



Rotary 1984-1992

In 1985, the Polio eradication campaign was launched as the largest private-sector health initiative in history. RCM member Bill Jermain oversaw the District 6270 drive with a goal of \$800,000. The drive started in 1987 and by the middle of 1988, the district pledged more than \$1,600,000, doubling the original goal.



A child in India receives the polio vaccine

In California in 1986, a court of law ruled against Rotary International for terminating the membership of a club that admitted three women. In 1987, following Supreme Court affirmation of the California court decision, RCM admitted its first three women members: Sister Camille Kliebahn, Gwen McLean and Jean McKey.

In 1988, the club's former presidents founded the Flickering Candle Society, "dedicated to the cause of preserving the status quo."



Children's Health Education Center

The 1990s began with RCM committing \$500,000 toward the projected \$4.7 million cost for the new Health Education Center with expectations of 200,000 visitors annually.

In 1992, the Club ranked 28th worldwide in membership, with a roster of 425. At \$6.95, it ranked lowest in lunch costs among major clubs, compared with \$26 in New York City.

During this era, Rotarians enjoyed great programs:

- 400 members and their families attended the newly revitalized Great Circus Parade as a group.
- The CEO of Allen-Bradley explained "computer-integrated manufacturing."
- The editor of the Milwaukee Journal vowed to keep it a great newspaper.
- In 1986, President of Marquette University Rev. John Raynor, S.J. addressed the club.
- Dave Kahler, the Bradley Center architect, discussed Jane Bradley Pettit's \$75 million gift to the community.
- The club heard from Pat Richter and Barry Alvarez in 1990 about plans to turn the University of Wisconsin football program around.
- The CEO of Midwest Express Airlines discussed rapid expansion with growth from 5 to 17 airplanes.
- Senator Robert Kasten discussed the status of Iraq and Saddam Hussein, along with the importance of getting government regulators out of the way of business.
- In 1991, the CEO of Blue Cross spoke on imminent changes in national health policies.
- 1992 concluded with a debate between U.S. Sen. Kasten and state Sen Russ Feingold. In a straw poll, Kasten received 86% of the votes and President Bush received 77%. Actual results were quite different, as President Clinton and Feingold were both elected.



RCM's first women members: Jean McKey, Gwen McLean and Sister Camille

Milwaukee and the World 1984-1992

By 1984, the Global Positioning System was made available for civilian use, Martin Luther King Day became a federal holiday and Chrysler began production of the first minivan. In 1984, Macintosh Apple computer debuted and crack, the form of cocaine that could be smoked first appeared.

In 1985, Microsoft released its first version of Windows, DNA was first used in a criminal case, Mikhail Gorbachev became leader of the Soviet Union, the wreck of RMS Titanic was located, and a Midwest Express Airlines plane crashed on takeoff from Milwaukee's airport.

In 1986, plans for building a tunnel connecting England and France were announced, the space shuttle Challenger disintegrated with a teacher on board, and the Chernobyl disaster claimed 4,000 lives. For the first time, per-capita income in Japan exceeded that of the United States.



*John Norquist
From the Milwaukee Public
Library Historic Photo Collection*

Milwaukee was changing visibly by 1988. John Norquist was elected mayor, Dave Schultz became county executive and at \$732 million, the county operating budget exceeded the city of Milwaukee's for the first time.

Nationally, the first George Bush was elected president, indictments were filed in the Iran-Contra affair, and Soviet troops began to withdraw from Afghanistan after nine years. The first computer virus, the Worm, appeared and the first commercial email system was used.

The 1980s closed with the wave of revolutions that swept Eastern Europe, signaling the beginning of the post-Cold War era. The World Wide Web was conceived in 1989 and the first text message was sent.

The massacre at Tiananmen Square took place as the decade closed.



Nelson Mandela walks free from prison in 1990

In 1990, Germany was reunited, Nelson Mandela was released from prison, and the stock market crash in Japan marked the start of what is popularly called the Lost Decade. The United States and Soviet Union agreed to end production of chemical weapons. The World Health Organization removed homosexuality from its list of diseases, beginning a slow change in public acceptance. Also in 1990, the first webpage was created and the first McDonald's opened in China.

In 1991, the Gulf War started and ended and the Soviet Union dissolved, bringing an end to the 45-year Cold War.

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.