



Rotary 1948-1956

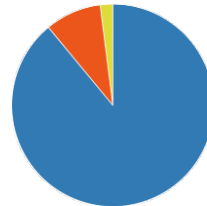
In 1948, the Greater Milwaukee Committee began operating formally with 16 Rotarians as charter members. RCM, which boasted a membership of 341, moved its offices to the Astor Hotel.

The club celebrated its 35th anniversary with founding member Billy Zimmers recalling the menu at the first luncheon. General Douglas MacArthur, who lived in Milwaukee for a few months in 1897, wrote to accept the club's honorary membership from his fellow townsmen.

During the early 1950s, Rotarians took leadership positions with the zoo, United Way, Better Business Bureau and other organizations.

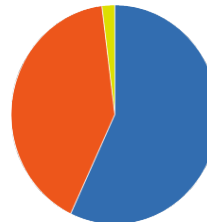
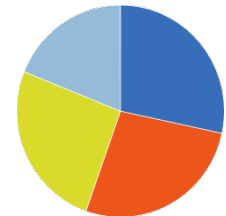
Cliff Randall, a past Rotary president and president of the Greater Milwaukee Committee, is credited with bringing Major League Baseball to the city when the Braves arrived from Boston in 1953.

In 1955, the club conducted a comprehensive survey of members to honor the occasion. The results:



88.92% Republicans
9.32% Independents
1.76% Democrats
0% Socialists

21% own a Cadillac
20% own a Buick
19% own an Oldsmobile
14% own a Ford



57% earn a fair salary
41% are underpaid
2% are overpaid

The survey report ended with "Can't help but wonder what our grandchildren will say 50 years from now when they compare Mr. Milwaukee Rotarian of 2005 with us."

In honor of Rotary International's 50th anniversary in 1955, RCM donated \$12,500 for construction of a winter cabin at the Boy Scout camp.



In 1954, Rotarian Otto R. Kuehn (left) reviews a planning model of the Zoo's new larger quarters. (The Zoo moved in 1958).

Photo courtesy of the Zoological Society.



The Rotary Boy Scout Cabin today.

Photo by Kevin Haass.

Seven hundred Rotarians and their guests attended the first opening day in Milwaukee, taking charter buses from the Astor Hotel. The Braves reached 1,826,397 in attendance, setting a National League record.

During this era, Rotarians enjoyed great programs such as:

- A special 1948 luncheon address on "Observations of a Chaplain at the Nuremberg Trials" featured the spiritual counselor to 21 Nazis in the days leading to their executions.

Milwaukee and the World 1948-1956

By 1948, racial segregation ended in the armed forces, the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the Congressional Committee on Un-American Activities began televised hearings.

In 1948, George Orwell's book "1984" was published. It was the first year no lynching of African Americans took place in the country, and the first western, "Hopalong Cassidy," aired on NBC.

In 1950, the first credit card, Diner's Club, was used in the country. Gen. MacArthur threatened to use nuclear weapons in Korea. Harold Vincent, an active Rotarian, became Superintendent of Milwaukee Public Schools. He built 44 new schools in the 1950s and 1960s to accommodate post-war demographics.

By 1951, Gen. MacArthur returned to Milwaukee for a parade after a 54-year absence. The Marshall Plan expired after \$13 billion in aid to Europe, and direct long-distance calling began.



Jonas Salk

In 1952, there were 58,000 cases of polio registered in the country with 3,145 deaths and 21,760 people left with some paralysis from the disease. By 1953, Jonas Salk announced a polio vaccine and a year later, mass vaccination against polio began. The FDA fully approved the vaccine in 1955.

The first color television sets were available for \$1,175 and 71% of the sets in the country were tuned to "I Love Lucy" as Lucy gave birth to her child.

In 1954, the Dow Jones passed the 1929 level for the first time, the transistor radio began to be sold commercially, and Edward R. Murrow produced a documentary on Republican U.S. Senator Joseph McCarthy, of Wisconsin.

The year 1955 brought the opening of Disneyland and the Montgomery bus boycott. In 1956, Elvis Presley reached the music charts for the first time, the interstate highway system was created, and IBM invented the hard disk drive.

- James Cash Penney, the founder of J.C. Penney, addressed a luncheon on Looking Forward; he had a perfect Rotary attendance record since joining the New York Club in 1942.
- In 1951, Illinois Senator Everett Dirksen addressed the Club, indicating the United States was in the same state of decline as the British Empire ten years earlier.
- In 1952, a special luncheon program on the conflict between President Truman and General MacArthur took place.
- Mayor Frank Zeidler spoke on his experience as an observer of atomic bomb testing in Nevada and its implications for defending Milwaukee.
- A Senator from Utah spoke on the dangers of Federal taxation now totaling \$9.8 billion annually with a \$260 billion Federal debt.
- In 1953, William F. Buckley, Jr. spoke about moral laxity and mental inertia as constraints to United States recovery from the New Deal.



Jesse Owens

- Olympian Jesse Owens received a standing ovation when he spoke as Secretary of the Illinois Athletic Commission.
- The editor of the New York Times spoke in 1954 on Freedom of the Press.

- A special luncheon focused on the likelihood of global warming in the future.
- Mayor Zeidler addressed Rotary as the Milwaukee budget reached \$100 million for the first time in 1955 with suburbanization straining services; in the preceding seven years, the Milwaukee footprint had grown from 46 to 70 square miles.
- The prominent author and radio colleague of Edward R. Murrow, William L. Shirer, discussed "The World Today" at a luncheon with the assessment in 1956 that the United States was losing the Cold War. Later in his career, he wrote The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich.

Created by Bill Durkin, edited by Mary Bolich

Bill Durkin, President of Durkin & Associates, was a member of the Rotary Club of Milwaukee from 2000 through his passing in the spring of 2021. Bill, who was instrumental in the development of MKE Urban Stables, was actively engaged in the Club's Centennial Anniversary celebration in 2013. An avid student of history, Bill created this history of the Club set in the context of key events occurring in the City, the State and the World.

Mary Bolich, a Principal with Red Rabbit Creative, joined Rotary in 2019. Mary has an extensive background in creative writing, journalism and editing working for organizations such as Kohler, Kohl's and the U.S. Navy. She is the volunteer coordinator of the Rotary Club of Milwaukee's People of Action profile series.