

Rotary Roots Run Deep at the United Nations

Back in the 1930's a Rotarian from Nashville TN, had the idea of developing "International Institutes of Understanding" to advance one of Rotary's causes, namely: to promote International Understanding and World Peace.

The concept grew to cities in Texas and spread across the globe. It was a great success which was embraced by many senior world leaders, putting Rotary on the map.



Very early, Rotary was at the grass roots of discussions and input to develop the United Nations concept. Prior to the 1945 San Francisco charter event, there were other exploratory meetings, which included Rotarians. During that time, Rotary published the "Dumbarton Oaks" meeting notes, to share and solicit input from clubs and members around the world.

At the 1940 RI Convention in Havana, Cuba the "respect for human rights" was discussed which led to the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. Rotary also planted seeds for the creation of UNESCO, through discussions at our 1942 RI Convention in London, UK.

When US President Roosevelt and UK's Winston Churchill had the idea of convening meetings to establish the UN, they wanted Rotary involved. They recognized that through the successful International Institutes and other Rotary events, we were already doing much of what the intended UN purpose might be.

There were 11 official Rotary International delegates who rotated into the 3 chairs, allocated to Rotary at the sessions. In addition, several other Rotarians acted as delegates from their respective countries.

Overall, a total of 49 Rotarians participated in 1945 at the San Francisco UN Charter meetings where the organization was officially formed. Some say it was actually 50 Rotarians, but apparently one country had



not passed the necessary legislation in time to have their delegate be considered official.

In addition, it was a Rotarian from South Africa who wrote the first draft of the UN Charter. There is a statue erected in a city park there, in his honour. Filipinos are proud that Rotarian PRIVP Carlos P Romulo, was the second President of the UN General Assembly.

For these reasons, the UN Charter and our Rotary Goals & Objectives are very similar in meaning. Rotarians in New York even played a key role in locating and negotiating the land deal to establish the UN headquarters there.

After the 1945 meetings, Rotary International published a booklet titled "From Here On" which contained UN Charter content as well as annotations and questions, with a view to encouraging people to use the document as a map and pathway to service and peace. Contact DougV@DougVincent.com for a pdf copy.

This article is not the complete story, but it is a summary as I know it. It explains why Rotary and the United Nations share a strong, deep-rooted partnership, working together to promote international understanding, global health, peace and harmony.

Thus, in this 2019-20 Rotary year, RI President Mark Maloney and Rotary will focus with pride on the 75th Anniversary of our United Nations founding contribution. Rotary's work will continue through our six areas of focus and TRF programs, closely aligned to help achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

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