

Club History

Dear Rotarians,

Allow me to present the fascinating history of our Rotary Club, which sheds light on our humble beginnings and the challenges we overcame.

I became a member of Rotary in 1979, marking the start of a 44-year journey. Initially, I joined Kowloon North and later transitioned to TST East in 1983. However, in mid-1986, I made the decision to resign from TST East and Rotary altogether. During this time, I was approached to become the Charter President of a new Club, which would eventually be named Kowloon Golden Mile.

In the Rotary year of 1986/87, my brother, Larry Parmanand, a Past President of the Rotary Club of Kowloon, was appointed as the District Governor's special representative for overseeing Club

Expansion and Extensions in District 3450.
This appointment was made by the then District Governor Gary Hung, who later became the RI President in the 2014/15 year.

Larry approached me to be the Charter President of the new club under the extension of the Rotary Club of Kowloon. Despite my love and passion for Rotary, I hesitated to accept the appointment due to several obstacles. Firstly, I was no longer a Rotarian, and secondly, I was not a member of the Kowloon Club. Normally, the Charter President should come from the sponsoring club, which, in this case, was the Kowloon Club.

To overcome these hurdles, PP Larry sought the advice of distinguished Rotarians such as PDG Peter Hall, DGE Raymond Wong, and DG Gary Hung. Fortunately, they all gave their approval for the formation of the new club, regardless of my non-Rotarian status and non-membership in the sponsoring club.

From November 17, 1986, onward, we held preliminary meetings as a provisional Rotary Club. Larry and I invited friends and reached out to company heads, inviting them to visit and attend what would soon become a new Rotary Club in the heart of Kowloon's business district. During these meetings, I presided over discussions on the ideals of Rotary and the expectations of members. While I had extensive knowledge and experience from my previous roles in other Rotary clubs, the guidance and advice from PP Larry, PDG Peter Hall, and DGE Raymond Wong proved invaluable in establishing this new club.

To apply for membership with Rotary International, we needed a minimum of 22 members. By early December 1986, we had seventeen potential members, signaling that we were ready to move forward and formally organize ourselves. In that same month, we adopted the name Rotary Club of Golden Mile and the Standard Rotary Club

Constitution and Club Bylaws. We also elected members to the 1986/87 Board and decided to hold our regular lunch meetings every Wednesday at the Holiday Inn Golden Mile, starting at 12:30 pm.

Unfortunately, during this time, there were rumblings of discontent from a specific club in the district, claiming that Kowloon Golden Mile was unlawfully formed and should be shut down. One of the key members of that club, Robin Ching, who later became President of our Club, joined Golden Mile, which further aggravated the situation, as it was seen as poaching members.

Larry and I were invited to a joint Presidents meeting in December 1986, where we were met with interrogation and hostility from many of the attending Presidents. Thankfully, PDG Peter Hall and DGE Raymond Wong were also present and managed to calm the situation.

The club that opposed us attempted to initiate a lawsuit to ban Golden Mile from proceeding with our provisional Club meetings. It seemed like my dream of leading this new club was in jeopardy. However, PDG Peter Hall and DGE Raymond Wong challenged these calls. Although we were advised to temporarily halt our provisional Club meetings to ease tensions, our meetings were eventually reinstated as they couldn't prove their case against us. The opposing club then lodged a complaint with Rotary International in Chicago, requesting that our membership be blocked.

The matter escalated to the point where RI called upon DG Gary Hung to investigate and make a final decision. DG Gary concluded that we should continue as a Provisional Club despite the challenges we faced.

In late January 1987, I applied to RI for membership, even though we only had 21 members instead of the required 22. DGE

Raymond Wong strongly supported moving forward with the application to avoid further upheaval. On February 26, 1987, I received a call from DGE Raymond Wong confirming that our membership to Rotary International had been accepted.

Although we were chartered on February 26, 1987, we officially received our Charter on April 11, 1987, during our very first Annual Fundraising Ball. The event was graced by the presence of the then RI President, M.A.T. Caparas, who presented the Club Charter himself. This was a truly momentous evening, and we were honored to have the RI President at our Ball. Not many clubs can claim such an honor.

I served as President for one half term, from February 26 to June 30, 1987, and then for a full term in 1987/88. Within three years, our membership grew from 21 members to over 60. I firmly believe that the true success of any organization lies in discipline, and our club was built on this principle.

During my time, I noticed that many members in Rotary were divided, lacking the kind of closeness, fellowship, and networking that one would expect. Transparency was lacking, there was rivalry among members, and politics played a significant role. I was determined to ensure that this would not happen at Golden Mile.

To foster closer relationships among members, I introduced the first-ever Indian Night, Chinese Night, and later Non-Indian Non-Chinese Night (NINC) in District 3450. These special yearly fellowships, in addition to our monthly fellowships, became renowned. Members respected and understood each other's cultures, fostering strong friendships and fellowship that were unprecedented in Rotary. I still cherish the two lovely antique Indian paintings donated by Rotarian Notan, which were auctioned at our first Indian fellowship night in 1987.

Another issue I addressed was the compulsory nature of fundraising within the club. I couldn't understand the arm-twisting that was going on. Fundraising should be voluntary, not mandatory. As President, I ensured that all contributions in our club were voluntary.

To strengthen Rotary information, I established in-house Rotary Information Seminars each month for new members, followed by fellowship dinners. This brought members even closer together and was a first for any Rotary Club in District 3450. Additionally, we held many fireside meetings and subcommittee meetings, chaired by our late PDG Dipo Sani, to raise funds for a Cook Book dedicated to PolioPlus. These initiatives further strengthened the bonds among our members.

In the 1987/88 Rotary year, I introduced a subcommittee, which I chaired, to interview all potential new members. This ensured that they fully understood their financial

commitments, attendance requirements, and other obligations as members of Golden Mile. This practice continues in our Club to this day and was another first in District 3450.

During that same year, the Rotary Club of Kowloon Golden Mile took the lead in welcoming women into Rotary. Looking back, this decision was one of the best moves we ever made, as many clubs that did not follow suit have been left behind.

Since 1987, our club has continued on a successful path year after year. Each President has brought their unique style of leadership, setting our club apart from any other in District 3450.

As the Charter President of Kowloon Golden Mile, I am extremely proud of our club's respect and prestige among other clubs in Hong Kong. I am grateful to all our dedicated members for making this possible

and allowing me to carry the title of Charter President with pride.

On a personal note, I ran for District Governor on two separate occasions, but unfortunately encountered hostilities and barriers at the District level. I firmly believe that as District Governor, I could have taken District 3450 to new heights, but it was not meant to be.

In 1990, my wife was diagnosed with cancer, and she fought this dreadful disease until 1997. When doctors in Hong Kong could no longer provide the necessary treatment, we moved to Australia to explore experimental drugs. The club, led by PP Joseph Kwan at the time, gave us a heartfelt send-off, and I was deeply touched when I received a book on Hong Kong, signed by every member, at the farewell drinks. To my surprise, the club also bestowed upon me an Honorary Membership.

Although my wife survived for another seven years with the help of Australian doctors, I eventually lost her in 2004.

I still try to return to HongKong on a regular basis because of strong family and social ties. Due to health issues, and with Covid, it has been hard to keep the same pace as before. I thank you for listening into these early days of the club, if you have any questions I am happy to answer them by way of our Club chat or you are welcome to PM me.

Thank you, Wishing you a Happy New Year, and may your 2024 be filled with nothing but Love, Laughter and Happiness.

Warmest regards,
CP Chandru Parmanand