

## **THE CHESTER ROTARY CLUB 1957 - 1982**

The history of the Chester Rotary Club goes back to the Saybrook Rotary Club which was the Hub Club serving the Towns of Westbrook, Saybrook, Essex, Deep River, and Chester. Each of these towns had a few members in the Saybrook Club, which met at the Pease House in Old Saybrook.

The Chester members, twenty-five years ago, were Stuart Joslyn (who served as President in 1945-46), Horace Bush (President in 1947-48), Harry Archambault and Stan Warner.

The Saybrook Club cleared the lines of communication between the leaders of the various towns and, contrary to Rotary's teaching, it resisted the development of the individual clubs in each town. Gradually, however, this feeling changed. Deep River and Essex formed individual clubs and they were soon followed by Chester.

It was on the Island of Sanibel, Florida, off the coast of Ft. Myers Beach, in January 1956 that Dave Lieberman and Robbie Collomore urged Harry Archambault to organize a Rotary Club in Chester. By the fall of 1956, Harry formed a committee with Stu, Bud and Stan to work up a list of prospective members. Meetings were held at the Cove Road Inn in November and it was agreed that a Rotary Club would be formed if the group were still together by January 1, 1957. And so it was that the group then became a provisional Rotary Club and shortly thereafter, it received its charter from Rotary International as a member club in District 798.

Charter night was held at the Ivoryton Hotel on April 10, 1957. There were about 400 people in attendance. Louis Thomas, who was serving as District Governor, presented the charter. Ted Wellman, who was president of the Saybrook Rotary Club, the sponsoring club, served as Master of Ceremonies and later became a member of the Chester Club.

The officers of the Chester Club were:

President	Harry Archambault
Vice-President	Archie T. Colvin
Secretary	Fred Van Name
Treasurer	Everett Brooks

Charter members were: Harry Archambault, Hamilton Bates Jr., Wells C. Bates, Abe Birnbaum, Everett M. Brooks, Horace S. Bush, Gus Calamari, Robert Collomore, Archie T. Colvin, James L. Grote, Harold Jones, David Jordan, Stuart Joslyn, Daniel Lattarulo, David Lieberman, D. Leonard Lieberman, Jr., Devereaux Martin, Elwood Myers, Ridge O'Sullivan, Meyer Pargman, Bill Sevigny, Morton Steinau, James Sypher, Domenick Tiezzi, Peter Tiezzi Sr., Fred Van Name, Stan Warner, Dan Zanardi and Donald Zito.

By the end of the first year of the Chester Club, there were thirty active members and their enthusiasm is attested to by an average monthly attendance of 88.66%, a figure surpassed only in 1959 and 1960.

Membership remained at about thirty until 1961 when under the presidency of Dave Lieberman, it reached thirty nine. The maximum membership of the club was reached in 1970 under the presidency of Jesse Lanzi when the Club had forty-four active and two past service members. In 1982, there were thirty-seven active members and two past service members.

Of the twenty five Presidents, Dave Lieberman also served as District Governor from 1968 to 1969. The Club has had four Paul Harris Fellows, Dr. Lieberman 1970, Warren Narducci 1977, Stuart Joslyn 1981 and Horace Bush 1981.

The Club has met at seven different restaurants. The first meetings were at the Cove Inn in Chester. This was followed by two restaurants in Haddam, the Silver Ball and the Pueblo House, the Gelston House in East Haddam in 1964, the Country Squire in Killingworth in 1968, the Griswold Inn in Essex in 1969 and finally the Chart House in Chester in 1976. A number of meetings were held with other clubs including Old Saybrook, Essex, Deep River, East Haddam and Clinton. In the summer months, the Club has been particularly fortunate in having the availability of the grounds of the Chrisholm Marina by the courtesy of Rotarian Lou Matz and the members have been enjoying the beautiful site on the banks of the Connecticut River in the warm summer evenings. Similarly, the Chester Rotarians are very much indebted to Rotarian Dave Joslow for the abundant hospitality of the Joslow Barn for the December Holiday season party as well as to the Archambaults, the Zitos, the Wheelers, the Sages and the Spires who also had Christmas festivities in their homes on various occasions. Over the years, the Club has also been indebted to the United Church and St. Joseph's Church for the use of their facilities from time to time. The Ladies Auxiliary of the United Church provided a number of suppers and the Girl Scouts have hosted the club in the Parish Center for the annual St. Patrick's Day corned beef dinners.

From its first days, the Chester Rotary Club has considered the distaff side to be an important part of the Rotary family. Rotarians wives have played an important part in rotary activities and have done considerable volunteer work for which too often little credit has been given. As a measure of appreciation, the Rotary schedule generally includes three or four "Ladies Nights" yearly.

Rotary Clubs are deeply involved in civic activities and from its inception Chester Rotarians have taken an active part in community service, International Service, Vocational Service as well as its own Club Service. All of these services have been reflected in the broad and varied list of speakers at rotary meetings: Business men, educators, lawyers, doctors, clergymen, members of the Armed Forces, holders of public office, writers, artists, craftsmen and foreign students. These speakers, both men and women, have brought to the meetings a sense of awareness and challenge of the problems, movements and forces affecting our current society, thereby enriching each Rotarian with a broader vision of community, national and international affairs.

Service in Rotary consists not only of talk but, more importantly, of action. Over its twenty five years, the Chester Club has instituted and carried out a number of projects designed to raise funds for community services. Since 1957, approximately \$40,000 has been raised by Chester Rotarians and contributed to over fifty different civic, educational, social and charitable groups. Among the larger contributions, the following are of note:

One of the first projects was the building of a children's library in the basement of the present library building. The cost was several thousand dollars which was a considerable sum for a new fledgling club but this project marked the beginning of the fund raising activities of the club for such purposes.

In 1980, the Rotary Bandstand on the Town Green was completed under the direction of Rotarian Robert Powell and it has since been in active use for concerts, Christmas parties, weddings and other occasions. The bandstand with its cost of over \$13,000 has been the largest single contribution of the Chester Rotary.

From its earliest years, the Club has been a staunch supporter of various summer camperships for teenagers and nearly \$4,000 has been contributed to these programs. An almost equal amount has been contributed to the Valley Y.M.C.A. including \$1,350 for the building fund and \$500 in 1975 for the flag pole in Westbrook.

The Little League and the Intermediate League have been among the activities supported by the Chester Club which provided approximately \$1,500 for a new field in 1970 generously built by Rudy Netsch. Likewise, over the years support has been given to the **Girl** Scouts, Boy Scouts and Brownies programs. Chester youth **has** also been helped through contributions for the school band uniforms and gym mats.

In the field of international service, the Club has made contributions to the Student Exchange Program and Chester Rotarians hosted students from abroad: Janet Lowe from England in 1968, Bjorn Muller from Sweden in 1969, Justin Akrofi from Ghana in 1970 and 1975 and Megre Motoko from Japan in 1971 and Liliana Burina from Argentina in 1970. The Chester Club also sponsored Chester students to various foreign countries. Nancy Tremalgia spent a year in Sweden, a group, which included Pat O'Sullivan and Carol Brogan spent three weeks in France, and one student went to Mexico.

Support for the Meeting House Restoration undertaken by the Chester Historical Society in 1972 was evidenced by a substantial rotary contribution to the building fund, to the cost of a piano and the installation of a glass enclosed billboard in front of the Meeting House in 1980.

Other groups to which the Chester Rotary made contributions in these years include the Chester Ambulance, the Middletown Hospital, the Chester Firehouse, the Park and Recreation Commission, Valley Regional High School, the Chester Library for the Children's corner, the American Field Service and the World Community Service.

The Club has also made significant contributions to Rotary International. As previously noted the Club has had four Paul Harris Fellows. Its contributions to Rotary Foundation of Rotary International have brought the Club to the 1900% plateau making it the fifth largest contributor among the 53 clubs of District 798.

The Rotarian ideal of personal involvement has also been the motivation for two special Chester programs. One of these is the annual Christmas visit to the local convalescent homes when the Rotarians gather around the carol singing and the giving of small presents to the guests at the homes. The other has taken the form of an annual dinner for the "old timers" meaning the townsmen who have reached the seventy mark and who are hosted at a special party in their honor. Personal involvement has also been

exemplified in welcoming exchange groups from other countries such as the Chester visit of six members of the Work Study Group from Queensland, Australia in 1975 when the Australians were given a tour of the lower River Valley prior to the District Conference held in Newport R.I. (at which the Chester Club was one of five host clubs). In 1978, three Chester Rotarians hosted five handicapped British visitors as part of the "Rotary Wheels" program of District 798.

Rotary has also been active in local projects designed to improve the town. The Club sponsored street poles and signs in the early 1960's. Some years later it undertook some research on old houses and supplied signs with names and dates. In 1981 individual rotarians volunteered their services in the painting of the three Chester flagpoles.

The fund raising projects of the Chester Club have been as varied as they have been interesting and always the occasion of good fellowship among the members. The principal project for the Club has become well known throughout the lower valley has been the annual lobster festival. The festival had its origins in the early days of the Club when clambakes were organized at Dr. Lieberman's summer home in Fenwood in Old Saybrook. Originally planned for Rotarians and their wives, they were soon enlarged to accommodate guests. In 1969 the concept was expanded to include the general public on a fund raising basis and the first Lobster Festival was held at the Pattaconk Yacht Club where it has taken place ever since with the exception of 1971 when it was held at the Elks Club in Westbrook. Volunteers drove to Falls River to bring back the lobsters and all the Rotarians pitched in so that the entire operation was carried out exclusively through Rotarian labor.

Another project which goes back to the early days of the Club is the soda sale at the Chester Fair in August. At first the Club sponsored bingo games but the project was turned into the sale of soda from a separate Rotary booth. Other fund raising projects held from time to time include dances held in 1965 at the Elementary School and in 1972, 1973 and 1974 at St. Joseph's Parish Center, auctions in 1972 and 1976 and a raffle in 1966 which did not prove to be very successful. In 1982 two new projects were undertaken; a mid-winter brunch held at the Chart House which was very well received and a spring shrubbery sale held on the Town Green.

Membership in Rotary involves the commitment to attend meetings with regularity. If attendance at a club meetings is impossible, the conscientious rotarian will make up at some neighboring club or in some other part of the country or, occasionally, some club abroad. Chester Club members have brought back the club banners of some seventy-five different clubs from every part of the United States and Canada as well as clubs located all over the globe from England and Germany to Africa, from Mexico to Argentina and from the Far East. The record for make ups is undoubtedly held by Stuart Joslyn whose record for perfect attendance over thirty years can be explained in part by the fact that he has made up in every state of the Union excepting Alaska

and North Dakota, attendance at two Rotary International Conventions at Hawaii in 1969 and Lausanne, Switzerland in 1973. Other notable attendance records are those of Warren Narducci, Dave and Len Lieberman, Everett Brooks, Jesse Lanzi, Archie Colvin and Charles Hayward. In addition to attending four Rotary

International conventions while a member of the Saybrook Club, Stuart and Tee went to the Hawaii meeting in 1969 with the Liebermans (Sr.), the Haywoods and the Colvins and to the 1973 meeting in Lausanne, Switzerland with the Liebermans and a large group from District 798 of whom some twenty or thirty return annually to the Chester Lobster Festival.

Each of the 900,000 and more Rotarians living in 156 different countries throughout the world received *The Rotarian* or its Spanish language edition *Revista Rotaria* covering a wide variety of subjects of universal interest. Each club, however, has its own bulletin and Chester has its *Barker*, so-called because at the time of the inception of the Chester Club, some of our friends in the lower river valley disparagingly referred to Chester as "dog town". Initially edited by Len Lieberman in 1957, it came out as a monthly publication and became a semimonthly in 1981.

The Chester Rotary Club has been a vibrant organization which has done much for our community and this in turn has enriched our members for in the words of St. Francis "It is in giving that we receive". As our first President, Harry Archambault, put it at the tenth anniversary party in 1968.

"I think Rotary has been good for Chester. It has furnished many of the leaders of the Town and it gives opportunity to these people to share their ideas with others across the table. I would certainly except that it will continue to provide and include the future leaders of our community".

May 22, 1982  
*Club Historian*

Edmund T. Delaney

## CHESTER ROTARY CLUB PRESIDENTS

Harry Archambault	1957 - 58
Archie T. Colvin	1958
Everett M. Brooks	1959
Herbert Hills	1960
Dr. David Lieberman	1961
James Sypher	1962
Donald Zito	1963
Morton Steinau	1964
Ridge O'Sullivan	1965
Arnold Watrous	1966
Frank Cadwell	1967
D. Leonard Lieberman, Jr.	1968
John Brogan	1969
Jesse Lanzi	1970
Daniel Zanardi	1971
Lou Matz	1972
Rudolph Netsch	1973
Edmund Delaney	1974
Robert Radicchi	1975
Bruce Watrous	1976
Paul Sage	1977
Clark Judge	1978
Richard Bickford	1979
Stephen Spires	1980
David Joslow	1981
Warren Narducci	1982

## IN MEMORIAM

Robbie Collomore  
Archie Colvin  
Nick Garbarino  
Henry Grzybala  
Charles Hayward  
David L. Lieberman  
Devereaux Martin  
Meyer Pargman  
Charles McKew Parr  
Gus Plettenberg  
Edwin Pratt  
Al Pross  
Fred Van Name  
Stan Warner  
Edward F. Wellman