



District 6960

A HISTORY OF LEADERSHIP AND SERVICE

Paul Sanborn 11/12/2012

This District 6960 history is dedicated to PDG Paul Sanborn, a great Rotarian and our District Historian for many years.

Paul Sanborn (93) passed away on July 17, 2017 leaving a great void in our district. Paul, known as “Mr. Rotary” throughout our district, served as District Governor 1974 -1975. He was not only a great Rotarian, but a community leader and the official historian of the City of Cape Coral as well. Paul led both our community and our District with a smile and never ending enthusiasm. Paul encouraged all of our Rotary members to be the best they could possibly be; he never had a bad word for anyone. He personified the Four Way Test. Rest in peace, Paul. You will be sadly missed.

PDG Don Thomas 2018 - 2021

The following is a compilation of activities of District Governors of District 696 and 6960 from 1968-69 through 2016-18. In some cases there will be just highlights of each Governor's year while others will be in depth information. Credit should be given to PDG Chauncey McIntyre of the St. Petersburg Club for information from 1968-69 through 1975-76, PDG Richard "Dick" Dodderidge of the Venice-Nokomis Club for information 1976-77 through 1998-99 and PDG Paul Sanborn of the Cape Coral Club for information 1999-2000 through 2010-12. PDG Don Thomas of the Rotary Club of Cape Coral Goldcoast from 2012-2021.

CHRONOLOGY OF DISTRICT

1915 – 1922	5 TH AND 8 TH DISTRICT
1922 – 1936	39 TH DISTRICT
1937 – 1947	167 TH DISTRICT
1947 – 1948	167 TH DISTRICT
1949 – 1957	244 TH DISTRICT
1957 – 1970	696 TH DISTRICT
1970 – 1980	696 TH DISTRICT REORGANIZED
1981 – 1991	696 TH DISTRICT REORGANIZED AGAIN
1991 – PRESENT	6960 TH DISTRICT (51 CLUBS)

BETWEEN 1914 & 1947 SIXTEEN CLUBS WERE CHARTERED IN OUR AREA (OF THE 75 IN THE DISTRICT).

1 in 1918, 1 in 1922, 3 in 1924, 3 in 1925, 3 in 1926, 1 in 1927, and 1 in 1929. NO OTHER CLUBS WERE CHARTERED UNTIL 1946. THERE WAS 1 IN 1946 AND 2 IN 1947.

1968-1969 – Leslie B. Anderson

(Winter Haven)

R.I. President Kiyoshi Togasaki adopted as his theme, “Participate”. Governor Leslie B. Anderson of Winter Haven accepted this literally by starting eight new clubs – the most by one governor in the history of the District. They were: West Orlando, sponsor Orlando, July 25th, 1968; Orange County East, sponsor Winter Park, October 17, 1968; Lakeland South, sponsor, Lakeland, October 17, 1968; Fort Myers South, sponsor Fort Myers, December 30, 1968; Seminole County South, sponsor Orange County East, March 8, 1969; Windermere, sponsor Winter Garden, March 10, 1969; Ocala-Silver Springs, sponsor Ocala, June 13, 1969; Naples North, sponsor Naples, June 13, 1969. These brought the total of clubs in the District to 70 and increased the pressure on RI to divide and bring District size down. Being Governor had become a fulltime job. RI agreed to act at the earliest possible opportunity.

At the start of his year, Les made up and distributed a District Directory to all clubs, Presidents and past officers of RI. This contained the names and addresses of all District officers, committee personnel, club meeting dates and locations, a schedule of club visit dates, and much other useful information. Such a directory has since become a yearly feature and is published by each Governor at District expense.

By the end of the year, membership had increased to 4,553, a District growth of 120 Rotarians.

1969-1970 – Arthur V. Benson

(St. Petersburg)

In 1970, District 696 reached its maximum size of 4,730 members in 70 clubs under the leadership of Governor A.V. “Swede” Benson”. RI agreed to a District division and the end of this Rotary year was set as time for the change. James F. Conway was RI President from Rockville Centre, New York, USA, and his theme was “Review and Renew” for that year.

The Group Study Exchange with District 255 in Australia was, from the 696 stand- point, a great success. The team under the leadership of PDG Les Ginkel left Florida in June and returned in August to immediately start a round of club visits to tell of their Australian experience. When the costs and the results of the project were assessed, it was agreed that another G.S.E. should be undertaken.

The District Conference, sponsored by St. Petersburg, was held at Port-O-Call and drew 650 registrants from 56 clubs. RI President’s Representative was Past Director

Pratt Secret. Major speakers were Congressman William Cramer and Lt. Governor Ray Osborn. At the Conference, the District Fund Committee made plans for the Fund division to be made at the time of District division. A new Governor was elected for the new District 695 to be formed from part of District 696 and all necessary voting approval by clubs on the division was completed.

New District 696 boundaries were established as that portion of Florida south of the northern boundary of Pasco County, west of Interstate Road 1-75, south of the northern boundary of Hillsborough County, west of the eastern boundaries of the counties of Hillsborough, Manatee, Sarasota, Charlotte and Lee and that portion of Collier County west of longitude 81° - 39'. Clubs remaining in District 696 were:

Anna Maria Isles	Immokalee	Punta Gorda
Bradenton	Interbay	Ruskin - Sun City
Brandon	Largo	St. Petersburg
Cape Coral	Marco Island	Sarasota
Clearwater	Naples	Sarasota Bay
Clearwater Beach	Naples North	Sarasota Keys
Dunedin	New Port Richey	Seminole
Englewood	North Hillsborough	South Manatee
Fort Myers	Palmetto	Tampa
Fort Myers Beach	Pinellas Park	Tarpon Springs
Fort Myers South	Plant City	Venice - Nokomis
Gulf Beaches	Port Charlotte	West St. Petersburg
		Ybor City

These 37 clubs had a membership of 2,508. Two clubs, Ocala and Ocala-Silver Springs, formerly in District 696 were placed in District 694. The balance of the former 696 clubs numbering 31 were placed in the newly formed District 695.

At the time of division, the balance in the 696 District Fund was \$13,865. This was divided on the basis of number of members moving to or remaining in each of the districts involved. District 694 received \$286, District 695 received \$5,582 and District 696 received \$7,997.

Accumulated Rotary Foundation contributions from 696 clubs were \$141,375 at the time of District division. The 37 clubs of the new District 696 were responsible for and received credit for \$84,201 of this total. Except for two newly formed clubs, this was a 100% District with Clearwater its highest contributor at 1,000%.

1970-1971 – Dan McLeroy

(Englewood)

Governor Dan McLeroy of Englewood promptly added a club to the reduced District. East Clearwater, sponsored by Clearwater, chartered on July 27, 1970. William E. Walk Jr. of Ontario, California, USA, was RI President and his theme was “Bridge the Gaps”.

37 of the clubs were represented at the District Conference in Fort Myers and all 38 were present at the Assembly in Sarasota.

A major event was the tour of the Group Study Exchange team from Australia. All clubs were visited.

Governor Dan increased the District membership by 193 to a total of 2,790.

1971-1972 – Hampton Dunn

(Tampa)

Governor Hampton Dunn of Tampa was responsible for the addition of three more clubs to the District roster. Club number 39, Dunedin North, was chartered November 21, 1971. Jim Fresh of the Dunedin club, RI President Earnst G. Breitholtz’s, special representative at the Charter Night, led the organizing efforts. PDG Charles West gave the Charter Night address. President of the new club was Woodrow V. Register, who later became a Governor of District 696. Dunedin North was the second breakfast club in the District and its first in the Northern end. The RI President’s theme for his year was “Good Will begins with You”. RI President was from Kalmar, Sweden.

Club number 40 was Belleair Bluffs, sponsored by Largo and chartered on May 10, 1972. Jerry Hubbell was the moving spirit for the organization of the club and was its first president. Jerry also went on to later become a District Governor. Club number 41 was Northwest Tampa, jointly sponsored by Interbay and North Hillsborough, chartered June 30, 1972, the last day of Hamp’s year.

696 continued as a 100% Rotary Foundation District with 10 clubs at 100%, 13 at 200%, 9 at 300%, 3 at 400%, 1 at 500%, 2 at 600% and 1, Clearwater, at 1100%. Foundation contributions up to February 29, 1972, were \$96,574.

The June 30th financial statement showed the District to have weathered the transition from 70 clubs down to 37 clubs in good shape. After payments to 694 and 695 and a year of 696 operating expense, the District Fund had a surplus of \$8,060 going into the new year.

District Conference was at Manger Motor Inn in Tampa on October 21-23. Mich Emanuel, Tampa President, selected Ward Dougherty as chairman for the very successful event. John Nightingale, Past President of RIBI, served as personal representative for President Earnst. Among the dignitaries present was Ken Wacker, Past RI Director from Winter Park. PDG Win Pendelton was M.C. at the banquet. A new event added to the program was the Club President's Breakfast. No speeches – a get together for exchange of ideas and fellowship.

The year which began with 38 clubs and 2,668 members ended with 41 clubs and 2,819 members.

1972-1973 – Joseph E. Selden

(Fort Myers)

Governor Joseph E. Selden, Jr., of Fort Myers featured an administration of growth. First of the ten objectives he listed in his initial monthly letter was the establishment of five new clubs. This he fulfilled: Club 42 was Naples East, jointly sponsored by Naples and Naples North, chartered on March 10, 1973; Club 43, Hudson, sponsored by New Port Richey and chartered June 14, 1973; Club 44, North Fort Myers, sponsored by Cape Coral, also chartered June 14, 1973; Club 45, Fort Myers East, sponsored by Fort Myers, chartered June 25, 1973; and Club 46, Lehigh Acres, sponsored jointly by Fort Myers and Cape Coral, chartered June 30, 1973.

Louis Nightingale of the Marco Island club was Chairman of the District Conference held at the Marco Island Hotel on October 21-23. PDG James Franklin, Jr., prepared the program, which differed from usual format in that one session was devoted to the subject of “The Fragile Ecology of South Florida,” with a speaker's panel covering Wildlife Management, Marine Biology, Power, Food, Soil Conservation and Wildlife Development, each talk being followed by an audience participation period. Another entire plenary session was taken up by a panel, members of which were Steve Peronis, Tampa University, Armstead Selden, Assistant Secretary for Defense, and Past Vice President of RI Marcel Corbat. Discussion subject was “Rotary's Place in a Troubled World.” In other Conference actions, the clubs agreed to undertake a Group Study Exchange in 1973 - 1975, to adopt “Project 696” under Perry Snell of Sarasota as our official World Community Service Project (see Project 696 elsewhere in this text), and to recommend certain changes in Zone nominating procedure to RI. Total registration for the conference was 603 with all clubs represented.

RI President Roy Hickman visited the St. Petersburg Club speaking to an audience of nearly 1,000 at our intercity meeting. Roy stated that, except for the RI Convention, this was the largest audience he faced in his year as RI President. President Hickman from Birmingham, Alabama, USA, had as his theme “Let’s Take a New Look”.

The Zone 4 Institute for RI Officers again met in District 696, this time at the Marco Island Hotel on December 3-5. Among the outstanding speakers were 1st Vice President William R. Robbins of RI and Past President of RIBI Jack Pride.

District Assembly at St. Petersburg had a registration of 220 with all clubs but one represented. Haywood Turner of Ybor City reported to the Assembly that the District had collected \$3,000 and turned it over to the Rotary Club of Managua for their Earthquake Relief Fund.

At year’s end there were 46 clubs and 2,965 members in 696.

1973-1974 – Moody Rinehard (Largo) / Edward St. Phillip (Sarasota)

This was a difficult year for the District due to a sad change in leadership. Moody F. Rinehart, who had been elected as its Governor, died on August 11, 1973. Moody had the District well organized, all committees appointed and functioning, major events scheduled, some club visits completed, and there was every prospect of another banner year when his death came. There was an immediate gathering and caucus of past governors. After considerable soul searching, PDG Edward St. Phillip, who had served the District well in 1967 - 1968, agreed to step in and on August 21st was appointed by RI President Bill Carter to be Governor of the District. So far as possible, Ed continued all of Moody’s appointments and endeavored to complete his objectives. All of the remaining club visits were made and all scheduled events occurred.

The District Conference was hosted by Dunedin, Dunedin North, Tarpon Springs and New Port Richey at the beautiful Innisbrook Club on October 19th. It was packed full of Rotary from its beginning with RI President-elect Bill Robbin’s banquet address to its ending with Governor Ed’s closing remarks and tribute to Moody Rinehart. District Assembly was at Punta Gorda on May 17-18.

Sarasota Gulf Gate, sponsored by Sarasota, and chartered on December 11, 1973, was the addition to the District roster. The year ended with 47 clubs and 3,133 members. RI President William C. Carter’s (from Battersea, London, England) theme was “A Time for Action”.

William R. Robbins of District 699, Florida, became the second Floridian to become President of RI. Bill selected as his theme, “Renew the Spirit of Rotary” which Paul Sanborn, the 1974-75 Governor of District 696, made the focus of his year. “Renew” was a part of every letter and the core of every meeting.

First of importance was the District Conference under the joint sponsorship of the three Naples clubs. 519 registered and enjoyed the Rotary and the hospitality at the Naples Beach Club on October 25-27. One of the unique features was a display of the flags and home club banners of all District clubs. It was announced that the District had contributed an average of \$4.61 per member for a total of \$13,363 to the Rotary Foundation the previous year. Because of this amount, three Foundation Fellowships were made in the District. They went to Mark Leib of Tampa to go to Bristol, England, Elizabeth McCampbell of St. Petersburg, going to Marburg, Germany, and Dan Denton of Bradenton going to Cardiff, Wales. All were for the 1976-1977 academic year.

The Group Study Exchange team made up of Messrs. Green of Fort Myers, Dixon of Tampa, Hoffman of Fort Canova of Immokalee, and McGuire of Palmetto. Under the leadership of PDG Joseph Selden, Jr., left on January 12, 1975, for their visit to India District 317. Return was on February 23, 1975. Joe and all of the group reported on the trip at the District Assembly with a professional quality film show and talks. RI footed a bill of \$11,550 for the trip.

Clearwater was the fourth club of the present District 696 to celebrate its 50th Anniversary. RI President Bill Robbins was on hand as speaker at the Golden Banquet on February 1st. Of the clubs of the original District 696, Clearwater’s celebration was the 12th such event. Rotary’s 70th birthday was also noted in February.

Governor Paul makes some interesting comments in his final monthly letter on District 696 Rotary. One is that 418 letters were written to new members within the year yet the net membership gain for the year was less than 50. “Member retention, not member growth,” he says, “should be the goal.”

Dr. Clyde O. Anderson of St. Petersburg became Governor of 696, and Ernesto I. De Mello was elected President of Rotary International. Both elections took place at Boca Raton, Florida, the new site of the International Institute. The move from Lake Placid, New York, site of the annual training school for Governors over all of Rotary's former years, was noted with regret and nostalgic memories by all past officers of RI, but was recognized as an inevitable accompaniment to Rotary's growth. RI President De Mello from Niteroi, Rio De Janiero, Brazil, chose as his theme, "Dignify the Human Being".

At the end of the 1974-75 year, the 16,549 Rotary Clubs with approximately 775,000 members in 151 countries were divided into 357 Districts. District 696, after its many breakups and boundary changes had stabilized at 47 clubs and 3,189 members.

From the very beginning of his year, Governor Clyde directed a major effort toward upgrading club esprit and encouraging civic performance. He was a believer in inspiration through personal contact and made many follow up, social and administrative calls after his round of required visits. These were so numerous that he became known as the "callin' and visitin'" Governor.

Because of a mixup in dates, the District Institute intended for the instruction of new club officers was late. Institute and District Conference were held as one gathering with the Institute on October 30th and the Conference October 31st – November 2nd. Meetings were at the Don CeSar Hotel in Pass-a-Grille with the five lower Pinellas clubs – St. Petersburg, Gulf Beaches, Pinellas Park, Seminole and West St. Petersburg – as co-hosts. Dr. Al Geiger, Jr., Past President of the St. Petersburg Rotary Club and son of former PDG Al Geiger, was general Chairman of both events.

PDG W.H. Stuart of Bartow was Institute Counselor. All clubs were represented with a total of 166 Rotarians registered, which included 40 club presidents and 33 Presidents-elect. Bill's presentation and institute format made a strong impression on his listeners and gave them the necessary inspiration to work toward a well-organized and productive year.

The District Conference, planned around a Bicentennial theme, was a continuation of the club upgrading objective. Past RI Director Kenneth E. Wacker, a former Governor of District 696 and serving as RI President DeMello's personal representative

to the Conference, spoke at the Bicentennial Banquet. Other addresses were by PDG Mark Hollis and Dr. Billy O. Wireman. Each of the inspirational plenary sessions stressed “how to” information for club officers. Best liked and most impressive of these was the panel presentation “Rotary and Me” given by five District “Rotary Anns”. Total registration for the Conference was 773 with all clubs represented. It was especially noteworthy that, out of a Conference budget of \$4,500, the Conference Committee was able to return \$2,765 in unused funds to the District.

All clubs of the District were again represented at the Assembly meeting on April 23-24 at Sarasota’s Hyatt House and sponsored by the Sarasota club. Total registration was 364. The voting delegates unanimously passed regulations modifying District election procedures, a 1976 - 1977 District Budget of \$13,075 and the continuation of Project 696 to completion.

Governor Clyde placed great emphasis on club civic activity which resulted in a multitude of individual club civic projects. Sarasota’s \$10,000 gift to the city, New Port Richey’s development of a 20-acre Boy Scout Camp, Tampa Rotary’s \$5,000 gift to Guatemalan Earthquake Relief, and Englewood’s auction are but a few typical of their scope and magnitude. Almost every club held some sort of a barbeque, picnic or rally to promote fellowship.

The Rotary Foundation came in for its share of promotion also. The number of Paul Harris Fellows was increased by doubling the total in the District. 22 new sustaining members were also added to the Foundation. Total contributions for the year were \$37,970.50, and the District accumulated total was raised to \$196,396. The District per capita contribution of \$12 was a new high. A Group Study Exchange, third for the District, was arranged with District 141 in Finland. All of these things together made this the best Foundation year in District history.

1976-1977 – Woodrow V. Register

(Dunedin)

Governor Register served under RI President Robert A Manchester II, from Youngstown, Ohio, USA, the RI President’s theme was “I believe in Rotary”.

Three new clubs were chartered. Past Governors Clyde Anderson and Paul Sanborn were awarded the citation for Meritorious Service from the Foundation. The Group Study Exchange Team was from Finland.

This was the year that there was a dark moment in the history of the District when the District Treasurer embezzled all but \$17.62 of the District Funds. Clubs rallied to provide necessary operating funds and the bonding company later covered the loss.

1977-1978 – Gerald Hubbell

(Belleair)

Rotary International President W. Jack Davis was from Hampton, Bermuda; his theme was “Serve to Unite Mankind”. No other information is available.

1978-1979 – Bob Perkins

(Sarasota)

Bob Perkins served as District Governor under RI President Clem Renouf from Nambour, Queensland, Australia. The RI President’s theme was “Reach Out”.

The District Conference had a circus theme that attracted over 1,000 registrants. Eve Perkins was awarded a Paul Harris Fellow by the members of the District. To my knowledge this was the only governor’s spouse ever to be so honored in this manner in the history of our District.

1979-1980 – Joe L. Pendleton

(Fort Myers)

RI President was James L. Bomar Jr. from Shelbyville, Tennessee, USA, his theme was “Let Service Light the Way”. No other information was available.

1980-1981 – W.O. Gillenwaters

(Seminole)

This was one of the greatest years in the history of the District as nine new clubs were introduced into Rotary in our District. W.O. will go down in history as the Extension governor. RI President during his term was Rolf J. Klarich, Helsinki-Helsingfors, Finland; his theme was “Take Time to Serve”.

1981-1982 – Roy C. Asbury, Jr.

(Lakeland)

The District gave leadership to the Florida-Caribbean Conference of Goodwill. Youth Exchange hit a new high with a very successful exchange program with Austria. With Roy’s encouragement eleven Rotary Clubs from Polk County banded together to support Camp Rotary. RI President was Stanley E. McCaffey of Stockton, California,

1982-1983 – William A. Hendry

(Naples)

Bill breathed new life into Foundation giving as contributions were nearly doubled. Bill started the tradition of having a Rotarian of the Year for the District, as well as presenting banners for best attendance and best bulletin. Our District held the best Florida attendance at the International Convention in Toronto. The RI President was Hiroji Mukasa, from Nakatsu, Oita, Japan; his theme was: “Mankind is One - Build Bridges of Friendship throughout the World”.

1983-1984 – Welch Whitesell

(Sarasota Bay)

Welch served under RI President William E. Skelton, from Christiansburg-Blacksburg, Virginia, USA; his theme was: “Share Rotary – Serve People”.

An International Service Project in Jamaica, W.I. was adopted. A blood refrigerator, hospital equipment, and supplies were given to the Savanna-la-mar Hospital. Heartbeat International was established and received a \$250,000 grant from The Rotary Foundation. The House of Representatives of the State of Florida made the state a Four Way Test state by endorsing and adopting the Rotary Four Way Test as a guide for important deliberations.

1984-1985 – John F. Imperatore, Jr.

(Sarasota Keys)

John was the youngest Governor in the world. He served under RI President Carlos Canseco from Monterrey, Nuveo Leon, Mexico. The theme for that year was: “Discover a New World of Service”.

1985-1986 – Neal Patterson

(Cape Coral)

Neal Patterson became Governor of District 696, the second from the Rotary Club of Cape Coral. He attended the first International Assembly for Incoming District Governors to be held at Nashville, Tennessee. Neal’s classification was Law-Probate.

The President of Rotary International in Neal’s year was Edward F. Cadman from Wenatchee, Washington, USA. His theme for the year was “You Are the Key”.

The district had 120 new Rotarians added in Neal's year, an outstanding feat, significant in the history of Rotary International.

The District started with 56 clubs, 3516 members, ending with 59 clubs and 3686 members. The increase included the addition of three new clubs, Cape Coral Goldcoast, San Carlos-Estero, and Lake Placid Noon. With some loss of members, the net gain of 90 was significant.

Neal's District Assembly was held in Bradenton, Florida at the newly opened Manatee Civic Center on May 2-3, 1985. Registration was 347 from 54 of the 57 District Clubs. At that meeting District dues were raised \$2.00 per capita, lowest of six Florida Districts.

The District Conference was held at the Marriott Marco Island Resort, October 24-26, 1985. RI President Cadman's representative was John VanCott, a former RI Director and RI Treasurer.

Registration reached a high of 538 with 51 of 57 clubs represented. With local Rotarians that did not register, the total attendance at some point during the conference reached in EXCESS OF 725.

Appearing at the conference were eight Youth Exchange Students and three S4TL participants, in addition to five GSE team members back from Thailand, with Jim Henry from the Sarasota Club as team leader.

Several projects were undertaken in Neal's year including "Heartland International", which provided Pace Maker implants at no cost to indigents in the South and Central Americas. Another major project was "Heart Village in Avon Park, established to train young men and women to go out into third world countries to assist in humanitarian and educational efforts.

During Neal's year "PETS" was only in the second year of existence with 55 of 57 incoming Presidents there.

The Rotary Foundation contributions were increased from \$57,000 in 1980 to approximately \$260,000 in 1985-86. Neal was instrumental, through a casual conversation with a fellow Rotarian attending the Toronto International Convention, in receiving a \$150,000 corporate gift from the Singer Corporation to The Rotary Foundation.

Neal's closing remarks about his year as Governor were, "The year 1985-86 has had its share of highlights and a few lows. The membership growth within the individual

clubs is still not what it should be. The instability of about four clubs remains each Governor's nightmare. The plus is a dynamic District, dedicated Rotarians and a District that can become better and will do so.

“Thanks for the memories...”

1986-1987 – Robert C.J. Koo

(Winter Haven)

The RI President during Bob's year was M.A.T. Caparas from Caloocan, Metro Manila, Philippines; his theme was “Rotary Brings Hope”.

In the opinion of the writer, Gov. Bob had one of the most enjoyable and successful District Conferences in the history of our District. It was family oriented, well attended, low cost, exceptional fellowship and Rotary information, and showed a profit of \$5,000 which was donated to Polio Plus. This might very well be the miracle conference of the century. The Rotary Foundation continued to make progress with PDG Neal Patterson as chair. Membership grew in the district by 316. A district fund raising activity was great fun, but a financial disaster: we lost \$2,000.

1987-1988 – E.E. (Jim) Eshelman

(Sebring)

Jim was from Sebring, Florida. He visited all the clubs in the district in the fall accompanied by his wife, Kay. Jim had a large turnout from the District at the RI Convention in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania where it was announced the total committed contribution to eradicate Polio was \$240,000,000.

The RI President was Charles C. Keller from California, Pennsylvania, USA; his theme was “Rotarians - United in Service, Dedicated to Peace”.

1988-1989 – George Cobb, II

(Sarasota)

During George's year as District Governor, the RI President was Roice Abbey from Essendon, Victoria, Australia; his theme was “Put Life into Rotary – Your Life”.

Membership continued to grow by 10% with one new club and individual club growth. Even though this was immediately after the great Polio Plus push for funding, Foundation giving continued to grow.

1989-1990 – Dr. Abdul Rahman

(Punta Gorda)

Governor Abdul with humor and enthusiasm brought the level of fellowship to new heights. He encouraged the two Rotary Clubs in Cape Coral to construct a Rotary float to showcase Rotary around the State of Florida. The theme was a paddlewheel boat.

His RI President was Hugh M. Archer from Dearborn, Michigan, USA; his theme was “Enjoy Rotary”.

1990-1991 – Harold N. “Hal” Morris

(Lake Placid)

During Hal’s year as Governor the District had 65 clubs. Gov. “Hal” placed great emphasis on community projects and helped clubs initiate many major and long lasting projects.

The RI President was Paolo V.C. Costa from Santos, San Paolo, Brazil; his theme was “Honor Rotary with Faith and Enthusiasm”.

1991-1992 – Desmond Farrell

(Marco Island)

Des served under RI President Rajendra K. Saboo from Chandigarh, Union Territory, India; his theme was “Look Beyond Yourself”.

Another great year for the Foundation as the District went 32% over goal. The new district was now down to 44 clubs as a result of re-districting, but with the growth of three new clubs, membership continued. Bob Perkins was designated the 19th candle in the world which commemorated the 75th anniversary of The Rotary Foundation.

1992-1993 – Bernard Soep

(Sarasota Sunrise)

Bernie was one of the most creative governors in our history. His District Conference, although small, bristled with creativity from the moment you arrived to the moment you left. He developed an “I (eye) know Rotary” pin and gave them out as Rotarians showed evidence of knowing something special about Rotary. Each club was given a bulletin board and instruction for use. The Group Study Exchange team from Columbia, South America, took his quiz and all went home wearing the pin. The district raised over \$35,000 to assist in relief for victims of Hurricane Andrew.

RI President during Bernie year was Clifford L. Dochterman from Moraga, California, USA; Cliff’s theme was “Real Happiness is Helping Others”.

1993-1994 – Henry (Hank) Dawson

(Punta Gorda)

When Hank (no one ever called him Henry) took over leadership of District 6960 from Bernie Soep (no one ever called him Bernard), Hank was a member of the Punta Gorda club, following Dr. Abdul Rahman, also a PDG from the Punta Gorda club who held the office in 1989-1990.

Robert Barth from Aarau, Switzerland, was President of Rotary International in Hank’s year. His theme was “Believe in what you do - Do what you believe in.”

At the start of Hank’s year there were 2899 members in the District. Holding his District Assembly in his hometown at Charlotte High School, he was pleased that all 46 clubs in the District were represented, with 211 Rotarians attending.

When the time came for his District Conference, again Hank kept activities in Punta Gorda. The Holiday Inn was selected for accommodations and plenary sessions with an excellent representation of 319 Rotarians and guests. Again all 46 clubs had members there.

The R.I. President sent Roy Troutt from the University of Oklahoma as his personal representative to Hank’s conference. Principal speakers were PDG’s Neal Patterson 1985-1986 and Robert (Bob) Perkins 1978-1979 (no one ever called him Robert).

During Hank’s year the District engaged in a Group Study Exchange with District 3140, Bombay, India. Howard G. Crowell, PDG from Sarasota Bay, was team leader from District 6960. Gary Wilson was named TRF Chairman for the District in Hank’s year.

1994-1995 – Jerry Fread

(Cape Coral)

When Jerry Fread became Governor for 1994-1995, it seemed the selection of District Governors was moving south in the District. From Bernie Soep in Sarasota, 1992-1993, Hank Dawson, 1993-94 from Punta Gorda, Jerry Fread 1994-1995 from Cape Coral, and Governor-Elect John Smarge 1995-1996 from Naples.

The first thing Jerry had to do was convince fellow Rotarians that his name was pronounced FRED, not FREED.

Bill Hartley from Lincolnshire, England was President of Rotary International. His theme for the year was “Be a Friend”. There were 48 clubs in the District at the start of Jerry’s year with 2568 members. No new clubs were added during the year. His District Assembly was held at the Lehigh Resort in Lehigh Acres with approximately 200 Rotarians and guests attending. All 48 clubs were represented.

When plans for his District Conference were being discussed, another resort, Sanibel Harbor Resort at the bridge to Sanibel Island was selected. Again all 48 clubs were represented with an attendance of 410 plus participating in plenary sessions and fellowship activities. John Jacobsen of the Cape Coral Club was Conference Chairman.

Dr. Richard Slager, Director, Rotary International was RI President Hartley’s representative at the conference.

During Jerry’s year contributions to TRF increased 20% from the previous year. A tribute to Jerry’s dedication and belief in the work of the Foundation.

1995-1996 – John Smarge

(Naples)

In 1995-1996 as John Smarge succeeded Jerry Fread as Governor of District 6960, Herb Brown from Clearwater, Florida was President of Rotary International, with his theme for the year being “Act with Integrity, Serve with Love, Work for Peace”.

John started his year as Governor with 2568 members of 48 Rotary Clubs. By year’s end membership had increased 140 members for a total of 2708, although one club, Naples Central had given up their charter. Members of the former club joined other Naples Clubs

John held his District Assembly at the Holiday Inn in Bradenton, May 5th and 6th, 1995. 43 clubs were represented with 229 registrants.

In September, John brought a large contingent of Rotarians and guests to his hometown of Naples and the fabulous Registry Resort for three days of fun and Rotary experience. President Herb Brown was represented by Charlie Laine at the conference.

In 1995-1996 the District sent a GSE team to District 2120 in Italy, led by George Drobinski. In addition to the increase in District membership, John was responsible for a \$15,000 contribution from the District to the Ronald McDonald house.

1996-1997 – Richard Cox

(Fort Myers)

Louis Vicente Giay was Rotary International's President during Dick's term. His home was Arrecifes, Buenos Aires, Argentina; his theme for the year was "Build the Future with Action and Vision".

Two GSE teams were received in the district from England and Sweden. Gary Wilson took over as District Secretary. The District participated in a fund raising event to support Camp Rotary. The first child was brought to Florida to receive medical assistance through The Gift of Life program.

1997-1998 – Leo E. (Pete) Cypher

(Englewood)

Leo E. "Pete" Cypher of Englewood became Governor in 1997-1998. Glen Kinross from Hampton, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia became President of Rotary International; his theme for the year was "Show Rotary Cares". Pete Cypher was an energetic individual, always with a hearty handshake and a smile with Rotary on his mind. Even with his many Rotary visits, he kept up with his hobby of woodworking and presented the results of his art to club Presidents and PDG's.

In Pete's year two new clubs were chartered, Harbor Heights/Peace River on March 3, 1998 and three months later on June 4, 1998 the Rotary club of Placida. At the start of Pete's year the District had 47 clubs, 49 at years end, with a total of 2687 members.

The District Assembly was held on March 21, 1997 with a good representation from Clubs in the District. Pete selected the Sheraton Harbor Place in Fort Myers for his District Conference April 24-26, 1998, where Jack Troughton from Ottawa, Canada was the R.I. President's representative. In addition, known throughout the Rotary World, Bill Ives was a featured speaker discussing Rotary/TRF/Polio Eradication.

The District sent not one but two Group Study Exchange Teams in 1997-1998, one

to District 3870, the Philippines, with Al Bruggmeyer, Naples North as team leader and one to District 2810, Japan with John Steakley, Fort Myers Sunrise as leader.

Other significant achievements in Pete's year were the very popular Florida Rotary All-Star Gridiron Classic, the Adopt-A-Village in Guatemala project, the burning of the Rotary Camp Florida Mortgage in June 1998. Also the introduction of the Tri-Level program and the addition of a District Secretary and District Treasurer. We lost an outstanding Rotarian and good friend, Pete Cypher, to cancer on December 28, 2004.

1998-1999 – Howard Crowell

(Sarasota Bay)

During Howard's term RI President James L. Lacy from Cookieville, Tennessee, USA, had as his theme "Follow Your Rotary Dream".

Only time will tell if Howard will be remembered as one of the best speakers that ever came from District 6960. He had a way of making every speech interesting. He will be remembered as the father of the District Reorganization plan. It was during his term that District administration was implemented. During Howard's year, we exchanged GSE teams with Italy and awarded three outgoing Ambassadorial Scholarships and one incoming scholarship.

1999-2000 Richard "Dick" Dodderidge

(Venice-Nokomis)

When Dick Dodderidge became Governor of District 6960, he had his plans and objectives outlined for the year. They were: Enhance services to our communities; Support "The Rotary Foundation"; Increase membership; All clubs to earn the Rotary International President's Citation.

At the start of Dick's year there were 2585 Rotarians in the District, after a loss of 107 members the previous year. By the end of his year there was recorded a net increase of 81 members.

Carlos Ravezza from Milano Sud-Ovest, Italy, was President of Rotary International. His theme was "Act with Consistency, Credibility, Continuity". Dick's Conference was held at the Naples Beach Hotel and Club in Naples May 11-13, 2000, where Barrie Davis of Zebulon, N.C., PDG of District 7710, was the R. I. President's representative to the conference. Other major speakers at the conference were, Lou Pirconi, RI Director and PDG Howard Crowell. 600 Rotarians and guests attended. At the conference Peggy Sealfon and Hal Atzinger were named Rotarians of the Year. John Smarge was honored

as the “District 6960 Rotarian of the Decade for 1991–2000”. Another highlight of the conference was the presentation of 15,432 pairs of shoes from clubs of the District to go to the Guadeloupe Center.

During the year, three candidates were selected for the Ambassadorial Scholar program. The District sent and received a GSE team to District 1720 in France. Peggy Sealfon was team leader to France. A Youth Exchange program was completed with students visiting from Germany, Sweden, and Japan.

The Rotary All-star Gridiron Classic was held in Orlando on January 29, 2000 raising over \$100,000 for the Buoniconti Fund for research and cure for spinal paralysis.

The first incoming Ambassadorial Scholar to District 6960, Carlos Silva from Rio de Janero, Brazil, arrived to attend Florida Gulf Coast University.

The Rotary Club of Punta Gorda celebrated their 75th Anniversary. The club was chartered on July 25, 1925. Sad news during the year was the death of 1992-93 PDG Bernie Soep of the Sarasota-Sunrise club on July 25, 1999.

Dick’s District Assembly was held February 26, 2000, at the Royal Palm Yacht Club in Fort Myers during which District dues were raised \$2.00.

In conclusion, the results of Dick’s plans and objectives were all positive, Service to our communities was abundant; \$300,000 was raised in support of TRF; Membership was increased by net 81; Every club in the District earned the RI Presidential Citation.

Dick had quite a year! He received the admiration of all Rotarians of the District.

2000-2001 – Gary Wilson

(Clewiston)

It was a foregone conclusion throughout District 6960 that when Gary Wilson became Governor on July 1, 2000, he was going to make a BIG impression on the District, and he did. Starting with 51 clubs, by year end he had added two new clubs, Estero and Lakewood Ranch. Gary served under RI President Frank J. Devlyn from Anahuac, Distrito Federal, Mexico, whose theme was “Create Awareness Take Action”.

Gary’s District Assembly was held at the Port Charlotte Cultural Art Center with 237 Rotarians in attendance. When it came time for his District Conference, he selected the Resort at South Seas Plantation on Captiva Island. Attendance at the conference was 475 Rotarians and guests. All clubs of the District were represented at both his assembly and conference. Past District Governor David Wastchak was the conference representative of Rotary International President Frank Devlyn.

A Group Study Exchange team was sent to Brazil, and a team from Brazil was received in our District during Gary's year. There were at least ten major achievements during Gary's year, namely the following: District 6960 was ranked as 13th for membership growth throughout the world; the District was presented with the 21st Century award from President Frank Devlyn in San Antonio; Cape Coral North had the highest gain in membership of all clubs in District 6960; Received Presidential Citation from President Devlyn as part of the 2000-2001 Presidential Citation Program; District 6960 was rated as top in Zone 34 for outstanding contribution to The Rotary Foundation per capita, Annual giving in 2000-2001; District rated as Best Newsletter in Zone 34 for 2000-2001; District 6960 was awarded for \$100+ Per capita Annual giving during 2000-2001 for Zones 33 and 34; Received award from Director Michaux for Best Membership Growth in Zones 33 and 34 during 2000-2001; Inducted two new clubs into District 6960 during 2000-2001 with the addition of Lakewood Ranch and Estero. All clubs in District 6960 received the Presidential Citation award during 2000-2001.

As Gary stepped away as Governor of District 6960, he took leadership roles in Zone activities, serving as editor for the Zone 33-34 Directory for several years. He did indeed start and leave a BIG impression in the District and Big Shoes for Incoming Governor Richard Rehmeyer to fill in 2001-2002.

2001-2002 – Richard (Dick)C. Rehmeyer

(Sarasota)

The year 2001-2002 was a very positive year for District 6960 as Richard C. Rehmeyer of the Sarasota Club took over command of the District from Gary Wilson. Dick continued to keep the momentum going that Gary had experienced. The very popular and magnanimous Richard King was President of Rotary International. President King hailed from Niles, California, USA. His theme for the year was "Mankind is Our Business".

Dick's year started with 51 clubs. During the year, he added North Port Central, Lakewood Ranch A.M., and Longboat Key to the clubs of the District, with the number of Rotarians in the District increasing by 150 to a total of 2,727 by year's end. The District Assembly for the year was held March 21, 2001 at Cardinal Mooney High School in Sarasota with 49 clubs and 150 Rotarians represented. With Charles Clemons, PDG representing President King, the District Conference was held for the first time on board a cruise ship to Cozumel, Mexico, where 150 Rotarians from 54 clubs in the District enjoyed the fellowship of other Rotarians. The conference included a one day land session of Rotary knowledge.

During the year the District received fourteen matching grants, the most ever for the district. In addition, the year brought a GSE with Argentina, District 4800, a completely revamped modernized website, as information and communication for the district was established which contained complete District/Club membership database, writable GSE and Ambassadorial Scholar Applications, TRF monthly club recognition summaries and much more. Dick credits Cliff Hodges as Webmaster. Finally during Dick's year the Tri-Level Leadership System was instituted. It was a good year for Dick and District 6960 as he relinquished the Governorship to Hal Atzingen of Naples.

2002-2003 Hal Atzingen

(Naples)

After being selected "Rotarian of the Year" in 2000, the District Governor Nominating Committee selected Hal as District Governor for 2002-2003.

Bhichai Rattakul from Dhonburi, Thailand was President of Rotary International that year. His theme was "Sow the Seeds of Love". Hal's year started and ended with 54 clubs and 2733 members. His District Assembly was held at the Charlotte Harbor Cultural Center in Punta Gorda. All 54 clubs signed in with a total attendance in excess of 200 Rotarians and guests.

Hal brought his District Conference, held May 8-10-2003, to his home town, Naples. He selected the Naples Beach Club as the site for fun and Rotary information. There were 400 plus registrants. All 54 clubs were recognized as having attended. Cliff Price was the Rotary International President's Representative to the conference. Other major speakers at the conference were Past Rotary International President, Rick King, Olympian Brian Shiner, Luis Cosenza, Vice President of Honduras, and Pam Moore from Camp Florida.

During Hal's year there was a GSE with District 9650, New South Wales, Australia. Don Thomas was Team leader.

Clubs within the District donated a minimum of \$100 per capita for Polio Eradication during the year - a tribute to the leadership of Hal Atzingen.

2003-2004 – James R. “Jim” Henry, Jr.

(Sarasota)

Jim Henry had been President of the Rotary Club of Sarasota in 1988-1989. He was elected as District Governor of District 6960 for the 2003-2004 year, because of his many contributions to Rotary locally and on the District level. When Jim started his year as Governor, there were 54 clubs and some 2,733 members in the District. His District Assembly was held in Port Charlotte, April 17, 2004.

Jim was always identifiable in a crowd of Rotarians by his white, wide brimmed hat with a Rotary blue logo emblazoned ribbon. He wore that hat at all Rotary functions.

The President of Rotary International during Jim’s year was Jonathan Majiyagbe, the first R.I. President from Nigeria. His theme was “Lend a Hand”.

In January 2004, District 6960 held the first Rotary Leadership Institute in the southeast. That was the founding of Rotary Leadership Institute – Sunshine Division, the most successful division in the Rotary Leadership family.

Jim was instrumental in holding the first overnight Presidents-Elect Training Session (PETS) with the District paying expenses for PEs and their spouses in Punta Gorda. All clubs were represented. DGN Jerry Hearn and his spouse were sent to Peach State PETS to investigate Multi District PETS. The following year, District 6960, under DG Hearn, was one of the founding districts of All Florida PETS. During Jim’s year and DGE Hearn’s Assembly, District dues were increased to allow the District to pay for all District PEs and their spouses to attend the All Florida PETS. As a result, District 6960 has continually had the highest representation of clubs at the All Florida PETS.

Over the years Jim has been the recipient of many awards including: Rotarian of the Decade, District 6960 2001-2010; Regional Rotary International Membership Coordinator, Zone 34, 2008-2010; Rotary Coordinator, Zone 34, 2010-2011; 2011 Rotary International Service Above Self Award; and member Rotary International North American Regional Membership Development and Retention Committee.

2004-2005 – Jerry L. Hearn

(Lakewood Ranch)

Jerry’s President of Rotary International was Glenn E. Estess Sr. from Shades Valley, Alabama, USA. Glenn’s theme was “Celebrate Rotary”.

As noted above, at Jerry’s District Training Assembly (that took place in Jim’s year) on April 17, 2004 in Port Charlotte, District dues were increased to allow the

District to pay for all District PEs and their spouses to attend the All Florida PETS. In 2005, under DG Hearn, District 6960 became one of the founding districts of the multi-district “Florida PETS”. The District can be proud of Jim Henry and Jerry Hearn’s foresight in working together to help establish the very successful Florida PETS which is still going strong today.

Jerry Hearn’s year as District Governor could be called the year of the Perfect Storms, that is plural not singular, for during Jerry’s year he encountered not only the normal duties of a District Governor, but did it while facing not one, but four major hurricanes. Fortunately Jerry was able to schedule and visit clubs of the District prior to the hurricanes; Charley, Frances, Jean, and Ivan that hit Florida in the short period of approximately six weeks during August and September 2004.

Disaster Relief was the byword during Jerry’s year.

Serious property damage occurred in numerous district communities on the west coast and central Florida. Special events were held to provide assistance during the 2004 holiday season. District Rotarians distributed \$100 Walmart gift cards to each of 350 trailers at the Punta Gorda FEMA Park (\$35,000). Free clothing, toys, and food were distributed to over 4,000 Arcadia residents at the “Arcadia Rotary Rally Day”. Later during the Rotary year, a massive tsunami struck Sri Lanka, killing hundreds of people and causing major property damage. Shelter Box USA, headquartered in District 6960, sent \$1.2 million worth of shelter boxes to the disaster area.

Jerry had planned his District Conference to be held as a “Conference Cruise”, and so it was, where 336 registrants from forty four Rotary Clubs enjoyed a needed relaxing four days cruising and participating in Rotary functions. Rotary International President Glenn Estess, Sr. sent John (Bo) Porter as his representative at the conference. Other major speakers during the conference were Bill Ives, PRID, Mike Colasurdo, PDG, Howard Crowell, PDG, John Smarge, PDG, and Hal Atzingen, PDG, Conference Chairman.

Jerry’s year started with 54 clubs, added one new club, Sarasota Gateway, ending his year with 2530 members in District 6960. The District had a Group Study Exchange with Japan District 2620. PDG Yasushi (Amigo) Amikura was the team leader.

Yes, Jerry had a full active year as Governor. The year of “PERFECT STORMS”.

2005-2006 – Paul Kent Musler

(Fort Myers)

The President of Rotary International during Paul's year was Carl-Wilhelm Stenhammer from Goteborg, Sweden; his theme was "Service Above Self".

During Jerry Hearn's year and Paul Musler's District Training Assembly, seventy five Rotarians from forty two Rotary Clubs attended the scheduled training held at the Holiday Inn in Fort Myers on April 16, 2005. It was considered a success although many Rotarians were still in a recovery mode from the hurricanes that took place in August through September in 2004.

2006-2007 – Anthony (Tony) Gallo

(West Bradenton)

Tony Gallo, member of the West Bradenton Rotary Club, District Governor for 2006-2007 made the historian's writings quite easy, for he prepared a review of events month by month during his year, starting actually four months before he took office when he attended PETS with 52 of his presidents-elect in Orlando. His district directory was developed in May of 2006 by Scott Reed of the West Bradenton club. The next month he and his spouse, Suzanne, attended the District Conference in Estero as well as the Rotary International Convention in Copenhagen.

RI President William B. Boyd of Pakuranga, Auckland, New Zealand had as his theme "Lead the Way".

Off and running, the first of July a new web site was put into operation, and the directory was distributed.

Tony made all of his club visits, 45 of which were attended with spouse Suzanne by his side. In August TRF seminar was held at Lakewood Ranch where 14 new Paul Harris Society members were recruited and Lei Ling, our Ambassadorial Scholar was greeted enthusiastically by attending Rotarians.

September through December clubs of the district were very active. Many clubs were starting grants with 6 out of 7 clubs receiving the RI public relations grants. The figure is outstanding when you consider those grants were given to only 150 clubs worldwide.

Successes for the year were the dictionary project, literary programs, the start of 3 new interact clubs.

Over 40 DGE's from around the world with their spouses attended a week-long stay in the Sarasota area, before attending the RI assembly in San Diego.

Two events, “Rotary Goes to the Dogs” on February 10th (raised \$15,000 for S4TL) and “Rotary at the Races” on March 17th collected over \$33,000 for Rotary’s Camp Florida.

In April the Group Study Exchange team from District 2110 (Sicily and Malta) visited our district and our team visited that district.

May 3-5, 2007, Tony held his District Conference at the Colony Beach and Tennis Resort on Longboat Key with 52 clubs represented and over 350 Rotarians and guests attending. During the conference, the RI Presidential Citation was presented to 31 clubs and the Governor’s award to 52 clubs. The year’s International Award went to John Capece of the Labelle Club. “Service Above Self” award went to Jim Henry of the Sarasota Club. The “Rotarian of the Year” to Gary Wilson, Clewiston Club. President of Rotary International William (Bill) Boyd sent Carlos Ravizza as the president’s representative to Tony’s conference. Another great addition was John T. Capps and his wife, Jane. Conference chairperson was Marilyn Bezner.

At the close of Tony’s year the district was on target to reach \$200 per capita for TRF. His final comments were “to my area governors, TRF committee, all district chair people, and the Rotarians of 6960, Suzanne and I thank you for your hospitality, dedication, and for everlasting memories, in making my year as District Governor fun filled and productive”.

2007-2008 – Gary Israel

(Estero)

A long time Rotarian stepped into the governance of District 6960 on July 1, 2007. Gary Israel, member of the Estero club, brought enthusiasm and determination to do good locally and internationally.

Wilfrid J. Wilkinson from Ontario, Canada was president of Rotary International. His theme of the year being “Rotary Serves”. He sent Robert Brickman as his representative to Gary’s district conference, which was held out of district on Royal Caribbean’s cruise ship, “Enchantment of the Seas” sailing throughout the Caribbean. Other major speakers during the conference were Past Rotary International Director Mike Colusardo, RI Director Barry Rassin, and Dr. Deri Joy Ronis. Gary held his district assembly at the Port Charlotte Cultural Center in Port Charlotte, where 54 of 56 clubs of the district were in attendance.

It was unfortunate that five clubs turned in their charters during 2007-2008 due to the downturn of business and the economy in general. We lost Fort Myers Beach, chartered in 1955, along with Sarasota AM, Osprey, Longboat Key, and Sarasota Sunset.

A highlight of Gary's year was participating in not one, but two Group Study Exchanges. One with France, District 1650, the other with Haiti, District 7020. Team leaders were Bruce Bridewell to France and Bob Clendenin to Haiti.

Gary's year had the highest per capita giving to The Rotary Foundation in the history of District 6960 with \$238.00 per Rotarian. Also, the re-invigoration of both the Wheelchair Foundation and the Gift of Life led to a very successful year for Gary.

2008-2009 – Margaret R. (Margie) Cypher (Placida)

After being named "Rotarian of the Year" in 2002, Margie became the first woman District Governor of District 6960 in 2008-2009. The President of Rotary International was Dong Kurn "D.K." Lee from Seoul, Korea. His theme for the year was "Make Dreams Real".

At the start of Margie's year there were 2500 Rotarians in the 52 Rotary Clubs of the District. By year end membership had dropped to 2328, with the loss of one club, Sarasota Sunset. Like many other District Governors before her, she held her District Assembly at the Charlotte Cultural Center in Port Charlotte. The date was April 21, 2008. 169 Rotarians registered, with 47 clubs represented. As did PDG Hal Atzingen in 2002-2003, she selected the Naples Beach Hotel and Golf Resort for the District Conference, held May 7-9, 2009. With 43 of the clubs of the District represented, there were 254 Rotarians registered. On the last day of the conference all in attendance were invited to help assemble food packages for the "Kids against Hunger of S.W. Florida". Over 1000 packages were assembled.

President Lee sent Wallace B. Brown, PDG of District 5430, from Murray, Utah, as his representative to Margie's conference. Attending the conference was the 2008-2009 Group Study Exchange team from District 3040 in India, with their District Governor Alok Billore as leader. Our GSE team leader to India was Selva Sunderavel, Past President of the Charlotte Harbor Rotary Club.

Significant achievements during Margie's year were: The Rotary Clubs of Englewood and Sarasota Bay were honored for 50 years of service with a Certificate of Congratulations from RI President D. K. Lee; Rotary Camp Florida reorganized their Board of Directors and revised camp by-laws; An Ambassadorial Scholar was sponsored to Australia; Becky Fero, AG, introduced the Rota-Kids program to 5th Graders; Cathy Parks developed a tri-level program for the Interact Clubs of District 6960; The PDG's of District 6960 met to assist the DG on August 4, 2008.

As Margie Cypher laid down the gavel to end her 2008-2009 year, Vince Cautero was quick to snatch it up to start his well planned for year as governor.

John Kenny of Grangemount, Scotland was president of Rotary International in 2009-2010; his theme for the year “The Future of Rotary Is In Your Hands”. Vince was a product of the Naples Club, where he served as President in 2003-2004.

His district conference was held out of district at the Tradewinds Resort in St. Petersburg Beach, May 13-16, 2010. PDG Hal Atzingen was conference chairman and turned out over 300 Rotarians and guests. Speakers were RI Director Elect John Smarge and PDG John T. Capps from North Carolina, among others. Jim Henry was honored as the “District 6960 Rotarian of the Decade for 2001-2010”.

In Vince’s year a matching grant of some \$33,500 was used by the Cape Coral Goldcoast club to provide education materials and computers to youth in Mandeville, Jamaica through a partnership with the Rotary Club in that city.

A first, the “Celebrate Rotary Dinner with the Presidents” was co-hosted by District 6950 and District 6960, on Wednesday, February 3, 2010 at the Grand Hyatt-Tampa Bay. RI President John Kenny and Past RI Presidents Glenn E. Estess Sr., Herbert Brown, and Frank Devlyn were participants.

Danielle Hall from the North Fort Myers Rotary Club was made “Rotarian of the Year” for 2009-10. Although diagnosed with cervical cancer, she rode her bike 220 miles through and over the Cascade Mountains. She raised over \$1,200 to benefit local charities. The ride was sponsored by the Redmond Washington Rotary Club.

At the 2010 International Convention in Montreal the district sponsored a booth promoting wheelchairs for polio survivors. Also in Vince’s year, a Group Study Exchange with District 5010 – Russia was a rewarding experience. Exchanges were in April and May of 2010. During the year District 6960 participated in 12 district simplified grants and 7 matching grants.

At the outset of Vince’s year he set three personal projects as the cornerstone of his year: Kids Against Hunger, Rotary Camp Florida and the JDRF. He was successful in those projects and many others.

Haiti Relief was a major project raising \$57,000 in cash and shelter boxes. Over 2,000,000 meals were shipped to Haiti, and Rotarians packaged over 7.5 million meals since August 2007.

And one final accomplishment ... through the leadership of the Fort Myers Rotary Club a new Rotaract Club was chartered at Edison State College.

Mr. Enthusiasm was Governor this year. Don had participated in many committees and projects of the District prior to his nomination and election as District Governor. Group Study Exchange was a favorite project of his. He was a team leader to Australia in 2002-2003.

When Don took over as Governor, Ray Klingensmith from Kirksville, Missouri, was President of Rotary International, his theme for the year being “Building Communities – Bridging Continents”. The District had 51 clubs with 2312 members. During the course of Don’s year, one club, Sarasota Southside, was added to the District, quite an accomplishment in the time of down-sizing because of the economy.

Don held his District Assembly in Port Charlotte on April 10, 2010 with all 51 clubs represented and a registration of 153 Rotarians.

Don went all out to bring his District Conference to his home city, Cape Coral, at the luxurious Marina Village on June 9-11, 2011. At the conference all 52 clubs were represented, with 432 Rotarians and guests in attendance. PDG Larry Lunsford was President Klingensmith’s representative to the conference. Other major speakers Don had lined up included Rotary International Director John Smarge, John and Jane Capps, Ken Behring, Rob Raylman, Steve Popper, Kenn Visser, Dave Clark, two Ambassadorial Scholars and the GSE team from Poland, District 2230. Our District team to Poland was led by Sandy Scoggins, member of the Bonita Springs Club.

Don made some significant changes in the administration of the District during his year. He reintroduced the practice of the District Governor meeting with the club board of directors prior to his official club visit.

Don’s wife, Sue, was an unofficial Assistant Governor for she was with him when he visited all 52 board and club meetings. Membership workshops were held in five locations throughout the District with a total attendance of 415 Rotarians.

During Don’s year the membership termination rate was cut by 2/3 from the previous year with a total loss of only 20 members. TRF giving totaled \$589,000 and the annual program fund was \$398,000.

One of Don’s “PET” projects “Rotary Cares Teddy Bears” distributed approximately 5000 of the cuddly bears to first responders, children’s hospitals, and shelters for abused women and children. Another of Don’s projects, which drew accolades throughout the District was the packaging of 1,037,000 meals in one day with Rotarians and volunteers at

three different locations, Sarasota, Naples and Fort Myers for “Kids Against Hunger/ Meals of Hope”.

Awards for activities and projects by clubs and Rotarians were many. Presidential Citations were presented to 36 clubs with 16 receiving “club of distinction” awards from International President Klinginsmith. 41 clubs received the Governor’s Award.

District 6960 “Rotarian of the Year” went to Steve Agius. District “Service Above Self” Award to Cyndi Doragh, and the “Trim Tab” Award was presented to Jane Goble. Jim Henry received Rotary International’s “Service Above Self” Award.

Mr. Enthusiasm had a “FANTASTIC” year.

2011-2012—Denise A. Hearn

(Lakewood Ranch)

When Don Thomas relinquished the Rotary District 6960 gavel to Denise, she was well prepared for her year as Governor, for she had not only served as an aid to the District Governor in 2004-2005 (who happened to be her spouse), she learned the duties of District Governor, served on a multitude of district committees, including being a facilitator for the Rotary Leadership Institute. She is a member of the Lakewood Ranch Club. In 2007 she was selected as “Club Rotarian of the Year”.

The President of Rotary International in 2011-2012 was Kalyan Banerjee from Vapi, Gujarat, India. His theme for the year was “Reach Within to Embrace Humanity”.

The district consisted of 52 clubs at the start of 2011 and ended the year with the same number, but the district lost 16 members during the year. Denise held her District Assembly at the Port Charlotte Cultural Center in Port Charlotte with 145 registrants and 45 clubs being represented.

When it came time for her conference, she elected to take Rotarians of District 6960 and guests on a working four day cruise to Cozumel, April 12-16, 2012. 45 of 52 clubs attended. Mike Colasurdo, a Past RI Director/Treasurer was President Banerjee’s representative to the conference. Other major speakers were RI Director John Smarge, Joanne Bertsche, RI Annual Giving Officer, and PDG Howard Crowell, who conducted the Installation Ceremony.

The District sent a GSE team to Korea, District 3600, with Nancy Reed from the Naples Collier club as team leader. The team from Korea spent a fantastic four weeks in our District with members of visited clubs giving high fives to the quality of their team.

During the year TRF per capita giving exceeded the goal of \$200 per member and it was noted that during the year the Polio eradication worldwide went from 4 endemic countries to 3. India has been removed from the list.

The Governor's Project: Honor Flight, June 9, 2012, a group of 55 Guardians escorted 55 World War II Veterans to Washington, D.C. to visit THEIR memorial as well as other monuments, including Iwo Jima, the Lincoln Memorial, the Washington Monument, Air Force tribute and witnessed the changing of the Guard at Arlington Cemetery. Upon arrival at Reagan International Airport (as well as at the Southwest Regional Airport) they were honored by water cannon salutes. They were greeted at airport gates by civilians, current military individuals, TSA employees, and many, many more (including children that wanted to touch a hero) and say "thank you for your service".

A highlight of the year was the development of the District Training Team which combined the "Governor Group" with their respective aides along with our District Trainer. A footprint was developed for consistent training programs, concrete documents to define roles, etc. Denise should be complimented for the tireless effort to bring this important project moving forward to positive impact through Rotary experiences as a District.

Denise had a final comment as she stepped down and became a Past District Governor, "WOW – What a Rotary year!!!"

2012-2013 – Stephen F. (Steve) Schlueter (Anna Maria Island)

Steve had a stellar year as Governor bringing strong leadership to our District. RI President Sakuji Tanaka from Yashio, Japan chose as his Rotary theme "Peace Through Service". His theme exemplified Steve's personality and desire to give back to his community and the world.

During Steve's year District 6960 held its own in membership. Two clubs gave up their charters leaving the District with 50 clubs. Fortunately, all but a few members from those clubs were relocated into active clubs, in fact many had already made the move once their club had stopped meeting the prior year. The District started the year with 2226 members and ended with 2208 members. District giving to the Annual Program Fund was \$486,000; total giving to The Rotary Foundation was \$678,000.

Steve's District Training Assembly was held on March 31, 2012 at the Port Charlotte Cultural Center with 133 Rotarians attending

The clubs really excelled in their projects. To quote Steve, “Perhaps this happens every year, but I really enjoyed watching the clubs’ activities”.

Throughout Steve’s official visits, he promoted the “Josh the Otter” program which helps prevent accidental childhood drownings and the Rotary Reader Patch Program, a literary/reading program geared to primary school students.

The people of St. Lucia benefitted greatly by Steve’s International Service Project to bring clean water to the Plateau population of 7000 in St. Lucia. It turned into a great project with five other Districts helping out and stretched into sanitation and education as well.

Steve’s District Conference took place at the Hyatt Regency in Sarasota, Florida from May 16 - May 19; 419 Rotarians and their guests attended. PDG James Probsdorfer from Yorktown, Virginia was RI President Tanaka’s Representative at the conference. Finishing off his District Conference was the creation of a District 6960 Rock and Roll band, “Rotary Rocks”, whose members are still playing today, raising money for The Rotary Foundation.

Steve says, “THIS WAS THE BEST YEAR OF MY LIFE”.

2013-2014 – Tim Milligan

(Bradenton)

Tim took the helm as Governor under the leadership of RI President Ron D. Burton from Norman, Oklahoma. President Ron’s theme was to “Engage Rotary, Change Lives”.

Tim introduced CART (Coins for Alzheimer Research Trust) to Zone 34. District 6960 was the first District in Florida to begin the program.

Tim led the way for the prestigious “Million Dollar Meals” for Zone 34. The dinner event raised over \$3.2 million dollars for The Rotary Foundation. RI President Ron Burton and his wife attended, along Anne Matthews, first female Vice President of RI.

The District Training Assembly took place at the Port Charlotte Cultural Center on April 20, 2013, and 126 Rotarians were in attendance. Tim had a multi-district conference May 1-5, 2014 in the Grand Bahamas with two other districts. Our district attendance was 74. Total giving to the Foundation for the District was \$602,000.

He took the lead in “Rotary Has Heart”. Tim served as President for Gift of Life Florida during 2014-2016, and he continued to serve as District Membership Chair through 2017.

Tim performs as a vocalist in the “Rotary Rocks” band, has hosted multiple Rotary Youth Exchange Students, and shares his good humor and quick wit with all he encounters. A great Rotarian with a big heart!

2014-2015 – Pete Doragh

(Fort Myers South)

District Governor Pete had what it takes to move our District to the next level. His vision, strong leadership, and organizational skills brought focus and determination to the forefront. RI President Gary Huang from Taipei, Taiwan started the year off right with his theme, “Light Up Rotary”.

Under Pete’s guidance and direction the District per capita giving increased, membership increased, grants increased, new programs and projects were established, RYLA was initiated, By-laws were rewritten, and the district’s Areas were re-assigned to improve communication between Area Governors and Club Presidents with the Governor.

Youth Service is a significant area of focus for Governor Pete. As a Past District Chairman for Rotary Youth Exchange, Pete was able to engage Rotarians throughout the District to become more involved, and youth interest and participation in the program increased. Pete continues to serve on the Board of Directors and provide legal service to RYE Florida. Pete and his wife, Cyndi, have hosted numerous youth exchange students in their home. Keeping with Pete’s focus on youth, Rota-Kids began with more involvement and activity within the District.

Rotaract grew and was included in PETS (President Elect Training Seminar) for the first time.

Pete’s District Training Assembly was held at the Port Charlotte Cultural Center on April 5, 2014 with 126 Rotarians attending. Pete’s District Conference was May 14-17, 2015 at South Seas Island Resort and had 290 Rotarians and guests in attendance. The District’s total giving to The Rotary Foundation for 2014-2015 was \$945,000.

2015-2016 – Cyndi Doragh

(Fort Myers South)

RI President K.R, “Ravi” Ravindran from Colombo, West Province, Sri Lanka challenged his District Governors to “Be a Gift to the World”. What a perfect theme for Cyndi! His theme drove Cyndi’s year as District Governor.

During 2015-2016 the District donated 20% of its District Designated Funds (DDF) to “End Polio Now”. The World’s Greatest Meal to End Polio raised in excess of \$130,000.

Other projects our District was involved in were: CART (Coins for Alzheimer’s Research Trust), working to help prevent/stop human trafficking, Josh the Otter, the Kenya Doll Project, and a water project in the Dominican Republic. Cyndi was also

active in Rotary Leadership Institute, and, of course, her first love, Rotary Youth Service.

At the beginning of her year there were 52 clubs in the District; the year ended with 51 clubs. Even with the loss of one club, Cyndi had an increase of membership for the year from 2229 to 2232.

Cyndi's District Training Assembly on April 25, 2015 at Hodges University in Naples and had 152 Rotarians in attendance. Cyndi's District Conference had a wonderful theme, "Fellowship of the Wheel: The Rotary Wheel". 436 Rotarians and guests attended the conference that was held at Sanibel Harbor Marriott Resort in Fort Myers, Florida. Many of the attendees got into the spirit of the theme and wore very clever costumes, and Cyndi had great videos correlated to her theme to play during her presentations. Deepa Willingham from California and India was RI President Ravi's Representative at the conference.

Cyndi did an exemplary job during her year as District Governor! At Zone in the fall of 2016, our District was recognized with the following awards earned during Cyndi's year: the highest annual fund per capita giving District in RI Zone 34 (5th in the world at \$365/\$1 a day per person), the 2nd highest total annual fund giving District in RI Zone 34/14th in the world (\$1,143,663.33), 2nd highest total giving District in RI Zone 34/17th in the world, the highest endowment fund giving District in RI Zone 34/28th in the world, and the 3rd highest Paul Harris Society Membership District in RI Zone 34/30th in the world.

Cyndi can be proud of all her accomplishments in 2015-2016. She made her mark on the Rotary world. She took her challenge from President Ravi very seriously and was truly "A gift to the world".

2016-2017 – Wm. Laddison (Ladd) Waldo (Lakewood Ranch)

When Ladd began his year as District Governor, John F. Germ from Chattanooga, Tennessee, USA was our RI President. John's theme was "Rotary Serving Humanity".

Ladd's District Training Assembly took place on April 16, 2016 at the Port Charlotte Cultural Center with 150 Rotarians in attendance. He started his year with 49 clubs and ended the year with 51 clubs. At the start of Ladd's year there were 2238 Rotarians in the District and at the end of the year membership had grown to 2287. Our membership growth in 2016-2017 was third highest in Zones 33-34 which continued our District's pattern of growth.

Ladd was happy to report that he had consistent and robust participation by the District clubs in both District and Global Grants, including clean water, literacy, and polio eradication. Our clubs participated in many multi-club projects to the betterment of their communities. This included everything from district-wide dictionary distributions to all

third graders in our district to service at senior living facilities. Several clubs planned joint projects, such as a county-wide network of three special needs playgrounds.

During Ladd's year two Interact Clubs and one Rota-Kids Club were founded. Several satellite clubs were started and two were chartered as new independent clubs.

Our District's annual total of giving to The Rotary Foundation ranked #7 in the Rotary world at \$1,017,533 with a per capita of \$328.17.

400 Rotarians and their guests attended Ladd's District Conference which was held at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Sarasota, Florida from May 18 – 21, 2017. His conference theme was "the British Invasion". PDG James Probsdorfer from Yorktown, Virginia represented RI President John Germ at the convention.

2017-2018 – Barbara "Bobbi" Bird

(Bonita Springs)

Barbara Bird lovingly known throughout District 6960 as "Bobbi" served Rotary International President Ian Risley from Australia; his theme was "Rotary Making a Difference".

Bobbi's District Training Assembly was held on April 22, 2017 at the Charlotte County Cultural Center with 198 Rotarians attending.

Membership Engagement continued to be a high priority for our clubs and has been very successful too. We started a new District wide "Rotary Means Business" affiliation. District Membership Chair, Darryl Keys, took the lead on this initiative and worked with several Rotarians throughout the District to set up three "Regional branches", so we have multiple, regularly scheduled meetings in the North, Central and South areas. This allows members and potential members multiple opportunities to network with each other. Members can attend any or all of these monthly meetings. This is a great new member benefit that dovetails with Rotary Global Rewards giving us the benefits of local, national, and international business and fellowship opportunities.

In September of 2017 we experienced Hurricane Irma which made landfall in the southern part of our District. Rotarians rallied and led many aspects of the immediate response. DGE Sandra Hemstead accepted the lead role in emergency response with Rotarians from many areas of the United States helping our District; Disaster Aid USA also provided us with assistance. Under the direction of District Rotary Foundation Chair, Pete Doragh, we set up a District Donor Advised Fund to use the numerous donations people sent to help our District specifically. We also worked with Lee County Habitat for Humanity to set up a new program for them that could utilize Donor Advised Funds to help area residents repair and rebuild their homes after Hurricane Irma. This has been working very well! This work is still ongoing. In addition to the \$1,011,411 that we raised and sent to The Rotary Foundation as our Annual Donation, we raised and have leveraged successfully about \$100,000 dollars that will aid Hurricane Irma victims throughout the

District. The first two grants from the District went to families in the Clewiston area.

Also under the direction of DRFC, Pete Doragh, members of our District participated in the Tour De Tucson for the first time. The Tour De Tucson cycle ride raises money and awareness for Polio.

Polio Pete, the penguin, was introduced as our District Mascot. Each Club President received a “copy” of Polio Pete on a stick to take along on Rotary trips, fundraisers, and meetings; “Pete” loves to be photographed. Polio Pete traveled around the world, literally, with members of our District. He was also one of our “heroes” and the mascot of our District Conference in the form of a custom designed pin.

The District Conference took place from May 17 through May 19, 2018 at the Hyatt Regency Coconut Point Resort and Spa in Bonita Springs, Florida. Attendance at the conference was 375. Eric Schmautz from the Rotary Club of San Francisco was the R.I. President’s Representative at the conference.

6960 was able to fund every District Grant request and fund our District’s first competitive, multi-club major grant. The successful grant application was from Area 8. The Sarasota clubs helped fund a refrigerated food truck for the All Faiths Food Bank that serves not only Sarasota, but several surrounding counties. This truck will allow them to expand services into Desoto County, a much underserved area. The grant was for \$40,000.

Finally, our District has worked very hard to realize our fourth consecutive year of membership growth. Not many Districts in North America have achieved this. It shows we are serving our customers well, and they are realizing the value of their membership and what Rotary does.

2018-2019 –Sandra Hempstead

(Bonita Springs)

Barry Rassin from District 7020 was the International President during Sandra’s term as District Governor. His theme was “Be the Inspiration”. This theme was a wonderful fit for Sandra, because she has been a great inspiration for District 6960 for years with all her volunteering efforts for Rotary throughout the world. This year allowed Sandra to share all her expertise with our district.

Sandra’s District Training Assembly for her year took place in April 27, 2018, at the Cultural Center of Charlotte County with an attendance of 189.

Sandra held a Million Dollar Dinner on February 13, 2019, at the Kensington Country Club in Naples, Florida. It was a great success! It raised 2.3 million dollars for the Rotary Foundation. Her guest speaker was RI President Barry Rassin.

Her district conference took place from May 9 through May 11, 2019 at the newly opened conference center at the Westin Resort at Marina Village in Cape Coral, Florida. She had 540 attendees at her district conference. PDG Kathy Fahy was RI President Barry

Rassin's Representative at the conference. It was a wonderful district conference. The venue allowed all the events to take place in the one area of the hotel. She had many speakers from out of the area among them was Grace Awara, the first "Gift of Life" child to receive a life-saving heart operation in the United States.

Sandra is an alumni of Rotary International. She was the team leader of the GSE team to Poland in 2011. She represented then DG Don Thomas and district 6960. She and her team learned Polish to help them give their presentations.

Sandra had 51 clubs at the start of her year and had 51 clubs at the end of her year. She did a great job retaining clubs during her year. The district membership at the start of her year was 2314 and showed only a minor loss to membership with a final membership number of 2278. The District annual giving total to the Rotary Foundation was \$1,311,512.

2019-2020 –Rich Kirschner

(Naples)

Rich Kirschner is member of the Rotary Club of Naples. Rich served under RI President Mark Daniel Maloney from the United States. Mark's them was "Rotary Connects the World".

Rich's training assembly took place on April 20, 2019 with 150 attendees. This training assembly is always a great way for the incoming District Governor to get to know their club presidents more and continue the training they received at PETS.

Rich started his year with 51 clubs. He ended the year with 49 clubs. One club, the Rotary Club of Murdock was lost, and 2 club merged to form the Manatee River club.

The District had many accomplishments during Rich's year:

Clubs in the district raised and donated nearly \$450,000 for Hurricane Dorian relief.

District 6960 was the number one district for the 10 million meal challenge.

The district founded two new Rotaract clubs and several new Interact and RotaKids clubs.

What a great way to get children and adults to know more about what Rotary does.

Rotary Youth Exchange had 10 inbound and outboard students.

A large community grant provided a truck to the Harry Chapin Food Bank.

During 2019-2020, 87 District Grants were established, many were multi-district grants.

50 clubs met online via Zoom during the COVID 19 state mandated stay at home. During this time clubs supplied food, PPE, hand sanitizer, and masks to their communities.

More clubs made use of Public Image this year.

25 clubs obtained Rotary Citations for the club status.

The District Conference for 2019-2020 had to be cancelled due to the COVID 19 epidemic. Sangkoo Yun of South Korea was supposed to be the RI President's Rep.

This year's district contribution to annual giving to The Rotary Foundation was \$1,014,482 and \$118,228 for polio for a total of \$1,457,082. The district giving was \$447.27 per capita.

It was a very successful year even though we were battling the COVID 19 epidemic.