

CLUB HISTORY

In July of 1954, Chauncey Brown, President of the Rotary Club of St. Petersburg, FL, appointed a committee to investigate the area know as Gulfport as the possible site of a new Rotary Club. District Governor Chesley Perry chose Everett Sumner, longtime Rotarian in the area to chair the committee.

Everett contacted members of the professional and business located in the area and arranged a meeting to explore potential interest. Numerous meetings yielded definite interest and the following slate of officers: President, William Belfie; VP Albert Craig; Secretary, Harold Archibald; Treasurer, John Holsapple. Directors were Roy Pippin and Calvin Knapp with Barney Sullivan serving as Sgt.-at-Arms.

The club charter was issued December 28, 1954. Charter Night was held on January 12, 1955 at the Great Hall at Stetson College of Law. Two hundred

nineteen Rotarians and Rotary-Ann's attended. Charter members of the fledgling club were:

Harold Archibald	Gerald E. Lamb
William G Belfie	Jesse H. Montgomery
Albert T Craig	James E. Phillips
Cecil Douglas	Roy Pippin
Benj. M. Duggar, Jr.	Edward K. Rocks
Dewitt Farabee	Floyd Sherrod
Robert Fruchs	John H. Squires
Charles Hilkey	Andrew Steele
John F. Holsapple	Barney J. Sullivan
Millard L. Keller	Harold Wentworth
Calvin B. Knapp	John L. White

The first official club meeting was January 14, 1955 with Barney Sullivan presenting a program on "Your Income Tax". During March of that year, the first Ladies Night was held at the Gulfport Casino with 150 in attendance. The initial club project was a Red Cross Drive with the club exceeding its quota of \$1200. A gift of a TV tower to the Gulfport Community House was the first Community Project. The first International project occurred when a student spoke to the club on his year of study in Switzerland. A milestone event also occurred during this initial year with the International Convention of Rotary was held

in Chicago celebrating 50 years of Rotary progress. Barney Sullivan attended as official delegate and distributed 4-leaf clover key rings grown and manufactured by club member Bill Daniels.

In the ensuing years, the Rotary Club of Gulfport has had several notable changes involving the Club name and meeting locations. In 1959, we became the Rotary Club of West St. Petersburg. In 1983 the club name was further modified to the Rotary Club of St. Petersburg West. Meeting location changes are indicated by the dates below:

Aug 57 - Pasadena Country Club
Jan 64 - Dutch Pantry
Aug 67 - Jungle Prada
July 70 - Sweden House
Aug 77 - Tiffneys at Crossroads
1980 - Sea Ketch
APR 84 - Mr. Tibbs
Jan 87 - Jungle Prada

Past Presidents and their year of assuming office are shown separately.

In June of 1960 due to an apparent feeling that several key club members pulled the "Rotary wagon", it was decided to call the installation of new officers the "Change of Horses" dinner. The name for this event has stuck ever since. Some significant events of the past include ringing the bell for the Salvation Army, Sea Fests dinners, Bedging fund raising events plus a beginning experience in scholarships at Junior College. Fund raising early on consisted mostly of reaching for one's wallet. After all Kiwanian people knew how to raise money, not us. This was never more apparent when all the Rotary Clubs of lower Pinellas decided to pledge \$40,000 for a bloodmobile. Let the record show that we were eventually successful however the Bob Hope night at the Bayfront netted a whopping minus \$10,000. Over the years, however, we gradually learned. Xmas tree sales busted due to bad weather. Apple sales were and are a success and gradually, other opportunities like the golf tournament paved the way to success.

Over the years, this club has had a wide variety of special emphases. We began Interact Club activities in 1967. A central theme consistent throughout our long history however, has been a focus of youth. Beginning with the Science Center and Junior College, we have over the years expanded our financial support to cover many colleges, high schools and vocational training centers. Perhaps, one of the most solidifying events occurred in 1972 when one of our former members Fred C. Fantz remembered the club in his will. This event is covered in more detail later.

Other notable achievements include the District Governorship of one of our members. During the 1982-83 year, Rolfe Duggar, a third generation Rotarian served District 695 as its Governor. Time has counted many members of this club who have joined, become active Rotarians and moved on to other places. One charter member, John L. "Jack" White is living though not active due to poor health.

Over the years, the membership has grown. A graph showing this growth is included. Our current membership should take pride in being part of an international organization with additional local identity and focus. The efforts of all members of our club have and hopefully will continue to reflect our motto, "SERVICE ABOVE SELF". Those who have served in the past well know that "He profits most who serves best."