**The History of the Eau Gallie Rotary Club**

The Eau Gallie Rotary Club is a club rich with history. During the early 60’s, the City of Melbourne had the only Rotary club in South Brevard. The Melbourne Club accomplished much during the mid 60’s. Their most notable accomplishment was the introduction of high school students to Rotary through a locally organized effort of leadership and service that resulted in the birth of Interact. Interact has grown internationally to over 200,000 high school students throughout the world.

Another significant accomplishment of the Melbourne Rotary Club came though the challenge of Fred DeHorn, then District Governor of District 699 (1964-1965), which resulted in its first offspring, the Eau Gallie Rotary Club. This monumental milestone was accomplished by a dedicated club, a district governor with foresight, and a young energetic Melbourne Rotarian, George Alto, who was elected to investigate the possibility of an Eau Gallie Club. George worked diligently during 1964, talking Rotary and interviewing individuals he felt worthy of the task at hand. With great fortune, George came upon two gracious gentlemen, one by the name of Bill Altman who served and moved on, and the other, Bill Langsworth, who lived and breathed Eau Gallie Rotary from the very beginning and was until his death an Eau Gallie Rotarian.

During 1964-1965, George, Bill & Bill laid the ground work for forming the new club. These men, working together with the incoming District Governor Natie Taylor (1965-1966) and with the diligent leadership of his group representative Woody Bowden, assembled 28 prospective members. In November 1965, an application was submitted to Rotary International as a formal request for charter.

We began as a provisional club the first week of 1966, and received our charter in March of that same year. Since that time we’ve grown not only in size, but in fundraising and outreach. Please travel through the past decades with us to relive some of our memories.

**The Early Years**

In the early years, fund raising was a real challenge to meet our growing budget of commitments to the many community affairs in which we were involved. Thus, the famous Eau Gallie Rotary Fish Fry was born, which netted us a whopping $280. During this era, our Club embarked on the following projects to help meet the needs of our community: Beautification of the Causeway; help for the newly organized volunteer ambulance service; commencement of our annual Salvation Army Christmas bell ringing; and organization of our first Interact Club at Eau Gallie High School.

This period also started the “musical chair” saga of where is the meeting place this week? We changed our meeting place four times. In January we started at The Pines, then moved to the Red Rooster, which closed three months later. We then moved to the Host of America until November after which we moved back to the Pines; yes, all in one year!

**The 70s**

In the 1970s, our Club grew in both size and stature. In 1978-1979, our very own Jack Burklew was elected District Governor of District 699.

It was during this period that a new and very exciting fund raiser called “Octoberfest” was created by our Club. It started off as a simple beer concession on the grounds of F.I.T. Octoberfest became our primary source of revenue. In fact it was so successful, that we got out of the fish, flea and junk business. The increased receipts from our new, successful fund raiser enabled the Club to further emphasize Rotary service and principles. As Octoberfest generated increasing profits, we became a major financial contributor to many civic projects.

**The 80s**

We experienced considerable growth in 80’s. Our peak membership of 73 was reached in 1984. We sponsored two new Rotary Clubs, one in Palm Bay and the other in Suntree. Our budget in the 1980’s averaged $18,000 per year. This represented a significant increase from our annual average budget of $1,500 in the 60’s.

We became a major contributor to the Rotary Foundation in these years. We actively supported Foundation Student awards, Group Study Exchange, and the Homestay Program became very significant to our Club. In addition, the club pledged $9,000 toward the Foundation’s new initiative, Polio Plus.

A very significant milestone during this time was the first female member being accepted in the Eau Gallie Rotary Club. Kate Maxner officially became a member of our club in May, 1989. It must be said that Kate proved to be a great Rotarian.

**The 90s**

In the early 90’s, the Club continued to display confidence in its ability to commit support and funds to worthy causes throughout the community. The most notable being a three year commitment to the Space Coast Early Intervention Center for $12,000. The Club also showed considerable interest in the Space Coast Marine Institute (now known as AMI Kids Space Coast), both as a Club and as members individually. Many members donate time and money to these causes.

Our affiliation with Habitat for Humanity blossomed as we became the top monetary contributor and participant in the construction of a house in conjunction with other Rotary clubs.

The mid 90s brought in a younger group of Rotarians and club presidents and other important roles. Ken Schaeffer served as District 6930’s Governor in 1993-1994. Scooter Webster’s Presidential term (1996-1997) marked the first Eau Gallie Rotarian’s son to become President 28 years after his father Oscar served as our third President after charter. These young Presidents brought about new ideas. We sold Octoberfest, and picked up new fund raisers like onion sales, art auction, fruit tree sales, and rejuvenated the flea market.

During these years, the Club embarked on some very interesting international projects. Five kidney dialysis machines were donated to a hospital in India. The Haiti Water Project was also born.

**The 00s**

The new millennium saw the need to establish a new signature fund raiser. The Club established the Space Coast LightFest at Wickham Park, a 40-night holiday light display. LightFest was an instant success. It served our club well in many aspects. LightFest was a family friendly event the community could enjoy and the money raised helped fund our charitable giving.

After a few years, we added the LightFest 5K run, again, an instant success. As a result, the club’s annual giving budget reached all time highs. In fact, LightFest was so profitable (and laborious) that we decided to get out of the onion, tree, auction and junk businesses (again).

Milestones of this decade include our sponsorship of the Orchid Island Rotary Club in Vero Beach, the election of our first female Club President, Phyl Strawbridge (2004-2005), and Eau Gallie Rotarian Jim Sisserson serving as District Governor in 2001-2002.

International projects included Ak’ Tenamit (The Guatemalan Tomorrow Fund), the Indian Braille Book Project and a schoolroom for an African village.

**The Decade After the 00s**

In 2012, we handed off LightFest to the Boy Scouts. They have grown it beyond our capabilities and secured it’s legacy in Brevard County.

2014 marked the inauguration of our new signature event, the Rocky Water Brew Fest. Sometimes it’s sunny. Sometimes it rains. Every time is it fun! The Rocky Water Brew Fest has been a huge success, funding the Eau Gallie Charites Corp to record levels. Allowing the club to increase donations to many worthy causes.

The decade closed out with the club learning how to conduct meetings on Zoom, and then hybrid meetings. And….. Brew Fest was skipped for the year.

I would like to update you with the following facts and figures for 2021 2022 by noting the addition of 7 Rotarians to our club. 4 of these Rotarians were women.

Leading the club through 2021 -2022 Brian Laughlin stepped up to the plate in his second term as president having served us in 2006 2007. In our club history we have not had a repeat performance of a former club president.

We began contributing monthly to the Eau Gallie High School food bank about a year and a half ago to assist families living under the guidelines for help with daily nutrition. Our help has made a big difference in these families lives.

On a recent delivery to the school, tears were seen from the staff and recipient students. Most grateful for our help.

Brew fest 2021 returned to the streets of Eau Gallie in November with record crowds turning out. This has become our major fund raiser for our commitment to the community.

Also a major event taking place came in February 2022. Under the direction of Mary Bonhomme and Roy Alterman, Eau Gallie Rotary installed the first peace pole in Brevard county. It is very appropriately displayed in a butterfly garden in Eau Gallie Square.

**In Summary**

The history of the Eau Gallie Rotary Club reveals dedication, determination, fellowship and a sincere desire to serve the community in a manner best described by the Rotary Motto: “Service Above Self”!

By the way, on a scale of 1 to 10, we still rank 10 in singing – obviously tops in our district.

**Presidents of the Eau Gallie Rotary Club**

1966-1967 George Alto 2000-2001 Joe Langlois

1967-1968 Joel Satterfield 2001-2002 Walt Robinson

1968-1969 Oscar Webster 2002-2003 Bill Anderson

1969-1970 Jack Finger 2003-2004 Bob Michaud

1970-1971 Jack Clark 2004-2005 Phyl Strawbridge

1971-1972 Jack Burklew 2005-2006 Paul Durney

1972-1973 Jim Whitley 2006-2007 Brian Laughlin

1973-1974 Bill McAllister 2007-2008 Buz Anderson

1974-1975 John Cates 2008-2009 Chad Dohtre

1975-1976 Dom Montalto 2009-2010 Roy Alterman

1976-1977 Mike Gatto 2010-2011 Samantha Hill

1977-1978 Ed Zorn 2011-2012 Rick Roach

1978-1979 Dan Richards 2012-2013 Mary Bonhomme

1979-1980 Dennis Sheppard 2013-2014 Eric Turner

1980-1981 Grant Hussel 2014-2015 Dave Spector

1981-1982 Lyle Henry 2015-2016 Rich Sutter

1982-1983 Gene Wilhelm 2016-2017 Nick Geinosky

1983-1984 Pat Ponder 2017-2018 Tom Richards

1984-1985 Earle Seaverns 2018-2019 Al Nuttall

1985-1986 Bob Wasson 2019-2020 Bruce Waters

1986-1987 Ray Singletary 2020-2021 Bill Pospisil

1987-1988 Tim Netley 2021-2022 Brian Laughlin

1988-1989 Luke Miorelli 2022-2023 Charles Berry

1989-1990 Don Anthony

1990-1991 Doug VanDerPost

1991-1992 Bryan Fisher

1992-1993 Henry Phelps

1993-1994 Jim Sisserson

1994-1995 Jay Sutherland

1995-1996 Mike Renfro

1996-1997 Scooter Webster

1997-1998 Bill Van Zante

1998-1999 John Rourk

1999-2000 Kurt Weiss