



## Rotary 1957-1965

In 1957, Rotary moved to the newly completed Milwaukee County War Memorial building, which featured a \$50,000 mosaic on its façade. Consisting of five tons of marble with 1,440,000 pieces over 18,000 square feet in 197 colors, the mosaic was the largest art project in Wisconsin history.



*The mosaic adorning the front of the War Memorial Center*

The year 1958 is distinguished by the election of Milwaukee's Clifford A. Randall as President of Rotary International. In his first six months in office, Randall visited 16 countries. That same year, several Rotarians accepted leadership roles in the campaign to construct the Performing Arts Center.



*Cliff Randall with international Rotarians during his year as RI President*

In the early 1960s, RCM made contributions to start the Music for Youth program and the Rotary Low Vision Clinic and Curative Workshop.

In 1965, club members with businesses enjoying global expansion funded the International Student Center on Prospect Ave. in Milwaukee. That year, members enjoyed a private tour of the new Milwaukee Public Museum and dubbed the Streets of Old Milwaukee as their favorite exhibit.

During this era, Rotarians enjoyed great programs such as:

- In 1957, representatives of the Milwaukee Art Center presented plans to increase their annual budget from \$100,000 to \$250,000 and to double the art purchase budget to \$60,000.
- In 1958, William Randolph Hearst spoke on "Russia Revisited" after the launch of Sputnik.
- Rotarian Elmer Winter, founder of Manpower, spoke on recovery progress in Europe after his 7-week tour.
- Harry Bradley of Allen-Bradley sponsored a series of luncheons on Communism.
- In 1959, a reporter for the *Milwaukee Journal* spoke on his firsthand experiences covering the Cuban Revolution.

• When Governor Gaylord Nelson addressed the club in 1960, it was noted members were unable to identify Democrats to sit with him; instead, the most recently admitted members were placed at his table.



*Gaylord Nelson*

- In 1961, several luncheon programs were dedicated to sharp criticism of President Kennedy and his New Frontier programs.
- Films were shown to profile the extent of damage that would occur if the country were attacked by the Soviet Union.
- In 1962, Rotarians were told about plans to reduce welfare rolls by teaching people skills; at the time, one-third of Milwaukee County's \$95 million budget was designated for supporting 40,000 welfare recipients, or 4% of the population.
- In 1963, a UW-Milwaukee professor warned about a brain drain to both coasts and the southwest due to huge government defense contracts. That same year, the UW-Milwaukee chancellor discussed the impact of emerging expectations that most of the population would pursue a college education.
- A 1964 luncheon recognized that business competition is no longer national but international.

- Club members received predictions in 1965 from the President of Beloit College about sweeping changes in higher education; as more federal money became available, the curriculum would be modernized to accommodate a more diverse base of students.

## Milwaukee and the World 1957-1965

In 1957, the first electric watch became available, the 22-year-old Elvis Presley bought Graceland, and President Dwight D. Eisenhower sent federal troops to Little Rock to escort African American students into a white high school. A U.S. government report called for additional missiles and fallout shelters. By 1962, Milwaukee had 400 public fallout shelters storing 1,000 tons of disaster supplies.

In 1958, the S.S. Edmund Fitzgerald was launched as the world's largest lake freighter and Pope John XIII became the 261st pope. For the first time, more passengers crossed the ocean by air than by sea.



*The S.S. Edmund Fitzgerald*

In 1959, the St. Lawrence Seaway opened for shipping. By 1961, Milwaukee's port managed 686,000 tons compared to 67,000 tons prior to the seaway. Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim Museum opened a few months after his death. The first human with HIV died in the Congo.

The year 1960 brought change everywhere. Since the end of WWII, Milwaukee absorbed 327,000 new housing units. In North Carolina, four African American college students were refused service at a Woolworth's lunch counter, triggering similar resistance actions throughout the country. Six months later, the students were served lunch. U-2 pilot Frances Gary Powers was shot down as a CIA agent flying over the Soviet Union. John Kennedy defeated Richard Nixon for president.

In 1961, the Berlin Wall was constructed. President Kennedy delivered the first live press conference, and Barack Obama was born. The Marine Bank building, now Chase Tower, became the first new construction downtown since before the start of the Great Depression. It was designed by the architect of the United Nations building in New York.



*Construction of the Marine Bank building  
From the Milwaukee Public Library Historic Photo Collection*

By 1963, Coca-Cola introduced Tab as the first diet soda, push-button phones were first available and zip codes made their first appearance. Martin Luther King Jr. delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech, Kennedy his "Ich Bin Ein Berliner" speech, and Kennedy was assassinated in November of that year.

In 1965, Tokyo surpassed New York City as the world's largest city, Winston Churchill's funeral attracted the largest assembly of statesmen in history, and President Lyndon Johnson announced the Great Society program in his State of the Union speech. The first combat troops were sent to Vietnam; Medicare and Medicaid came into existence, and the Watts riots in California took place just weeks after the Voting Rights Act passed.

### 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.