KIWANIS CLUN OF ATLANA

HISTORICAL PRESENTATION

1958 – 1968

THE TEN-YEAR PERIOD OF 1958 TO 1968 WAS A TIME OF CULTURAL AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN AMERICA – AND IN THE CITY OF ATLANTA

TO PARAPHRASE WORDS OF BOB DYLAN – “TIMES THEY WERE

A-CHANGIN”

THE MOST SIGNIFICANT OF THESE CHANGES WERE BROUGHT ABOUT BY THE CIVAL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

THERE IS NO WAY IN A FIVE-MINUTE PRESENTATION TO COVER THE EVENTS, IMPACT AND IMMENSE HISTORIAL SIGNIFICACE OF THE MOVEMENT, AND/OR, CHRONICLE THE WORK AND IMPORTANCE OF DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING

BUT I WOULD LIKE TO TELL THE STORY, NEW TO ME, OF AN EVENT THAT SET THE STAGE FOR THE BEGINNING OF INTER-RACIAL DIALOGE IN ATLATA

ON OCTOBER 1OTH, 1964, MARTIN LUTHER KING WAS THE RECIPIENT OF THE NOBEL PEACE PRIZE

BACK IN ATLANTA, AN ORGANIZING COMMITTEE WAS FORMED AND SOUGHT A WAY TO SIMULTANIOSLY ACKNOWEDGE DR. KINGS ACCOMPLISHMENT WHILE UNITING ATLANTA’S SEGREGATED BLACK AND WHITE COMMUNITIES THROUGH WHAT WOULD BE AN UNPRECEDENTED INTERACIAL EVENT – LITTLERALY THE FIRST OF IT’S KIND IN ATLANTA

THE COMMITTEE CONSISTED OF -

RALGH McGILL – PUBLISHER OF THE ATLANTA CONSTITUTION,

BENJAMIN E. HAYES – PREDSIDENT OF MOREHOUSE,

CATHOLIC ARCHBISHOP PAUL HALLINAN ,

AND RABBI JACOB ROTHSCHILD OF THE HEBREW BENEVOLENT CONGRATION

THE COMMITTEE PLANNED, AND SCHEDULED, A RECOGNITION BANQUET HONORING DR. KING ON JANUARY 27TH, 1965

IN NEED OF COMMUNITY SUPPORT TO ENSURE AN APPROPREATELY BI-RACAL AUDIENCE, THE COMMITTEE CONTACTED THE THEN MAYOR OF ATLANTA, IVAN ALLEN JR., BELIEVING HE WOULD HAVE THE NECESSARY POLICAL CLOUT TO TURN OUT THE WHITE ESTABLISHMENT. MAYOR ALLEN, BEING AN EVER PRACTICAL POLITITIAN, AGREED. HIS INICIAL REACHING OUT TO THE BUSUNESS COMMUNITY WAS MET WITH A LESS THAN AN ENTHUSIASTIC RESPONSE

UNDERSTANDING THE INFLUENCE OF ROBERT W. WOODWARD, PAST PRESIDENT OF THE COCA-COLA COMPANY, HAD OVER THE WHITE BUSINESS ELITE OF ATLANTA, MAYOR ALLEN PRIVATLEY VISITED WOODRUFF AND THE THEN PRESIDENT OF COCA-COLA PAUL AUSTIN. HE READILY RECEIVED THEIR ENDORSEMENT FOR THE EVENT

CALLS WERE MADE AND AUSTIN ARRAIGNED A PRIVATE CONFERENCE WITH PROMINATE WHITE BUSINESS MEN AT THE PEIDMONT DRIVING CLUB.

DURING THE MEETING AUSTIN IS QUOTED AS SAYING -

“IT IS EMBARRASSING FOR COCA-COLA TO BE LOCATED IN A CITY THAT REFUSES YO HONOR IT’S NOBEL PRIZE WINNER. WE ARE AN INTEERNATIONAL BUSINESS. THE COCA-COLA COMPANY DOES NOT NEED ATLANTA. YOU ALL NEED TO DECIDE WHETHER ATLANTA NEEDS THE COCA-COLA COMPANY”

LONG STORY SHORT, BY JANUARY 20TH, THE BANQUET COMMITTEE ANNOUNCED THAT THEY HAD SOLD ALL AVAILABLE TICKETS TO THE EVENT

FOLLOWING THE EVENT, THE NEW YORK TIMES REPORTED THAT 1,500 GUESTS ATTENDED THE EVENT WHERE DR. KING WAS PRESENTED WITH AN ENGRAVED CRYSTAL STEUBEN BOWL BY RABBI JACOB ROTHSCHILD, THE MOREHOUSE CHIOR SANG AND, IT WAS REPORTED, THAT THE EVENING ENDED WITH AN IMPROMTU SINGING OF “WE SHALL OVERCOME”

THIS EVENT WAS THE BEGINNING OF AN INTER-RACIAL DIALOG THAT GREW AND MATURED – AND HAS SERVED THE CITY OF ATANTA TO THIS DAY

ALSO DURING THE 1958 TO 1968 TIME PERIOD THE KIWANIS CLUB OF ATLANTA WAS ACTIVE AS WELL

I OFFER TWO HIGHLIGHTS –

WALTER CATES, A MEMBER OF THE KIWANIS CLUB OF ATLANTA, AND IN 1959, EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT OF THE GEORGA CHANBER OF COMMERCE, ORGANIZED THE “STUDENT TEACHER ACHIEVEMENT RECOGNITION ‘PROGRAM - OR “STAR “ PROGRAM

AS YOU KNOW, OUR CLUB ANNUALLY HOST THE RECIEPIRNT LUCHEON FOR THE ATLANTA “STAR” STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

SECONDLY, IN 1962, THE REVITALZED “CAMP KIWANIS” OPENED Its DOORS AT LAKE ALTOONNA TO SERVE THE INTER-CITY YOUTH OF ATLANTA IN CONJUCTION WITH THE ATLANTA BOYS AND GIRLS CLUBS

THANK YOU, PRESIDENT YOUNG, THIS CONCLUDES THIS CENNTENIAL REPORT