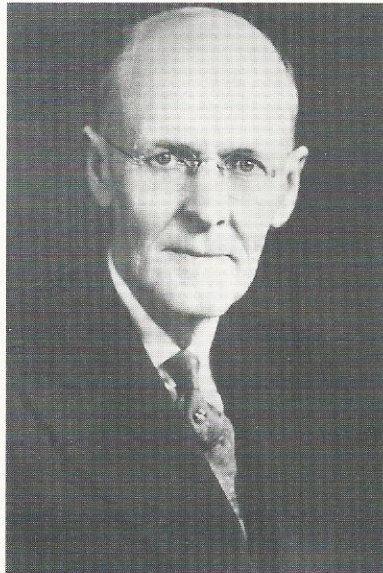


Our Rotary Story

by Don L. Taylor

Rotary International is a Wisconsin Idea!

Our founder, Paul P. Harris, was born in Racine on April 19, 1868. Unfortunately, he was soon taken to Vermont to be raised by his



Paul P. Harris
Founder of Rotary

grandparents, and he earned his law degree at the University of Iowa. Eventually he ended up in Chicago where he finally started the first Rotary Club in 1905, but there is no doubt that the concept of Rotary was born in baby Paul's brain while he was still a Badger.

The six original members of his new club had gone to Chicago to seek their fortunes but they were lonely and missed their home towns. They found friendship with each other. Harris called them 'Rotarians' because they rotated occasional meetings in their offices.

Silvester Schiele, a coal dealer, was chosen as the first president, and the membership grew so rapidly that before long they began holding weekly luncheon meetings.

It took three years before the second Rotary Club was organized, in San Francisco, but by 1911 the idea had spread across the border with a club in Canada.

Rotary reached Waukesha in late 1920 when Paul 'Tiny' Ferris gathered fifteen men under the sponsorship of the Milwaukee Club.



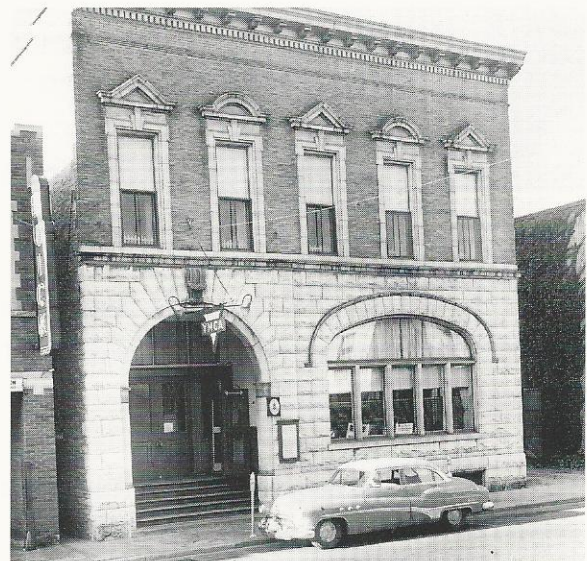
Paul 'Tiny' Ferris
Our Founder

Under Tiny's leadership, the group immediately launched into community service by rejuvenating the dilapidated YMCA building at 257 South Street which had been vacated by the moribund organization in 1909. The new Rotarians held their charter night meeting there early in 1921 with twenty five members and a full house of well-wishers including many Rotarians from Milwaukee.

Although Tiny Ferris never chose to be president, he continued to be the driving force of the Waukesha Rotary Club as its secretary for several years. He arranged many of the programs and prepared most of the meals the first year until Ethel Burgess was hired as a caterer.

When I joined Rotary in 1955 several of the charter members were still around. I remember when Tiny Ferris drove his Buick into the fresh concrete of Barstow Street, getting hopelessly mired!

It was not enough to clean up the YMCA building. At that very first meeting, the new Rotarians decided to renew the YMCA organization too. In June they hired Earl 'Ole' Lockman as its manager, and since then countless thousands of men and boys have benefited from its programs.



The Old YMCA Building
Our First Meeting Place, 1921-1928



Rotary Hall at Phantom Lake Camp

The YMCA has remained close to our hearts; in 1971-1973 we led the finance drive to replace their burned-down dining lodge with Rotary Hall, the first winterized building at their Phantom Lake Camp near Mukwonago.

James B. Crouch, a schoolbook salesman for Scott, Foresman & Co., was a fun-loving charter member who won a waltzing contest at our first District Conference in Fargo, North Dakota, in April 1921. Our first president, Fred Strong, presented him with a bouquet of paper roses. Jim took his Rotary membership seriously, however. The next year he was our first representative to a Rotary International Convention, held in Los Angeles. He became our second president in 1923, and was elected District Governor at the 1926 District Conference in La Crosse. In 1944, 'J.B.' was elected to the very first Board of Directors of the Waukesha State Bank. I remember him as a dignified but friendly gentleman.

Our club has enjoyed its singing beginning with Tiny Ferris as song leader and featuring Curt Callow, Russ Oakes, Ole Lockman, and C.C 'Doc' Edmonson as a renowned quartet. Other noted song leaders through the years have included Tony Olinger, George Pace, Russ Schuetze, and Frank Hedgcock.



James B. Crouch
Our First District Governor

In the summer of 1928 our club moved from the old YMCA Building to the newly-built Avalon Hotel where we held our Monday noon meetings for the next forty years.

The 75¢ price per meal dropped to 35¢ during the Great Depression, but bounced back to 80¢ by the end of World War II. We were paying \$2 when the hotel closed in 1968. Today, after sixty years of inflation, the meal price has climbed to \$9, an increase of nearly 2,500% from 1932.



**The Avalon Hotel
Our Second Meeting Place, 1928-1968**

My father, Carl Taylor, had wanted to join Rotary when he founded the Waukesha State Bank in 1944, but his application was blackballed. Rotary allows only one member from each occupation, and the 'Banking' classification was already filled. Nevertheless, we believed my father was rejected because he had come from Milwaukee and started his bank in competition with the venerable Waukesha National Bank. Stung by the rejection, Dad joined the Waukesha Kiwanis Club.

Fortunately, our bank's vice president, John Davies Jr., came from an old-time Waukesha family. He was admitted as a Rotarian in 1952 and he soon pulled me in, too. Remembering my father's snub, in 1973 I sponsored my competitor, Tom Loew, president of the Marine Bank when it opened in Waukesha.

Waukesha's many mineral springs were already history when our Rotary Club was chartered in 1921, and the city was well into the age of business and industry. Our Rotary club was created by businessmen. Waukesha County, however, had a nationwide reputation for dairy farming. Cattle outnumbered people here in 'Cow County USA' until mid-century, but among our charter members only one, William L. Baird, a nationally recognized cattle breeder, represented agriculture.



Got Milk?

Rotarian John Davies Jr. (right) Toasts Farmers in 1963

To salute our non-member farm friends, from the beginning of our club's life we invited them as our luncheon guests during the week of the local Dairy Show in June. The dairy industry declined during the 1950s and 1960s and our Farm Day ended along with the Dairy Show.

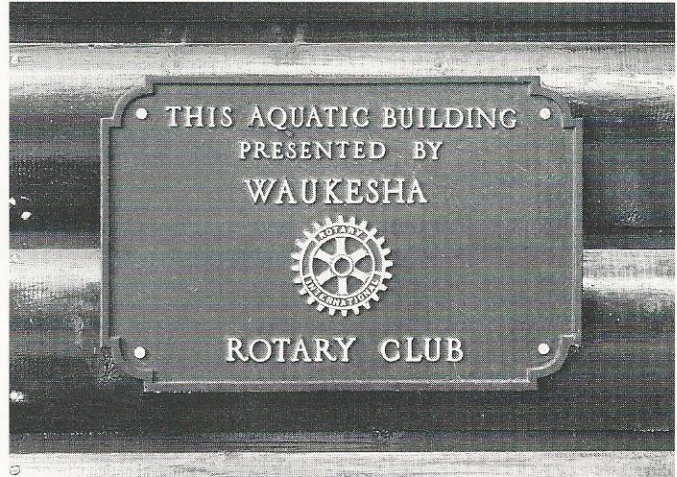


Our Annual FFA Auction in 1950

Auctioneer Martin Fromm, Rotarians Fred Rode and Owen Rowlands, and FFA president Al Basse

Another farm program was the annual auction beginning in 1947 where high school members of the Future Farmers of America brought their farm products, mostly dressed poultry and a few fresh cuts of meat, for sale.

Soon after our club's formation in 1921, we created a Youth Committee to coordinate our civic activities such as sending boys and girls to camp, sponsoring athletic teams, and awarding academic scholarships. In 1925 we studied the Boy Scout program and were instrumental in forming the Potawatomi Area Boy Scout Council and hiring a Scout executive. We contributed toward the purchase of Camp Long Lake in 1945, and in 1967 we paid for a new Aquatic Building at the camp. Through the years we have supplied a variety of camp equipment and sponsored several Boy Scout troops.



Boy Scout Camp at Long Lake, 1967

To help raise money for our civic activities, we held a Community Rummage Auction in the Stock Pavilion annually for three years starting in 1948. "What you don't want, WE DO!"



Rotary Wives Advertising the 1949 Rummage Auction

Gaze at the photo of these 'Rotary Anns' in aprons and caps on their way to the 1949 Auction. Were they actually called 'Cupcakes'?

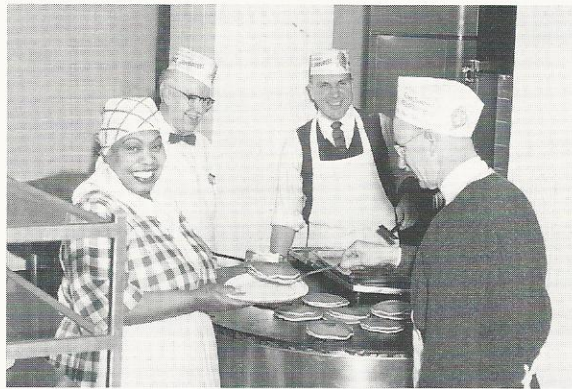
What would our modern Rotary women say to that!

The supply of rummage rapidly diminished, however, and soon we were searching for new revenue. The answer was a Pancake Festival, proposed by club president Tom Stine in 1951 and first held in 1955 in the cafeteria of Waukesha High School on Grand Avenue when Lloid Grout was president. As a new member, I sold advance tickets and mixed batter for the griddles.



Rotarian Charlie Williams Flips 'em in 1955

The annual Pancake Festival was an immediate and lasting success. In 1958 we moved to the larger cafeteria at Waukesha South High School. The next year,



Aunt Jemima with Rotarians Cliff Fritz, Bob Rowlands, and Joe Burk in 1959

to speed production, Al Hardy and Bill Green designed and built large rotating grills which are still in use.

In 1986 we moved the Festival from South High School to the county's Expo Center on Northview Road,

and the crowds followed. Pancakes have been a steady source through the years to fund a wide variety of worthwhile community organizations and activities. Our most recent Festival, on February 17th, 2001, under the chairmanship of Rotarian Bryan Van Deun, served 2,581 people and netted a typical \$17,500. As usual, I mixed the batter all morning – my 45th year on the job, having missed only two years while serving in the U.S. Army.

To maximize our financial strength, Bill Wolfe established the tax-exempt Waukesha Rotary Club Charitable Fund in 1963. Led by Rotarian Wayne Williams in recent years, it has been the vehicle to



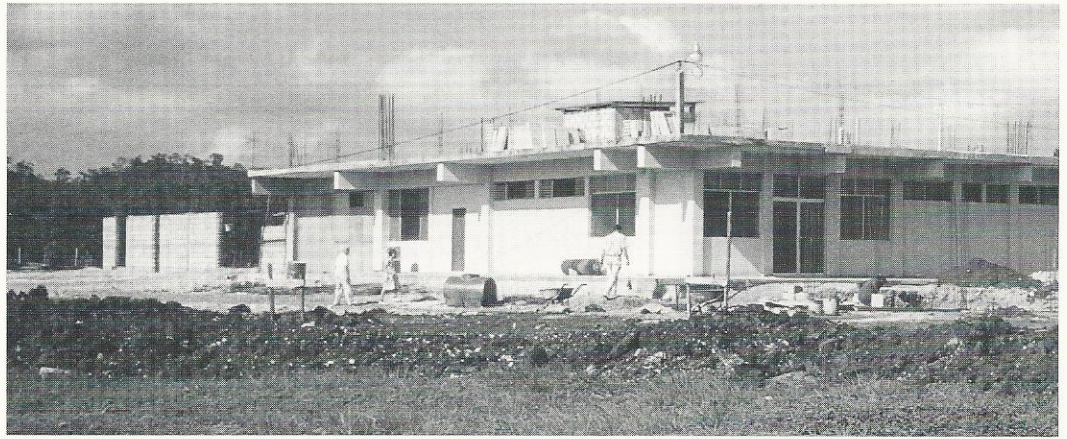
Sunshine School, Jamaica, in 2001

give hundreds of thousands of dollars to myriad local groups such as the YMCA, YWCA, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Waukesha Memorial Hospital, Junior League Baseball, American Field Service, Salvation Army, Christmas Clearing Council, Women's Center, Hebron House, La Casa de Esperanza, Waukesha County Food Pantry, Mental Health Association,

Waukesha Training Center, Project Literacy, Ethan Allen School for Boys, Haertel Field Tot Lot, First Call for Help, Parents Place, Womens Development Center, The Caring Place, Richard's Place, and Make-A-Wish Foundation. We have contributed scholarships for Waukesha's high schools and colleges. Internationally, we have supported Rotary's student exchange program and group study exchanges, Albanian Relief, books in Bolivia, clean water projects in India, Java, and the Philippines, a school in Jamaica and a hospital in Guatemala.



Commemorating our Clean Water Project in Java



Rotarian Steve Hammer's Guatemalan Hospital Nearing Completion in 2001

Our Rotarian Dr. Steve Hammer has moved to the Petén area of Guatemala with his family to build and staff a hospital. In addition to the financial support of our club and individual Rotarians, the hospital's well was paid for by Rotary International.

Lloid Grout was our president when I joined Rotary in 1955 and went on to serve as District Governor in 1966-1967. It had been a long forty years since Jim Crouch had held that job for us, and like Jim, Lloid was dedicated to Rotary to the depth of his heart. I knew him well for like Jim he too was a Director of our bank for many years. His shy smile was brightened by the sparkle in his eye. He operated his own auto supply business, National Parts Co. in Waukesha.

Lloid's son Jerry, my flying partner in a Cherokee airplane, was our club president in 1980-1981.



**Lloid Grout
Our Second District Governor**



Jack Mikula
Our Third District Governor

Jack Mikula, whose career was the distribution of natural gas, joined our club in 1957 and became one of our most dedicated members with decades of perfect attendance. He was club president in 1969-1970, and served as District Governor in 1974-1975 while I was club president.

Historically our club has fined individual members for their gaffes or their notable publicity. In 1981 club president Pat Buckley carried the idea to incredible heights by initiating a 'Creative Fining' program at Christmas. Members are encouraged to fine themselves, with or without recognition. For twenty-one years the program has raised up to ten thousand dollars annually for our Charitable Fund.

More recently, Pat developed our relationship to the nearby White Rock Elementary School. We have contributed keyboards and new encyclopedias in both English and Spanish, and the students frequently address us with brief speeches coached by Pat.



White Rock Students in 2000