

Talk by Walter F. Nelson on 70th Birthday of Club

HOW ROTARY CAME TO RICHMOND

In October of 1919, I attended a State Conference of City and County Superintendents of Schools which was held in Yosemite Valley. While there, I met a friend of mine, Alex Sheriffs, who was the City Superintendent of Schools in San Jose. He was also District Governor of District No. 2 of Rotary International. One afternoon, we took a hike and he told me about his experiences as a Rotarian and as District Governor. He had just returned from a conference in Chicago. His discussion of Rotary and the value it had been to various communities in developing friendship and acquaintances interested me, and I spoke to him of the probability of such an organization in Richmond. He told me that it had been the policy of Rotary only to establish clubs in larger cities, the feeling being that in a small city it would not succeed. However, he promised to speak to the Berkeley Rotary Club about Richmond and ask them to look into the probability of organizing a club in Richmond. I heard nothing more about it and had almost forgotten the matter when early in 1920 I received a note from the Secretary of the Berkeley Rotary Club inviting me to attend a meeting of that club and to bring ^{to} other men from Richmond with me. Accordingly, I invited Fred LaMoine and Harry Marcus and the three of us attended a meeting of the Berkeley Rotary Club. We found that Robert Gordon Sproule who was then Controller of the University of California, now the President, was the President of the Berkeley Rotary Club at that time, and its membership was made up of the prominent business and professional men of Berkeley. The meeting started rather quietly and sedately when suddenly a box of firecrackers started exploding under the chair of Lester Hink. Many other exciting things happened and a lot of ^efining and good fellowship existed. Fred and I, and especially Harry Marcus, were very much impressed with the whole meeting and on the way home we decided that's what Richmond needed. A little later, a committee from the Berkeley Club came to Richmond and met with the three of us and we were asked to suggest a list of 25 people, business and professional men, in Richmond as the list of Charter members in the new club. At that time a club could not start with more than 25 members. This was a difficult task for us because the limit of 25 forced us to leave out the names of several persons who should have been included in our Charter list. From then on, things happened rapidly and

the club was organized with a fine meeting with the following list of Charter members and with the following officers:

Henry W. Lunceford	--Western Pipe and Steel Co.
Edward M. Tilden	--Tilden Lumber Co.
Chas. S. Renwick	--Pioneer Electric Co.
Albert Burdick	--A. C. Burdick Hardware Co.
Joseph F. Brooks	--Manager, Standard Oil Co., Richmond
Clark C. Kratzer	--Service Station
Phillip M. Eberhart	--Eberhart's
Harry Marcus	--The Big Store
Archie H. Campbell	--California Cap Co.
John F. Galvin	--Independent Publishing Co.
Harry W. Pulse	--Pulse Bros
George W. Rooker	--Western St. Gas and Electric Co.
Edward M. Downer	--The Mechanics Bank
Hershey A. Stiver	--Southern Pacific Co.
Charles J. Crary	--First National Bank
Gus W. Penning	--Santa Fe Foundry Co.
Jesse C. Hitchcock	--Pacific Gas & Electric Co.
Otto A. Poulsen	--O. A. Poulsen, Jeweler
Wm. F. Fraser	--W. F. Fraser, O.D.
Fred B. LaMoine	--LaMoine Drug Co.
Henry A. Johnson	--Real Estate
Walter T. Helms	--Supt. of Schools
Tony H. DeLap	--Attorney-at-Law
Clark L. Abbott	--Physician
Edward H. Harlow	--Santa Fe Railroad Co.

<u>President:-</u>	Clark Abbott
<u>Secretary:-</u>	Harry Marcus
<u>Treasurer:-</u>	Charles J. Crary

The Club was a success from the start and it rapidly took on the list of members should have been included in the list of Charter members. Among these were:

Edgar Cunningham, Jack Best, Jim Harbett, Tony Papadakis, Dick Stratton, Jim McVittie, Carl Alexander, Harry Plate, Aubrey Wilson, Tom Boyer, Harry Chapman, Teddy Iverson, Louis Garfinkle, Percy Sanford, Urea Abbott, Lud Johnson, Charlie Lipp, Loyd Pockman, Bob Miller, John Silveira, Frank Mero, Claude Downing, George Calvert, Otto Ludwig, Dick Spierach, Rue Timmons, Clair Cameron, Walter Trull, Bill Richards, Dick Hanna, Harley Carter and Vernon Bremer.

Following are some of the instances in the life of the Club. On April 15, 1941,

Dr. Clark Abbott ended the first year as President and was presented with the Past President's jewel. Joe Brooks, then Manager of the Standard Oil Refinery, became our second President. In a contest for the best roll call definition of his classification, Dick Stratton won the prize by stating that he manufactured Bolshevick Breakfast Food. Once under Joe's

jurisdiction we had one of our first and famous Ladies' Nights. It began with a 6:30 dinner at the Christian Church and after a musical program President Brooks delivered an address on Rotary. Ray Munsell and Joe Risborough of the Oakland Club presented a stunt entitled "Mar-no-name." Then an unannounced speaker got the floor and delivered a 45 minute address. This was Victor Grant of London. By this time the hour had reached 11:00 p.m. with the lecture of the evening still to be heard. Professor Herbert Bolton of the University of California gave a talk on, "Ansa's Tour of the Southwest", and we adjourned at 12:10 a.m.

In August of 1922 we had our meeting in the new cafeteria in the Standard Oil Refinery as the guests of Dick Hanna. In August, 1947, we are going to have another.

Lunch troubles we always had with us. In Fred LaMoine's reign, quite a dispute is reported at one of the meetings of the Board of Directors. Al Burdick, Chairman of Club Service, stated he wished to have Mrs. Carl Alexander take charge of the meals. The directors of the Richmond Club contended that our lease stated the directors had the say as to who should prepare the meals. We find no record how the matter was finally settled but shortly afterwards we moved to the Christian Church where we met for a number of years and had wonderful service from the ladies of that Church. In July of 1926, we moved to the Hotel Carquinez. As an indication of the rumblings that we now have, we note that in January of 1934 we celebrated Clark Kratzer Day at his new automobile showrooms, and the bulletin of that date announced that meeting as follows: "It won't be held at the Hotel and won't be Hotel food!"

On August 10, 1923, the Club held memorial services for President Harding who was a Rotarian. Similar services were held when President Coolidge passed away.

In May, 1922, we celebrated our second birthday as Ladies' Night, and Tony DeLap was Chairman on that evening. We note that the meal cost \$1.75 per plate whereas our meal on our 25th celebration is costing only \$2.00 per plate.

Fire

In June of 1921, W. E. Gulver, Piedmont/Chief spoke on "Fire Prevention" instead of Jay Stevens, but in June, 1922, Jay was on the job and has taken care of this subject ever since.

As an indication of the activities of the Club in the community, we note that without much publicity it has contributed liberally to such movements as Boys' Work and work for

crippled children, as well as many other worthy causes. In the first year of its existence, in May of 1921, it gave \$138.00 from a very slim treasury to the Y.M.C.A. Summer Camps, and \$25.00 to the Boy Scouts Camp. Again in the following October, it gave \$250.00 to the Y.M.C.A. budget. In 1923, we raised over \$500.00 for the suffering Japanese when their country was destroyed by fire, earthquake and floods.

The directors' minutes show many interesting, although at the time serious, problems for Presidents. I do not like to mention this just before election, but in August of 1921, one Robert Miller continued his membership in the Club when he had sold his business, and to add insult to injury had entered the employ of the competitor of one of our members. This problem was finally solved by having the said Robert Miller purchase the business and thus retain his membership.

The Club has had many prominent people as speakers and it is interesting to look back over the topics presented and to note how many of these things discussed are still problems and how others have been solved. In 1922, J. O. Davis, former Collector of the Port, pointed out that the great cost of government was due to the bureau system; and in 1922, Ex Chief Peterson of Oakland spoke on "Juvenile Delinquency." In August of 1921, Hurston Campbell spoke on "Bridging the Bay." Dr. Herbert Powell of Berkeley, father of our member Dick Rowell, spoke on "Community Welfare." Other topics discussed were:- "Motion Pictures - Miracle or Menace", "The Future of the Airplane", "Will Motion Pictures Become an Industry?". In November of 1934, Dr. Camp of the University of California spoke on "Hitler As I See Him." He had just returned from Germany and saw him just about as it has turned out.

We have had many interesting and unique programs. In 1921, George Galvert arranged to have a set of earphones for each member and at 1:30 p.m. President Brooks carried on a long distance conversation with International Secretary Ches Perry in Chicago. The only trouble was that Harry Marcus forgot to notify Ches and Joe had a hard time getting him to know what he wanted. George said it cost the company \$550 for this stunt. We have not heard had time to ascertain if phone rates were raised. At this same meeting, George Galvert presented the President with a beautiful gavel made from the wood of the Battleship Maine.

The tops all stunt was put on by Jack Galvin who dressed up as a news boy and sold special editions of the "Rotary Raspberry." Another was a radio news program with a lot of local stuff. It was later discovered that the broadcast was in the next room. Harry Marcus put on a strip tease act with what later developed to be one of his window models.

All the old timers will remember Harry Chapman's endeavor to trade Lou Garfinkles' brother-in-law for one of our members whose attendance was not very good. When Harry became President he announced that hereafter the date would be written Rotary, B.C., meaning "Before Chapman".

I have some bad news for the Club. I note in the minutes that on May 1, 1925, I was re-elected Secretary at a salary of \$25.00 per month. I cannot find any record of that action being rescinded. Since I have never drawn any salary it now amounts to 20 years at \$300 or \$6,000. Percy is going to have a tough time raising that through fines.

On Friday, October 10, 1941 we celebrated the event of our 100th member. The program on that occasion was put on by our Mother Club, the Berkeley Rotary Club. At the time our Club was organized we were number 654. At that time our membership had increased from the original 25 to 100. Instead of 654 clubs in the world, Rotary now is organized in more than 50 countries and there are more than 5,000 clubs in existence. On this same date, we celebrated the event of the arrival of Al Hill's first grandchild, and took up a collection to start a bank account. It is lucky for us from the way things turned out that we didn't agree to do this for each additional grandchild.

Walter J. Helmer