HENRY BLAKE FELLOWS

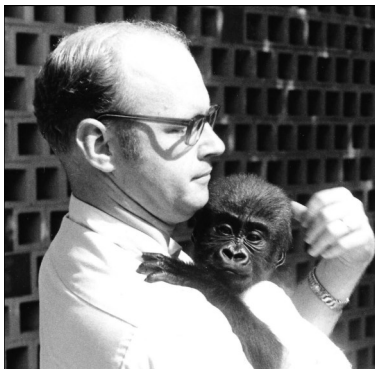
The Henry Blake Fellowship was established to honor Dr. Henry S. Blake Jr. It was Blake's vision that resulted in the Topeka Rotary Foundation. As president of the club in 1975, he introduced and nurtured the concept and the Foundation became a reality the following year. The Foundation fulfills a major obligation of club membership by providing an avenue for community service. Rotarians who contribute \$500 to the local foundation are known as Henry Blake Fellows. Over 135 Topeka club members have fulfilled the financial qualifications to become Henry Blake Fellows. Dr. Blake was a surgeon and chief of surgery at Stormont-Vail and headed the disaster team after the 1966 Topeka tornado. In addition, he was credited with designing and constructing the first refrigerated container for the movement of whole blood to military combat areas when he served in the South Pacific during World War II.



Henry Blake in 1947

MAX THE GORILLA

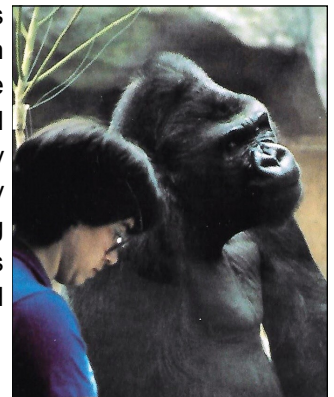
In 1969 Gary Clarke, the Director of the World's Famous Topeka Zoo, and a member of The Downtown Topeka Rotary Club, appeared before the Rotary board to ask for a donation of \$5,000 to purchase a gorilla. The Rotary board agreed to this request and the purchase was made. The club board had decided to name the gorilla RoTop, a combination of Rotary and Topeka. Gary convinced them that RoTop was not a suitable gorilla name so the decision was made to name it after the club president at the time who was Max Falkenstien. Gary felt that Max was a very suitable gorilla name.



Gary Clarke and Baby Max

Three rotary club members; Gary Clarke, Mark Morris, Jr., Max Falkenstien; and Loren Nash who was the Park Commissioner at the time, made use of Mark Morris's airplane and flew to Dallas, Texas on September 29, 1969 to pick up the 13lb, 5 month old, baby gorilla, which would now become

the first gorilla in the state of Kansas. As Max grew, the Zoo realized they did not want Max to grow up a bachelor, so when the Kansas City Zoo called with an offer to sell the zoo a female gorilla, named Tiffany, the Topeka community responded. Other zoos were standing in line with money in hand to buy Tiffany but Gary was given a week to come up with the funds. A Spontaneous "Max Loves Tiffany" Campaign arose in Topeka and in one weeks' time \$5,000 was raised to buy Tiffany. When Tiffany arrived at the Topeka Zoo, Gary waited until the following morning for them to meet so, as Gary loves to tell, Max could have "Breakfast at Tiffany's".



Max with Lead Keeper Alice Miser

Max was loaned to the Santa Barbara, California Zoo in 1996. After having entertained Zoo visitors for 27 years, he died there in October, 2003. Tiffany remains at the Topeka Zoo as of this date and is one of the oldest gorillas in captivity.

TREE PLANTING PROGRAM 1992-95

By Charles Jeffress

At the 1991 Rotary International Convention held in Mexico City, incoming Rotary International President Rajendra Saboo announced as his theme for his year as president to be "Preserve Planet Earth". One way he suggested to preserve the planet was to plant trees.

Topeka Rotary Club members attending this convention brought this idea home with them. Those members were Jim Young and Vern Jarboe from the Downtown Rotary Club and Alice Young and Charles Jeffress from the Topeka West Rotary Club. The three Rotary Clubs in Topeka agreed to join in the program to fund the cost of the trees. A committee representing all three clubs was formed consisting of Nancy Perry (Downtown Club), Rick Higgs (South Club) and Charles Jeffress, (Topeka West; later transferred to the Downtown Club). The Topeka City Park Department agreed to select the trees and plant them in parks around the city. As luck would have it, Jim Blackburn a member of the Downtown Club and owner of Blackburn Nursery, had plans to move his business from 29th and Wanamaker to a new location on South Gage and needed to remove trees from the Wanamaker site. He offered to sell trees of a suitable size and type to the project as greatly discounted prices.

The first ceremonial tree planting was held on April 20, 1992 in the new Brookfield Park at 25th and Kingsrow Road. Mayor Butch Felker agreed to move his weekly press conference to that location and to join in the planting assisted by the three club presidents and the District Governor. TV and print press gave the project good promotion and recognition to Rotary.

Tree planting continued through 1995 and resulted in 229 trees being planted in 18 Topeka parks at a total cost to the Rotary Clubs of \$7,600. The three Topeka Rotary Clubs were presented with the "Brighten Your Corner" awards by the Topeka City Council for these efforts.

VENTURE ROTARIANS

By Amanda Brown

Venture Rotarians was established in 2012 to provide an alternative option for traditional Rotary membership. The Downtown Topeka Rotary Club established this subgroup for professionals who have a schedule that limits their time for weekly meetings. This club uses the Rotary's Service Above Self motto to drive community efforts.



Covered in Coats



Sole Mates

Venture is a service project oriented club. A handful of those projects have included the Book Project, Senior Picture Project and Run for a Reason. We also partner with traditional Rotary members on projects such as Walking for Water, Covered in Coats and Sole Mates. It is estimated that to date, Venture's projects have reached more than 800 youth in our community.

This Club meets on a flexible basis after work or on weekends to discuss the needs of the public and how they may be fulfilled. Venture Rotarians also provide leadership opportunities within the Club and community. Each member has the opportunity to chair their service project with the full support of fellow Ventures. Members are encouraged to participate in The Downtown Topeka Rotary Club whenever their schedule permits in order to interact with traditional Rotary members.

Venture Rotarians also have meetings for educational opportunities. They visit local not-for-profits to brainstorm for future projects and overall growth. The Venture Rotarians continue to grow and count on the support of The Downtown Topeka Rotary Club and community, for it is this support that drives the achievements of Venture Rotarians.

CHRISTMAS IN APRIL

We weren't afraid to jump in with both hands to help the local community repair houses as part of the Christmas in April projects.



DOWNTOWN TOPEKA ROTARY CLUB DONATES 500 BOOKS, \$50K TO AVONDALE EAST

The Rotary Club of Downtown Topeka on Tuesday donated its final book to Avondale East Elementary School, which closed at the end of the 2012 school year. From left: Terry Diebolt, Club Foundation President; Vicki Peterson, selector of the books; Anita Wolgast, Club president 2011-12, and Philip Elwood, past president and originator of the idea in 2002.



In the of 2002 - 2012, the Rotary Club of Downtown Topeka donated 500 books and \$50,000 for field trips, books and student recognition awards to Avondale East Elementary School. Individually-selected books with a Rotary bookplate signed by each weeks' Rotary speakers were presented to the school each year. Club officials presented their final book May 12, 2012 to the school as the students were scheduled to attend Ross Elementary School next year.

DICTIONARY PROJECT

By Maria Pyko

Each year the Downtown Topeka Rotary provides each fourth grader in six schools their own dictionary reaching up to 600 students. Rotarians visit individual classrooms and hand deliver the books ensuring that each student has a personal connection with club members. This is a pivotal time in a new readers learning. Students in the fourth grade are becoming stronger readers and are making the transition from learning to read words to reading to learn new concepts. The dictionaries provide each student with the support he/she needs to become familiar with new and different words as they grow as learners. The students not only get this cherished gift for helping with their learning but also it belongs to them. Many students don't have the opportunity to have multiple books that belong to them so the dictionary becomes a valued possession. The benefit of this project is not simply for the students but our Rotarians truly enjoy the ability to give and nurture literacy as well as have an opportunity to be part of the school even if it is just for one day. The joy expressed by Rotarians and the students with the Dictionary Project is definitely visible in each classroom they visit.



PEANUT BUTTER AND JELLY AND BOOKS FOR PROJECT TOPEKA & LITERARY PROJECT

In 2004, as part of the 100th Anniversary of Rotary International the four Rotary clubs of Topeka joined forces to stock numerous community food pantries with over 1,000 pounds of peanut butter and jelly. Peanut butter was chosen because of it's high protein content and it's relative high cost since it's not usually the kind of food donated to food pantries. In addition, 950 books were donated to the Lets Help Literary Project. About 40 percent of those receiving food pantry food are children.

TOPEKA'S ROTARY POCKET PARK AT THE "INTERSECTION OF FREEDOM"

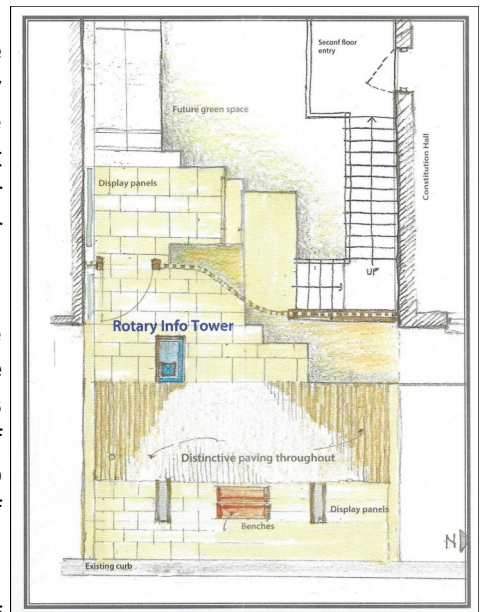
By Gordon Lansford

As re-development began along Kansas avenue in 2014 and a revival of "downtown" began there were a few Rotarians that believed in the "history" that occurred there in the 1850's and 1950's. So as we celebrate the 100th Anniversary of Rotary in Topeka it is appropriate that we also celebrate the anniversaries of significant historical events related to "freedom" that took place at the same location, even though they were 100 years apart. Thus was the inception of Topeka's Rotary Pocket Park at the "Intersection of Freedom" at the corner of 5th Street and Kansas Avenue.

It was within a stone's throw of this intersection that two completely different, but related historical events took place. The first was the gathering of the Free State Legislature to write the Free State Constitution that eventually influenced the Constitution of the State of Kansas. There was a tense standoff between the Free State Legislature and the US Army Troops sent from Ft Leavenworth and Ft. Riley to stop the proceedings. Were it not for the level heads of their leadership the first shot of the American Civil War might well have been fired at Constitution Hall on Kansas Avenue.

The second significant event carrying the banner of Freedom occurred in the 1950's at the Federal Courthouse directly across the street from the aforementioned Constitution Hall of the 1850's. The case became known as Brown v. Board of Education and was ultimately decided in favor of integrated schools where there had been segregated school previously. To this day that since abandoned Federal Courtroom stands as a symbol of those who stood for a cause and saw it through.

These two events brought the United States closer to its eventual goal of Freedom for all people! The Topeka Rotary Pocket Park will stand and tell the story and significance of those events that led to America being the "land of the free". Private fund raising was used to fund the project with those contributors recognized permanently and perseverance was used to bring it to life. It required the cooperation of many diverse groups to create the Park as a "Memorial to Freedom" at the "Intersection of Freedom" on Kansas Avenue. Many folks have contributed their time and resources to make this Freedom Park a reality. It is expected to be dedicated in the Fall of 2015!



Rotary International Foundation

The Rotary Club of Topeka is proud of its participation in the Rotary International Foundation. Active since 1947, the Foundation has provided scholarships for advanced students who would spend a year in a foreign country, sending groups of non-Rotarians from foreign countries to acquaint them with another part of the world and, most recently, providing inoculations on a worldwide basis for disease reduction. Initially the fund sought a minimum contribution of \$10 per Rotarian and the Topeka club had 100 percent participation soon after the program was announced. Since that time our club has contributed over \$750,000 to the Rotary International Foundation and over 250 Paul Harris Fellows are now associated with our club

ROTARY INTERNATIONAL SPECIAL AWARDS AND RECOGNITION TO MEMBERS OF OUR CLUB

Service Above Self Award: Awarded to Stan Teeter in 2007 for outstanding service in the development and implementation of the Super Tortilla Project. Stan is the only member of our club to ever receive this high honor. Only about 15 such awards have ever been given in our District.

Citation for Meritorious Service: Seven members of our club have received this recognition for outstanding service to The Foundation. Typically only one such award is given in the District each year.

- Wilbur Lewis—date not given
- Frank Johnson, 1975
- Roy Browning, 1980
- Cecil Bulkley, 1980
- Claire Hettinger, 1983-84
- Larry Dimmitt, 2009-10, India, Panama service projects
- Phil Coolidge, 2014, for many years of service in the Group Study Exchange Program,



Phil Coolidge receiving the Citation for Meritorious Service

THE LONG REACH OF ROTARY ROGER AESCHLIMAN'S EXPERIENCE IN IRAQ

When Dick Knoll announced my impending combat deployment to Iraq there were audible gasps and one cry of “oh, dear God, No!” I was surrounded by well-wishers and promised to keep in touch. Via a weekly email I was able to keep folks informed of the many interesting events, history and observations of the Mesopotamian conflict. About halfway through the 366 days Topeka South Rotarian Maria Russo (Wilson) went beyond asking and insisted that Rotary MUST do something to support me. I had no needs and few personal wants. She insisted, one thing led to another and at my direction my Kansas Army National Guard unit initiated a plan to furnish and stock a medical clinic for Iraqi civilians in the town of Makasib. Initially I asked for small parcels of over-the-counter medications, bandages and other things you might find in your own bathroom cabinet. This effort grew and swelled and rippled across America thanks to the power of forwarded email. By the time I left Iraq we had delivered two TONS of medical equipment and supplies donated by Rotarians, co-workers, medical providers and people I never heard of from small towns in California, Iowa and Illinois. Maria Russo (part pit-bulldog) continued this effort and through the Air Force National Guard acquired an entire mobile emergency room that was otherwise going into the trash. It arrived in Makasib about six months after I left. Perhaps we will never know the good done by Topeka Rotarians but it is likely there are children alive today who would not have survived. And perhaps there are people there who think kindly of Topeka and Rotary who will work for peace.



ROTARY YOUTH EXCHANGE

By David Beck

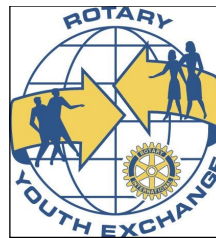
The opportunity to participate in the Rotary Youth Exchange program has been the most gratifying Rotary experience for me. It has truly enriched my life. I don't know how far back the club goes with RYE, but for me it started in 2004 when Gordon Lansford asked me about hosting a high school age student in our home. My wife Lynnette and I eventually said yes, and at that time none of us knew what we were getting ourselves into. We agreed to be the first of three host families for Kei Takahashi, a 16 year old girl from Japan who would be a junior at Topeka High for the 2005-06 school year. Kei proved to be an extraordinary and delightful young lady, and she has become a part of our family. This is not to say that her year in America was easy for her or for her host parents! We all had to deal with homesickness, culture shock, and language challenges, and Kei had to deal with making her way in a strange high school with no host siblings, since all of her host parents were old enough to be her grandparents. There were lots of tears shed, many cultural and language misunderstandings, and some interesting times like helping her to understand *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by reading the book aloud to translate it into the version of English that Kei was still struggling to learn.

After her year here, Kei has found her way back to Topeka for a visit, and she showed us around Montreal, along with Gordon and Phyllis Lansford, when she spent one of her college years at McGill University and we were all attending the Rotary International convention. Later we spent a week with Kei and her family in Japan and attended her graduation ceremony from Waseda University in Tokyo. Since then Kei has won a Rotary Ambassadorial Scholarship to Oxford and continues to be a part of our extended family, and she maintains ties to the friends she made here.

Since Kei's year our club has hosted students from Italy, Germany, and two from France, working with Shawnee Heights, Hayden and Washburn Rural High Schools. Claudio D'Eramo, our current RYE student, attends Topeka High this year. We have also sponsored two outbound students from Topeka West, Lucy Anton to Belgium and Jodie Ladner to Chile, and we will be sponsoring Joe Fritz, a Washburn Rural student, to Spain this coming school year.



David Beck, Claudio D'Eramo, Rehan Reza, Richard Ross, and Lynette Beck at the May 2015 District Conference. Claudio was selected by the District Youth Exchange committee to be the one student of the 2014-15 Inbound students to receive a Paul Harris Fellow.



2015 Rotary Youth Exchange Inbound Students Visit the State Capitol

POLIOPLUS

By Bill Latimer

In 1984 our club began collecting pocket change "in the cups" at every meeting for a program called PolioPlus. Between that time and June of 1988 we collected \$7,200 toward the purchase of polio inoculations. In 1987, under the leadership of Rotary International President Charles Keller and club president John Knoll, the most ambitious fund raising project in International's and our club's history was undertaken. The stated purpose of the PolioPlus Campaign was to eradicate polio from the face of the Earth. The committee of forty three club members chaired by Don Townsend, raised \$55,615 which purchased 463,464 inoculations. It is worthy of note that the vast majority of the contributed funds were from our club's membership in this most worthy of projects.

In 1987 President John Knoll called a special meeting of the officers and Board of Directors to meet with District Governor, Bill Muhlarky. The purpose of the meeting was to implement the PolioPlus campaign in our club. Governor Muhlarky outlined the goal of eradicating Polio world-wide and that with a club our size we should raise at least \$100,000. As President-elect I was concerned as our annual donations had been less than \$5,000. Governor Muhlarky expected each officer and board member to contribute at least \$1,000 to set an example for the rest of our club's Rotarians. The \$100,000 goal was exceeded in three years with donations still being made toward this worthy cause which now totals close to \$200,000.

GHANA NATIONAL IMMUNIZATION DAY

By Stan Teeter

In 1985 when RI started the polio eradication project, our club under the leadership of John Knoll exceeded their fund raising goal. In 1998 our club and district again exceed their goal for funding a polio national immunization day in Ghana. A bus load of Rotarians from around our district paid the own way to go to Ghana and immunize children against polio. We saw

many older children that survived polio but still suffer the paralysis from the disease. We also visited schools in the area and observed the lack of books in the classrooms and their libraries. A project was initiated to collect books from clubs around the district and in 2000 six thousand pounds of books were sent to Ghana to be distributed to schools and libraries.



POLIO RECONSTRUCTIVE SURGERY PROJECT

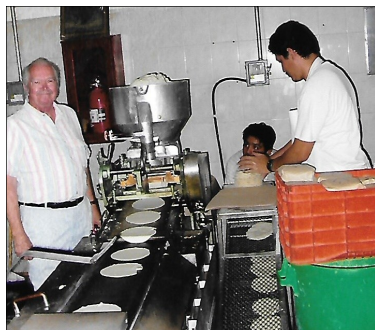
For those who were not so fortunate to receive the polio inoculation and who contracted polio, a polio reconstructive surgery camp was initiated between the Rotary Club of Mumbai Ghatkopar, the Rotary Club of Topeka and the Rotary International Matching Grant Project. Our club raised \$10,000 and was matched with another \$12,000 by the RI Foundation. As a result of these surgeries, which straightened limbs and made fitting of calipers possible, many polio victims were able to return to a productive life. Rotarians Ryan Hudspeth and J. D. Lakhani visited and participated in the project.



SUPER TORTILLA PROJECT

By Stan Teeter

Planning for the Super Tortilla project started in 2000 and the district received a matching grant in 2002. The feeding of children began in late 2003. Topeka Rotary was the major donor to this project. The object of the project, was to alleviate malnutrition in Mexican children. A similar project by the Mexican government including educational and financial incentives and a nutritional supplement was not successful because it was not a part of the culture and required a change of eating habits and thus compliance was not achieved. The Super Tortilla project made their traditional food complete and balanced nutrition for children. No change in eating habit was required. Success was documented by the positive differences in scientific measurements of growth and blood values. When I visited the project in Mexico the best subjective evaluation came from the mothers saying that their children were bright eyed, energetic and slept better.



PANAMA HEALTH FAIRS AND CLEAN WATER PROJECTS

In the early 2000s Larry and Lois Dimmitt, and later Scott Teeter in 2007, went with others from our District to western Panama to assist American and local doctors with "health fairs." These events involved several thousand natives from western Panama coming

to a designated town to receive health care in a *single day*. Thereafter, it was decided that there should be week-long health clinics—replacing the one-day health fairs. In 2008 Larry Dimmitt and Dick Meidinger joined a team from our District to conduct a week-long medical clinic among natives who lived in the mountains and seasonally worked on coffee plantations. This proved beneficial, but since many of the health problems they encountered were caused by water-borne diseases, they developed the idea of installing water filters in the area so there could be clean water. This idea was carried out by a team that went to Panama in 2010 to install water filters. Dick Meidinger was also on that team. A year later, another team went to install water filters, this team including Rehan Reza and David Beck from our club.



BANGLADESH DEEP WATER WELLS PROJECT

Our club has sponsored several grants which have paid for the installation of some 30 deep water wells in Bangladesh. The deep wells are needed there due to the high degree of arsenic in the subsoil. Rehan Reza was involved with this project and has visited a number of these well sites.



SAN JOSE DE DAVID, PANAMA MEDICAL EQUIPMENT PROJECT

By Larry Dimmitt

Our club cooperated with several clubs in the District to send used medical equipment to the town of David in western Panama. We did it two different years, 2003-4. We sent a 40 foot container of equipment each year to David. We collected used equipment and surplus supplies from Stormont Vail, St. Francis, Knolls Medical Supply, Munn's Medical Supply and the Lawrence Medical Center. Cappers donated several wheel chairs. Eight to ten members of our club, along with other Topeka Rotarians and some from Lawrence, loaded up the equipment, which we stored in a warehouse at Forbes donated for our use by Payless Shoes.

The equipment and supplies were delivered to Panama prior to the arrival of a team from Kansas which traveled to Panama for a health fair in 2004. The team was able to visit local hospitals in David and see where the equipment had been delivered, including the wheel chairs from Cappers.

At the health fair, several Rotarians from our district, including Lois and Larry Dimmitt, assisted doctors and dentists from our district and from Panama in treating and advising several thousand local inhabitants in western Panama. Later, Dr. Dick Meidinger and Larry traveled to David, with other Rotarians from our district, to participate in a week-long health clinic.



Loading Hospital Equipment at Forbes in 2004



BANGLADESH AMBULANCE

The Narayangong Diabetic Hospital in Narayangong, Bangladesh, the home city of club member Rehan Reza, began using its new ambulance on May 11, 2009 thanks to the efforts initiated by Rehan Reza and Past District Governor Larry Dimmitt. A total of \$25,000 was collected from the Rotary Club of Topeka, Rotary District 5710, the Rotary International Humanitarian Grants Program, Ashraf Sufi, a Topeka gastroenterologist and president of the Islamic Medical Association of North America, and the Rotary Club of Narayanganj, Bangladesh. Rehan remembered the day 10 years earlier when his father died in a private car on the way to the hospital, a trip that can take up to three hours, because there was no ambulance to transport, treat and stabilize him.



"Thousands of people died because they had no ambulance," Rehan said. The ambulance is now saving the lives of people who before would have fallen victim, just as Rehan's father did.

VOCATIONAL TRAINING TEAM (VTT)

The VTT (Vocational Training Team) from Australia was a departure from the standard GSE team composition by requiring all team members to be of the same profession. The Australian team specialized in renewable energy industries and visited energy related businesses and industries in Kansas.

The original Group Study Exchange Program which started in 1965 has offered many thousands of Rotarian the opportunity to be team leaders, and non-Rotarians the opportunity to be team members. Team members visit foreign countries and have the chance to form a better understanding and appreciation for other cultures in a very enjoyable manner. Our club has hosted as many as 20 GSE team since the mid-70's. Three of our club members; Roy Browning, Phil Coolidge, and Ken Groteweil led trips to Sweden, Japan, and Senegal respectively.

RUSSIAN VISITORS

By Hurst Coffman

I was President of the Topeka Rotary Club in 1991-1992. The Soviet Union had collapsed in 1989 and for the first time in many years Rotary was reestablished in the former Soviet bloc countries. The President of the West Club, Don Moses, and South Club, Stuart Douthett, and I decided we should have a project for our three clubs. We settled on the idea of bringing a new Rotarian from one of those former Soviet countries to visit Topeka. Somehow we contacted the new Rotary Club of Prague, Czech Republic, and found a member named Jarislow "Jerry" Jandos (pronounced Yan-dosh). He was an economics professor at the University of Prague. We raised money among our members and paid for Jerry to visit Topeka for two weeks in March, 1992. It was a great international experience for him and for us. He stayed with Rotarian families, most memorably Webb and Julie Garlinghouse. When he stayed with Don and Shirley Moses he was introduced to their Lhasa Apso named "Boo" and at first was apprehensive but they became real buddies. Joan Wagnon was in the Kansas Legislature at the time and arranged for Jerry to visit the State House chambers and meet Governor Joan Finney. He visited companies headed by Rotarians such as Hill's Pet Nutrition, Western Resources, and Capitol Federal. One highlight for him was visiting our family farm where my mother drove him around in a pickup truck to look at her cattle (he said he had met a real American cowgirl!). One night we went to the Free State Brewery in Lawrence, which reminded him of Prague beer halls.



L to R: Hurst Coffman, Jarislow "Jerry" Jandos, Stuart Douthett, Past District Governor Don Moses and Past District Governor John Hollyman

FRANCINE HINES INTERNATIONAL STUDENT MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIPS

By Gordon Lansford

Francine Hines was an exemplary, and longtime, Rotarian in Topeka before she passed away in 2006. Originally from Belgium, she arrived in Topeka in 1946 to marry the soldier she met in Belgium during World War II, and later become a U.S. Citizen in 1952. She was a strong believer in quality education, in the United States, and in freedom. To hear her speak of the students and their accomplishments was a delight; always succinct and eloquent in her French-laden English. Francine was the epitome of a true Rotarian!

For many years she was in charge of selecting deserving international students from Washburn University to receive scholarships funded by Downtown Topeka Rotary. Following her death Dick Knoll suggested to the club that the students she so admired be recognized as recipients of scholarships in her memory. The Board of Directors agreed and our scholarship program was renamed in her memory. It is hard to estimate how many students have been helped by Francine, and in her memory, but it is hundreds.



Francine Hines, Center Front

Francine was "one of a kind"; a tribute to what Rotary can accomplish through its' members. To quote the Topeka Capital Journal Editorial Board, *"The message of her life is that with style, grace, intelligence, education and perseverance, even a woman who never lost her French accent can achieve greatness in Kansas."* We all miss her!

HOW TOPEKA HAS CHANGED OVER THE PAST 50 YEARS

By Doug Wallace

As an example, Topeka's then two largest banks, 1st National and Merchants National, both changed hands numerous times—the old Mulvane (a prominent early Topeka family) bank—1st National—becoming Bank IV then Boatman's Bank and finally part of the conglomerate that is Bank of America (it at least kept the sign company busy changing its title atop the 17-story bank tower, which, of course, it no longer occupies).

Possibly the biggest shock came with the consolidation of America's Class 1 railroads in the 1990s with the merger of Santa Fe and the Burlington Northern into BNSF (1996). Though long off its main line, Topeka nevertheless held a special place in the line's history. True, the Shops still play a major role, but now there is a sense everything pales in contrast to the glory days of the early 1900s.

Besides changing economic conditions, which would affect any community, three “psychological blows” contributed to a sense malaise perceived by some: 1) The 1966 tornado struck at the heart of city, especially Washburn University which would now have to spend resources on recovery. Total cost to the city was estimated at \$100 million (over \$677 million in today's dollars), not something one can get over quickly or easily. 2) The 1973 closing of Forbes AFB which had brought in a continuous influx of people, many of whom stayed, and 3) The 2003 move of Menninger's to Houston which was something of an intellectual blow to the capital city. Each of these events brought new dilemmas. Should Washburn be a traditional university or cater instead to the non-traditional student? What to do with expansive Forbes Field, and is Topeka viable to have airline service with KCI only an hour away? Finally, did Topeka lose something with the Menninger move that had made it unique and not just another country town with a capitol? Certainly a quarter century of little or no population growth for city and county pointed in that direction.

All seemingly so “doom and gloom;” however, the new millennium also saw bright, positive things for the Kansas capital. These include new manufacturers and

distribution warehouses: e.g., Mars Candy, Home Depot, and Target. Next, an “incubator for entrepreneurs”—712 Innovations—opened downtown providing the tools for new ideas, supported by institutions like Washburn University and Washburn Tech (the old Kaw Valley Tech School). Along with these developments, downtown lost in the doldrums for decades is being renovated and spruced-up. And Menninger's may be gone, but the two hospital complexes—Stormont-Vail and St. Francis—offer the latest in health care, in an ever improving environment.

Perhaps few things are as striking as the city's cultural renaissance. The list goes on and on but features: the Kansas Statehouse's restoration; creation of a North Topeka Arts District—NOTO—a business area once moribund but now regularly bustling with activities; new performing arts companies like Ad Astra and Arts Inc.; an important set of murals—“A History of the Written Word”—created for and donated to Topeka High School's Woodward Library; the fact that for two of the last three years (2012-14), the Highland Park H.S. Theatre Dept. has been invited to perform at the Edinburgh Festival thus giving the capital city international attention; private restoration of Hiram Price Dillon's town mansion after years of neglect by the State; and so forth. While some people still moan and complain (and always will), other Topekans in the 21st century are doing something—many of them Rotarians!

ROTARY LOOKING FORWARD

It is obvious from the preceding pages that over the past 100 years our club has been very actively involved in all phases of the Rotary Avenues of Service. Recently, The Rotary Foundation introduced a new model for providing service—The Six Areas of Focus—Peace and Conflict Resolution, Fighting Disease, Water and Sanitation, Maternal and Child Health, Basic Education and Literacy, and Economic and Community Development.

Going forward, the Rotary Club of Downtown Topeka will continue to face the challenges of reaching out to our local community and the world with the Four-Way Test as our guide, in the pursuit of fulfilling the intent of our motto—*Service Above Self*.

