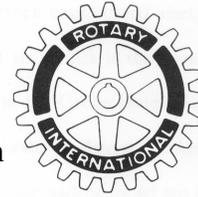


FAIRPORT ROTARY CLUB

First of two articles



A “gold thread in the fabric of the community” was how Perinton Supervisor Jim Smith described Fairport’s Rotary Club on its 70th anniversary in 1996. Over those 70 years the club has clearly lived up to its motto of “service over self.”

The first Rotary Club was founded in 1905 in Chicago by Paul Harris who envisioned a service club that also would embody the friendliness of a small town that he had known as a child. Twenty-one years later, in 1926, Harry Tinney, a Fairport resident who belonged to the Rochester Rotary Club, decided that Fairport should have its own club. Joined by nineteen others, among them Herman Steffen, Samuel Arms, Edward McGinnis, John Bahler, and James Welch, Harry Tinney called an organizational meeting to order on October 22, 1926, and all filled out application cards and turned them in with the \$20 initiation fee. Sam Arms was elected president; James Welch, vice-president; Ed McGinnis, treasurer; and Lynn Dodge, secretary. The first regular meeting was held on November 7th, and Charter Night, when the new club received its formal charter, was held in the Fairport High School gym on February 8, 1927. 350 area Rotarians were present and the women of the local PTA prepared and served “an excellent dinner.”

As a service club, Rotary is dedicated to community service and donates both time and money to those organizations that show need. It is also a social group and participates in community affairs. Both these aspects are well represented in the Fairport Club.

Even before its charter meeting, the new club began its community service by sponsoring a Christmas party at the Baptist Home. A chicken dinner and entertainment were provided, culminating in a sightseeing drive around Fairport and Perinton to view the Christmas lights and decorations. This was followed by the club’s first service project, which helped members of the Fairport High School band purchase uniforms and instruments. Each club member signed a \$200 note to raise the necessary \$3,000, and a Mardi Gras gala was held to raise money to help pay off the debt.

In 1955, charter member Dr. James Welch recalled some of the projects that the early members of the club were involved with, including the ones mentioned above. He remembered that the Club was one of the first organizations to come to the aid of the needy after the Crash of 1929, providing Christmas baskets of toys, food, and clothing. The aid continued for the duration of the Depression. Rotarians also supplied local young men with seed potatoes that not only were planted for food, but also taught the recipients something about farming. Money was also loaned for college tuition.

Many of the Rotarians’ projects and events have centered around children and young people. One of the early events sponsored by Rotary was a kite-flying contest held on “Health and Recreation Day” (May 1, 1948). Kites had to be built by the contestants, and ten \$3 prizes were awarded. Dances were recurring events as well. Further, the club was actively involved in the development of the Fairport Little League with Rotarian Mark Malcolm serving as its first president, and it continues with a recent donation of \$2500. Rotarians were responsible for the warming shed at Potter ice rink, a building for clubs and scout meetings at the Foreman Center, and more recently, aid to the Fairport Crew Club. The Club has also donated to the Lion’s Den Teen Center. Young people too have been involved in service through the Interact Club, a youth organization sponsored by Rotary.

Rotarian interests and concerns have not been exclusive to Fairport. Members are involved both on the national and international level with a variety of projects.

To be continued



Fairport Rotary charter members Dr. James Welch and J. Sidney Villere join President Art Roberts and Hal Soby (a 50 year member) to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Fairport club in 1976. (photo by the Rev. Albert D'Annunzio)