

TERRE HAUTE ROTARY CLUB
“ROTARY’S DIAMOND LEGACY”
75TH ANNIVERSARY ADDRESS

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OCTOBER 1, 1988

Thank you, Chairman Jim Rentschler, President Bishop, Governor Stephens, Distinguished guests, Fellow Rotarians and Rotary Anns:

By now, you may have gathered that today is Rotary’s 75th anniversary of its chartering. Let us look backward to see what was happening in 1913.

First, there was a Depression, The Panic of 1913, and the Federal Income Tax was established by the 16th Amendment to give us something to complain about ever since.

Vitamin A was isolated probably in the nick of time and then three developments came along each with a possible bearing on the other—

1. The Fox Trot came into fashion.
2. Henry Ford introduced the assembly line at his car factory.
3. Zippers became popular

Many other things happened in 1913, none as intriguing as those I’ve listed.

AND WHAT WAS GOING ON IN TERRE HAUTE ON OCTOBER 1, 1913?

I have read the Terre Haute Tribune of that date and can make this report. On the front page a speaker from the socialist party charged that the Republican party was responsible for the high cost of living. He claimed that American citizens once had two stomachs but since the G.O.P. came to power, one of these stomachs had shriveled up and is now known as the appendix all because of the lack of money to buy food!

What were the prevailing prices?

Fine large pears \$.95 a bushel – cooking apples \$.50 a bushel,
horseradish \$.10 a bottle, butterine was \$.25 a lb.

At the Root Store, women’s umbrellas were \$1.50 and patent leather button shoes were \$2.89 a pair. At Joe Silversteins, there was a sale of men’s fleeced underwear for \$.29 -- \$.50 value and men’s suits were \$9.75 and overcoats were \$4.95.

A full set of teeth cost \$4.00 at the Eastern Painless Dentist and painless extractions were \$.50. I'll skip the ads for constipation. Also in the news, was a report of a general remonstrance against a proposed southside park – 600 citizens were present at the Fairbanks School.

Another item reported – Mexicans were fleeing over the United States border headed for safety and a Texas flood, 6 ft. deep, poured over San Antonio streets (grandfather of Gilbert). An editorial criticized the opponents of organized labor and said “The time for a change is here.” And factories were urged to hold fire drills.

The police docket was light: One man got drunk and fell out of his buggy at Eagle and Fifth and Maggie Kelley was fined \$1 and costs on a “plain case of drunk.” In those days there was only one comic strip – the “Doings of the Vanloons.”

The Terre Haute Water Works Company at 634 Cherry Street advertised that a “Bathroom will add much to the comfort of the family” and “even a kitchen sink with city filtered water will be a big improvement. Phone No. 215.

The average daily circulation of the Tribune was 15,257.

On October 2, Rotary announced that 100 members of the Indianapolis Rotary Club will come to Terre Haute on October 7 to be entertained with a reception and banquet at the Filbeck Hotel. Terre Haute had politics, a rise in prices, remonstrances, drunks, Mexican refugees, but no Service Club until late summer of 1913. While attending a convention in Kansas City, Mo., George Graham Holloway, a Terre Haute Photographer visited some sessions of a district Rotary meeting. Impressed, he returned to Terre Haute determined to organize a Rotary Club.

In early September, 50 business and professional men met with six Indianapolis Rotarians. Plans for the new Club were made and two weeks later 86 men adopted a constitution, chose directors and elected Mr. Holloway president. Our Rotary Club is the 84th in the world among more than 23,000 today and the second oldest in Indiana. Rotary International was founded in 1905.

After 75 years, this Club has a membership of 167 men and women and helped organize the Terre Haute South Rotary Club and clubs in Sullivan, Vincennes, Evansville, Brazil, West Terre Haute and Paris, Illinois.

Henry David Thoreau, the great American philosopher and naturalist once wrote that “Time is but a stream I go fishing in.” His stream was filled with ideas and Rotary's 75 year long stream has been filled with the opportunity to serve others, but it is much too long a stream to recount Rotary's experience fully.

Some 78 men have served as our presidents and many others have held leadership roles. Each left an imprint that melded into an organism that is alive and highly motivated. We can only refer to a few examples of club service undertaken in past years.

The first recorded public service of the Club was a contribution of \$100.00 to a citizen's committee, which was investigating the decline law enforcement in the city. Rotary aided in many ways the fight against "moral decay" in the city and its government.

Our Club was instrumental in organizing the local council of the Boy Scouts, raising funds for a full-time executive and a building at the first scout camp. Later Rotary underwrote operating expenses of the council for three years and built a lodge at the camp site. The Boy's Club, 4-H Club and the Corn Club were all assisted. The Lobby of the YMCA and a room at Union Hospital were furnished by Rotary.

In the depression years of the thirties, Rotary appropriated \$500.00 to provide milk for youngsters in West Terre Haute where unemployment was widespread. The amount was increased to \$1,000.00 the next year. In 1937, Rotary helped with housing and feeding in Terre Haute of people driven from their homes by serious floods on the Ohio River.

In the forties, under the leadership of Guy Kornblum and John Bloxsome (Father of Janet Harmening) Rotary was active in the war effort. Many Rotarians served in uniform as Rotarians in World War I. Supplies and clothing were sent to London's bombing victims and to Rugby, England. Large quantities of blood were donated for our soldiers. War bonds were sold and our members served on draft and rationing boards and in civil defense – examples of individual Rotarians serving their country and their community.

Continuing its club projects, Rotary in 1946 undertook major assistance to Goodwill by distributing and collecting the Goodwill bags—the lifeline of that important service. This assistance continues to the present.

By 1966, support for Junior Achievement and what we now call United Fund was substantially increased and equipment was purchased for the senior citizens. In 1967, \$4,500 was pledged for Hamilton Center. For years, Rotarians have risked pneumonia by shaking cans and ringing bells for the Salvation Army. Recent Hospice Fund drives were led by Rod Heefner, Dan Debard, and Greg Gibson.

The Girl Scouts were assisted financially long before women were admitted to Rotary and still are. In recent years, fund drives for the Swope Museum were assisted by a team headed by Ralph Mason who was always generous with the time he gave so cheerfully and efficiently.

Support for the Rotary Foundation has been gratifying. Over \$288 million has been collected to date. Over \$200 million has been subscribed for the Rotary International Polio Eradication Program, \$100 million over the goal. This Club has

contributed more than \$26,000 to the Polio Fund. Polio-Plus is designed to help 240 million children.

- 4 -

Forty-two Terre Haute Rotarians are Paul Harris Fellows – Rotary’s highest honor – and \$42,000 has been forwarded to Foundation Headquarters. Altogether, there are more than 176,000 Paul Harris Fellows representing \$176,000,000. Our Club has used this means to honor fellow Rotarians for community or Club service. Groups of 10 Rotarians contribute \$100.00 each and name a Paul Harris Fellow. This is repeated year after year with many of the same members contributing.

Foundation Funds are used to provide student exchange scholarships for American students to study abroad and for students from abroad to study in the United States. The benefits to international understanding are immeasurable. Since 1947, some 17,000 scholars from 110 countries have studied in countries other than their own at an investment of more than \$126,000,000. 40% of our Terre Haute annual budget is allocated to community or international projects.

And now for some highlights that stand out in our history.

1. Dr. Allen Albert, President of Rotary International in 1915-16, became a member of our Club in 1919 or 1920. Some years later, he was the Director of the Swope Art Museum.
2. George Wiemuth, President in 1955, holds a record of more than 25 years of perfect attendance.
3. Our oldest Rotarian is Earl Pike—90 years old. He attends meetings regularly.
4. The Rotary/Kiwanis picnic was first held in 1920. This year Rotary won the baseball game, the 1st time in the memory of those who can remember.
5. Shelton Hannig and George Nichols hold the Club record for International travel and in reporting back to us, have increased our understanding of the world’s peoples, their customs and problems.
6. Chuck Shutt, for years, has planned and directed a special program at Christmas—without uncovering any hidden talent except his own—and Salty Seaman has provided some intriguing or “Salty” art as prizes for our contests and he designed the logo for tonight’s program booklet.
7. Dave Turney and Bob Dewey have earnestly tried to raise the cultural level of our Club by their violin and piano duets of classical music. Keep trying men.
8. The late Iverson Bell epitomized Rotary goals by his service in the Terre Haute community, particularly by serving on the Board of the Vigo County School Corporation for many years.

9. William Jennings Bryan, Edgar Guest and Harry Lauder have appeared before our Club.

- 5 -

10. Our Club received a President's Citation from Rotary International as the only Club in the district in 1987-88 which met the criteria for this award.
11. John Logan and Alan Rankin were dropped from Rotary in 1969-70 for failure to meet attendance requirements. The late General Allison Maxwell was their nemesis but he was just following the rules. After due penance, the chastened AWOLS were returned to grace and favor.
12. In a dramatic moment, Maynard Wheeler walked out of a meeting while the speaker from Indiana University was expressing economic views which differed from those held by Maynard.
13. Dale Baughman conducts impressive inductions of new members and draws on a vast store of humor without provocation.
14. And last, in 1916, Wood Posey was running for president of the Club (later he was Mayor of Terre Haute) and he promised that a gal named Tiny May would be present on election day and dance for them. Tiny May did appear—she was a baby elephant with a campaign sign. Posey lost the election but Tiny May was voted into honorary membership.

After 75 years, you would not be surprised to find some changes in Rotary. We still pay dues, have rules on attendance, limit the number of members in occupational class, (Judge Crawford; our classification specialist, is exceedingly adept in finding acceptable classifications. It's legal if the Judge says so.) We prohibit members from promoting their own professions at Rotary meetings, and most important, we still stress individual service in the community and in Club projects.

Where then have we changed?

1. Years ago, we sang "America" and "On the Banks of the Wabash"—now we open with an invocation and a flag salute.
2. We now meet in one of the 20 best Holiday Inns in the world. (We haven't always been that fortunate.)
3. We are admitting many younger members. Our Board of Directors looks a little like the Junior Varsity with Bob Bishop, Jim Rentschler, and Dale McKee as senior citizens, comparatively speaking! Their youthful energy and talent are making a livelier Club by bringing new ideas and tackling

any assignment.

4. Women are now joining Rotary. Ten years ago, this idea would be scorned. The cataclysm didn't cause a ripple. Decorum is high. I am convinced that our Club will benefit from our emphasis on youth and on women members.

- 6 -

Rotary has given meaning to important American values wherever they are acted upon—here or abroad. Values turned into action are a form of volunteerism. Rotary volunteers work with our youth and the elderly, help to eradicate disease, support cultural and civic causes, and promote peace and international understanding. A local church sign reads “Only volunteers go to heaven.” I’m not sure that Rotarian John Chironna would accept that limited interpretation of theology, but it is a pretty good idea for some of us to keep in mind.

Rotary is clearly a fellowship of professional men and women who share their training and experience in applying the idea of service. Our lives would be diminished if Rotary had not brought to us these opportunities to serve. Everyone here is working to leave our city and perhaps the world better than we found it.

On this diamond anniversary, Rotary holds a respected position in this city and has produced a shining legacy of good will, congeniality and good citizenship. We can look ahead with confidence. But I shall leave that subject, appropriately, to one of our capable younger Rotarians, Craig McKee.

Thank you.

