

Hot Springs National Park Rotary Club: 100 Years of Service

Jacob L. King, Dick Gladden, Gail Greenberg, Clay Farrar

EDITOR'S NOTE: The Hot Springs National Park Rotary Club celebrated its 100th birthday in July of 2016. The following history is an abridged compilation of a previous history of the club that has been updated over the years. This history was first prepared by club member Jacob L. King in the 1950s.

The Rotary ideal of "Service Above Self" was born in Chicago when the first club was organized on February 23, 1905. Paul Harris, a young attorney, invited three new friends to meet with him both for fellowship and to discuss self-development ideas. This event developed into regular weekly meetings, rotating among the offices of those participating. From this practice the name "Rotary" came into being.

The first Rotary Club in Arkansas was established in 1913 when Sidney M. Brooks, a young businessman, invited several others to meet with him on July 6, 1913, to form the Little Rock Rotary Club. They received their charter, No. 99, in January 1914. Two years later the idea of forming a Rotary Club in Hot Springs began. William G. Maurice, the owner of Maurice Bath House, contacted Sid Brooks in Little Rock and, with his guidance, the Hot Springs Club was organized on July 1, 1916, becoming club No. 246 on the register of Rotary Clubs.



William G. Maurice (left) greets Rotary founder Paul Harris outside the Arlington Hotel, March 11, 1927. [HSNP Rotary Club]

ABOUT THE AUTHORS: The late Jacob L. King was a Hot Springs National Park Rotary Club historian and president. Dick Gladden is a past president of the club. Gail Greenberg is executive secretary of HSNP Rotary. Clay Farrar is a past president of HSNP Rotary and chair of the club's history committee.

The fifteen charter members and officers were the following: William G. Maurice, President; Hamp Williams, Vice-President; Arthur Katz, Secretary; Dave Burgauer, Treasurer; Joseph Klyman, Sergeant-at-Arms; Harry A. Jones, Director; William Anderson, Director; Orvis E. Biggs, Director; Martin A. Eisele, Director; E. Lynn Howlett, Director; George A. Callahan, John G. Higgins, Jack Frisby, and Albert Mendel.

Early Years

The first club project was to improve the playground at Jones Elementary School. Each member was required to raise \$5.00 toward the purchase of playground equipment.

Almost immediately, the club took stands on controversial issues. The following motion was adopted by the club on February 13, 1917: "That the secretary be instructed to write Judge Wood, heartily endorsing his good movement to abolish the gambling evil in Hot Springs." Ironically, on February 24, 1919, the club adopted a resolution against the closing of the Oaklawn Race Track. Also in 1919, the club adopted a resolution stating: "That the club fully endorse and approve the course adopted by the city government in their effort to eliminate vice in the city, and ridding the city of all persons known to be prostitutes or other persons of known immoral tendencies."

On July 12, 1917, the club voted to donate \$100.00 to support the recently formed Boy Scout organization in Hot Springs. (Over the last 100 years, the club has donated over \$100,000.00 to support the Boy Scouts.) In the 1920s, the club played a very active part in the highway improvement program for Arkansas. On one project the Rotarians themselves took picks, shovels, and rakes and filled holes and smoothed the road (Highway 5) leading to Hot Springs from Little Rock.



Arkansas Senator Hattie Caraway (in black), the first woman elected to the US Senate, is welcomed to Rotary lunch meeting at Arlington Hotel, late 1930s. [HSNP Rotary Club]

Weekly Programs

During the last one hundred years, the Hot Springs National Park Rotary Club has hosted over five thousand programs at its weekly luncheons. Among the outstanding individuals who have spoken to the club have been United States Senators and Congressmen, Arkansas Constitutional Officers, and the Director of the United States National Park Service.

Notable program speakers, between 1916 and 1956,

included Paul Harris, founder of Rotary; Helen Keller, the iconic woman who

brought great hope to the blind and deaf; William Jennings Bryan, noted statesman and orator; and Sam Rayburn, Speaker of the House of Representatives of the United States Congress.

Since the 1960s, the club has recognized and honored the outstanding participants in the annual Miss Arkansas Pageant. Each year the reigning Miss Arkansas is a guest of the club. On several occasions the reigning Miss America has been a special guest of the club.

Local Scholarship Program

Rotary (which has over 34,000 clubs in more than 200 countries) has promoted world peace through its international scholarship programs. Hot Springs National Park Rotary has contributed toward that effort and also has given scholarships to almost 1,000 local high school students and non-traditional students to assist in their college educations.

In 1950, recognizing the financial needs of local college-bound high school graduates, the club began a program to help deserving students. In 1971, this fund was replaced by a "Student Scholarship Program" embracing all Garland County high schools. Scholarships were awarded based on academic ability, extracurricular involvement, and financial need. In 1992, an Endowment Scholarship Committee was formed to raise funds through member donations and fundraising events. Named "The Joe F. Fish Scholarship Endowment Fund" in honor of the late Joe Fish, who served as club treasurer for twenty-five years, the fund now has over \$100,000.00.

In 1988, Rotarian J. C. Rowe and his wife, Wayma Rowe, established the Grace and Stuart Rowe Scholarship, which awards not less than \$1,000.00 annually. Another scholarship program, the Hot Springs National Park Rotary Club Scholarship Trust, was started during years 2001–2002. In 2016, the club awarded eighteen scholarships in the amount of \$1,000.00 each from its various scholarship funds.

Polio Plus

In 1985, Rotary International launched its PolioPlus program, a major initiative to tackle global polio eradication through the mass worldwide vaccination of children. Since 1985 Rotary International has contributed more than 1.5 billion dollars to immunize more than 2.5 billion children in 122 countries. In addition, Rotary's advocacy efforts have played a role in decisions by donor governments to contribute more than \$9 billion.



J. C. "Pancho" Rowe with Rotary scholarship recipients. [HSNP Rotary Club]

The Global Polio Eradication Initiative, formed in 1989, is a public-private partnership that includes Rotary International, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and also many governments. Through these efforts, the scourge of polio has been almost completely eliminated throughout the world. The Hot Springs National Park Rotary Club has contributed generously to this effort since the project's inception.

Oaklawn, Hot Springs Village, Hot Springs Sunrise Clubs

The Hot Springs National Park Rotary Club has sponsored three new Rotary Clubs: the Oaklawn Club, formed in 1970; the Hot Springs Village Club, formed in 1985; and the Hot Springs Sunrise Club, formed in 2004. The North Garland County Club was formed recently. There are now over 300 men and women in Garland County who are members of one of these five clubs. Membership is open to all races and religions and reflects the diversity of the Hot Springs community.

Rehabilitation of Downtown Hot Springs

Since the mid-1980s, a major rehabilitation program has taken place in both Hot Springs National Park and in downtown Hot Springs. From Como Square to Whittington Park Junction, a "facelift" has occurred, and the entire area is "blooming" again.



Rotarians Clay Farrar (left) and Mark Fleischner at Rotary symposium on future of Hot Springs National Park, July 4, 1985. Guest speaker was US Representative Beryl Anthony. Four hundred citizens attended this public hearing at the Convention Auditorium.
[Sentinel-Record, photo by David Vann]

In 1985, the Hot Springs National Park Rotary Club was instrumental in lobbying efforts that resulted in the renovation of the Fordyce Bathhouse and its repurposing as the Hot Springs National Park Visitor Center. This was done through the combined efforts of the club and the Arkansas Congressional delegation, which included Senator Dale Bumpers, Senator David Pryor, and Congressman Beryl Anthony.

The club served as a catalyst for many of the National Park's and downtown Hot Springs' improvements. This was accomplished, in part, by repeatedly using the club's weekly programs as forums to focus public attention on these projects. For example, the club worked with Mayor Jim Randal and the downtown task force that he established in 1985 to work for the creation of the Central Business District Commission.

Continuing to Serve

Today the members of the Hot Springs National Park Rotary Club, like their predecessors in Rotary, generously give their time and their dollars to improve their community. For example, in 2015–2016, they worked to maintain the Hot

Springs Greenway Trail's Rotary Centennial Trailhead, which they created (along with Oaklawn Rotary) in 2004–2005. Members worked to maintain the Rotary Welcome Garden at the intersection of Whittington, Park, and Central avenues. They visited elementary schools and read to children. They participated in the Human Trafficking Awareness program in Hot Springs, donated one hundred coats to needy children, and continued as a major sponsor of the Garland County Imagination Library. They sponsored Interact Clubs (young people's clubs that perform service projects) at Arkansas School for Mathematics, Sciences, and the Arts and at Hot Springs High School. These are a few examples of the club's activities that support the local community.

The Hot Springs National Park Rotary Club has been successfully promoting progress in Hot Springs for one hundred years. It will continue to put "Service Above Self" as it enters its second hundred years.

Contributors

Compiled in the 1950s by Jacob L. King, Past President, Club Historian

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Dedication of Rotary Welcome Garden, 2013. City Manager David Watkins, Rollin Caristianos, Parks and Trails Director Jean Wallace, Sissi Bennett, Christi Nation, Cynthia Keheley, Sharon Dent, and Loretta Curtis. [HSNP Rotary Club]



Hot Springs National Park Rotary Club, April 13, 2016, on Arlington Hotel steps [HSNP Rotary Club]

Hot Springs National Park Rotary Programs: A Sample From the 1950s

Clay Farrar

The Hot Springs National Park Rotary Club celebrates the one hundredth anniversary of its founding in July 2016. As a part of this centennial anniversary, this article will look back at some of the programs that have been presented to the club at its regular weekly meetings.

Since the club has met over five thousand times in the last one hundred years, a comprehensive review of club programs would be difficult. Instead, this article will review a sample of club programs during the four year period from 1953 until 1957. This four year period was selected because of good club records that are available from this period and because these programs from the mid-1950s provide insights about not only the local Rotary Club, but also the Hot Springs community and even the nation and world in that era.

The Rotary records include numerous news stories about the club programs that were published in the *Hot Springs Sentinel-Record* or its former sister publication, the afternoon newspaper the *Hot Springs New Era*. Many of these newspaper articles about the weekly club programs were written by Edna Howe, a senior editor at the *Sentinel-Record*. Known fondly to the Rotary Club members as “Ms. Edna,” she attended club meetings and provided weekly publicity for club programs for thirty years. Ms. Edna was a beloved icon both in the Hot Springs community and also at the Rotary Club, which awarded her a Paul Harris Fellow Award.



Edna Howe [HSNP Rotary Club]

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For one hundred years, the weekly programs of the Rotary Club have been forums that have provided a wealth of information to both club members and the larger Hot Springs community. Program topics have included reports about subjects ranging from local water and sewer improvement to peace in the Middle East. Over the years speakers have included numerous Arkansas governors, United States senators and representatives, and the Director of the United States National Park Service (1985–1989), William Penn Mott.

Programs about Local Issues

Local economic development topics have frequently been a part of the weekly Rotary programs. For example, on December 31, 1953, the Chamber of Commerce presented its annual program about economic problems facing Hot Springs. A major concern was the pending closure of the Army and Navy General Hospital. The speaker, Chamber President-Elect W. L. Clark, explained that a local delegation had traveled to Washington and had received only a temporary reprieve for the hospital. (Given to the state in 1960, the hospital's buildings now house the Arkansas Career Training Institute.) A second problem discussed in the program was the possible elimination by the Missouri Pacific Railroad of one of its two passenger trains that had served Hot Springs for many years. (The passenger train service ended completely in 1964.)

The club welcomed differing opinions on the topic of local economic development. On April 27, 1954, prominent Little Rock businessman Raymond Rebsamen presented a program about the Hot Springs economy. He explained that he saw no point in Hot Springs trying to recruit industry and instead recommended that local efforts should be directed toward promoting thermal bathing and the lakes.

The subjects of local corruption and illegal gambling in Hot Springs were rarely addressed in Rotary programs. However, at the June 9, 1954 program the speaker, Cecil H. Ledgerwood, did explain: "Control of Garland County has always been in the hands of the 'open town' or the 'closed town' factions." (In the 1940s and 1950s, the term "open town" was a code for permitting illegal gambling and casinos to operate in Hot Springs.)

Club program presenters frequently commented about government policy. For example, on November 16, 1955, the weekly club program was presented by the President of Henderson State College, Dr. D. D. McBrien. He reported that the

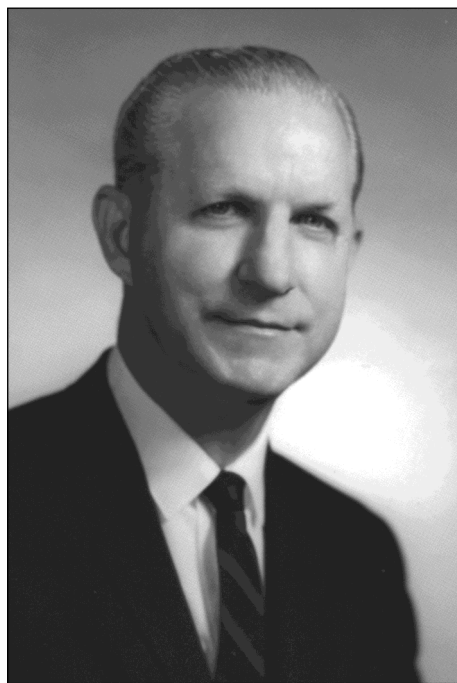
Arkansas legislature had recently cut funding for education and that, indeed, Arkansas was the only state in the country that year to reduce education funding. The speaker summarized that, in light of these cuts to education, perhaps Arkansas was not the “Land of Opportunity” that it claimed to be.

A 1956 Rotary program dealt with two local problems that still need resolution sixty years later in 2016. In a September 5, 1956 club program presented by then Chamber of Commerce Secretary-Manager President Mort Cox, the club learned about the problem of an insufficient supply of municipal water. Cox further described the traffic congestion in downtown Hot Springs as “distressing, depressing, and exacerbating.”

Programs about National and International Issues

In the mid-1950s, the threat of the expansion of Communism was a frequent program topic. But surprisingly, several programs were also presented that suggested that the Senate hearings conducted by Senator Joseph McCarthy about the domestic threat of communism had gone too far. On March 31, 1954, Arkansas Supreme Court Justice Ed F. McFadden presented a program in which he stated that it was time to put some caution and common sense into Senatorial investigations so that American liberties would not be lost. The justice concluded, “There must be some sensible course to follow in order to stop the tactics of Senator McCarthy.”

Prominent visitors to Hot Springs included both political leaders and celebrities who came to take the thermal baths. For example, in December 1954, the incoming Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, Sam Rayburn of Texas, vacationed in Hot Springs. He presented a program to the Rotary Club on the topic of national defense. Rayburn told the club that so long as danger threatened the



Mort Cox, Chamber of Commerce Manager from 1953–1964 [GCHS 5.983 T. Harding, Jr.]



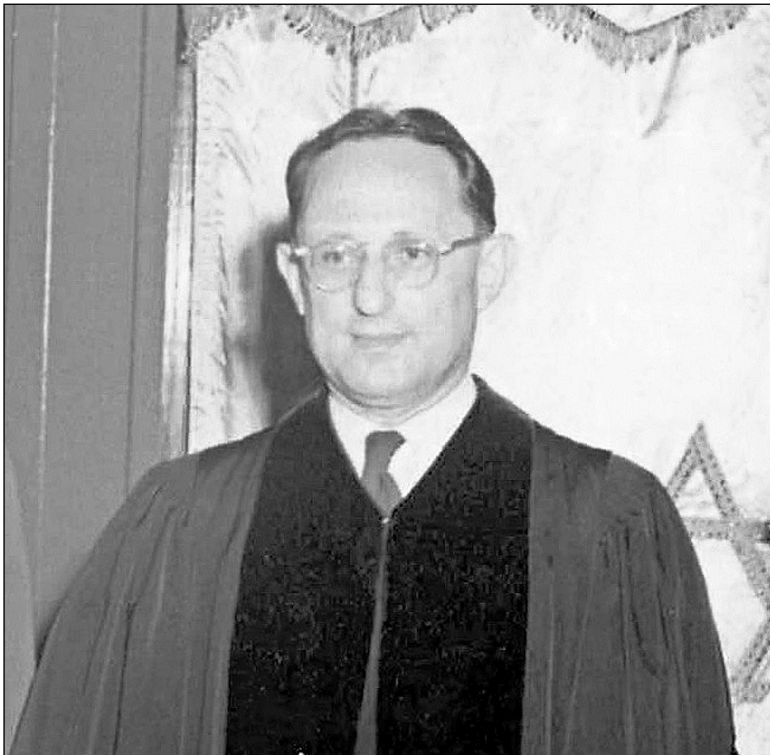
Shown in 1936, Sam Rayburn served in the US House of Representatives from 1913–1961. For seventeen of those years he served as Speaker of the House. [Library of Congress]

nation, he was going to vote to levy taxes to raise money to make the country militarily strong.

Club programs did not shy away from controversial topics. Balanced against frequent programs that warned of the dangers of communism or socialism were programs that recommended moderation in the defense policy of the United States. For example, on April 13, 1955, Walter Trulock, a former State Department aide, presented a program to the Rotary Club on the topic of international politics and defense. He cautioned against pursuing battles with the Red Chinese over islands off of the Chinese coast and warned that doing so could precipitate World War III. Trulock even criticized then Vice President Richard Nixon as being “too bellicose.”

Programs about Religion

From its founding in 1916, the Hot Springs National Park Rotary club has been very ecumenical in its membership. Many Jewish citizens have always been



Rabbi Sampson A. Shain served the Congregation House of Israel in Hot Springs from 1951–1956. [Congregation House of Israel]

members and officers and prominent in the club. Over the years, the local rabbi from the Congregation House of Israel was usually a member of the Rotary Club. Also, the club has always had a number of clergymen of various denominations as members. Usually, one of these clergy was called upon to deliver the annual Thanksgiving and Christmas programs. The local rabbi was frequently asked to give holiday programs. For example the “Christmas message” was given by Rabbi Sampson A. Shain in December 1954.

On July 16, 1953, the program topic was the recently published Revised Standard Version of the Bible. A Little Rock Presbyterian minister presented this program, in which he assured club members that this new version of the Bible was not “communistic.”

In November 1953, club members received a report from a Hot Springs public school principal, Wilbur Mosier, about the status of church attendance by public school teachers. Club members were assured that all 203 of the Hot Springs public school teachers were indeed members of churches. Further, the speaker reported that almost 75% of the teachers had attended church services the previous week. The speaker also explained that it was a state law in Arkansas that the Bible be read every day and that children at his school were receiving a daily Bible lesson.

On December 2, 1953, Rotarians received an unusual Christmas program. Local minister Rev. Herbert G. Dudley, pastor of the First Christian Church, presented a program about his concerns about the commercialization of the Christmas holiday. In his presentation, the minister told club members, “You cannot buy happiness at the store by the fifth. If you must get drunk, don’t wait until Christmas to do it. Do it on the 4th of July or some other time.”

Miscellaneous Programs

Variety in program subjects has contributed to the quality of the weekly Rotary Club programs. Programs occasionally included topics about sports, including golf, hunting, fishing, and local and state athletics. For example, on May 11, 1955, Bert Mead, golf pro at the Hot Springs Golf and Country Club, presented a program about the upcoming PGA golf tournament that was to be held at the Hot Springs Country Club. Professional golfers who played in the Hot Springs tournament included famous golfers Byron Nelson and Dr. Carey Middlecoff.

One of the most unique club programs of mid-1950s was on the topic of “The Woman’s Side of the Battle of the Sexes.” The program was presented by Ann Stell McDaniel, wife of prominent Hot Springs



The Arlington Hotel began its first Arlington Open PGA Tournament at Hot Springs Golf and Country Club on May 20, 1955. In 1960 the Chamber of Commerce sponsored the Hot Springs Annual PGA Tournament (pictured) with \$20,000 in prize money. [GCHS 4.2792.021]

architect I. Granger McDaniel. Her presentation dealt with topics that anticipated the rise of feminism a decade later in the 1960s. One theme of Ms.



Ann Stell McDaniel, ca 1954. Her father, Dr. Jack Stell, is at left.
[Diana Hampo]

McDaniel's presentation was that "a woman's entire life is wrapped up in pleasing her man."

Some club programs demonstrated the old proverb that the more things change the more they are the same. For example, on September 14, 1955, in a program presented by local postmaster Paul Francis, the club learned that the United States Postal Service was faced with a loss of \$100 million. The postmaster further explained that the Postal Service was charging the same three cent price for a first class stamp in 1955 that it had charged in 1932.

Conclusion

For one hundred years the Hot Springs National Park Rotary Club has played an important role in our community. The club's weekly programs have stimulated awareness about hundreds of issues ranging from national defense to downtown improvements. As this outstanding service club enters its second century, it continues to provide a forum for issues of concern to our community, our state, and our world.

Source

Hot Springs National Park Rotary Club Minutes, which include newspaper clippings about weekly programs. These minutes are archived in the Rotary Room of the Garland County Historical Society archives building, 328 Quapaw Avenue, Hot Springs, Arkansas.