

## Issue 255 - June 2025

### From the President's Desk

Dear Fellow Members,

This month we celebrate Rotary Fellowships.

In an increasingly complex world, Rotary provides one of the most basic human needs: that of friendship and fellowship. This is one of the reasons why Rotary began in 1905. The second original reason for Rotary's growth was business development. Everyone needs to network. Rotary consists of a cross-section of every business and profession. Its members come from all walks of life. Rotarians help each other and collectively help others.

Rotary Fellowships were started informally in 1928 by a group of Rotarians who were interested in Esperanto. Over the years, other groups were formed, each concentrating on a specific passion. These groups thrived over the years. In 1947, the International Yachting Fellowship was formed. From there, other groups were formed, and today there are more than 90 different Fellowships.

We are proud to represent the Rotary Global History Fellowship (RGHF), which was approved as a Fellowship by the Rotary Board on October 2, 2003. We are proud to represent RGHF and to continue to document the history of Rotary. Have you ever seen this video? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=usfj1o8huyQ>

Do keep visiting our website [www.rghf.org](http://www.rghf.org) and encourage others to do the same. Also, keep writing relevant information about your Rotary Club, District or other activities which you feel would become elements of Rotary History.



June is also the month when the Rotary International Convention will be held in Calgary, Canada. Come in our RGHF Booth Number 750. We hope to see you there.



**Jeetendra Sharma**  
**President**  
**Rotary Global History Fellowship (RGHF)**

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## **Paul Harris Memorial Visit**

Past Rotary International Presidents Gordon McNally (2023-24), Jennifer Jones (2022-23), Holger Knaack (2021-22), and Mark Maloney (2019-20), along with other Trustees and Rotarians, visited the Paul Harris Memorial Walkway in Chicago in 2025. They also toured the Paul and Jean Harris House nearby.

The Comely Bank was the dwelling place of Paul and Jean Harris in Chicago. The nostalgic feeling you experience when you visit the Paul Harris Memorial Walkway explains the power of One Man who, in 1905, dared to dream, imagined a world where people of all colors and cultures are united for the purpose of Doing Good in the World.

RGHF's Board Chair Emeritus, PDG Irv Kaplan, was honored for his untiring efforts towards Comely Bank and the Paul Harris Memorial & Presidential Walkway.







**Paul Harris Home**



**Paul Percy Harris was a Chicago, Illinois, attorney.**

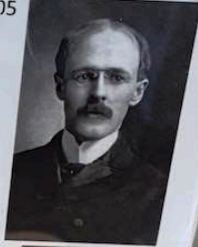
He founded Rotary in 1905  
at 37 Years Old.

Born: April 19, 1868,  
Racine, WI

Married: Jean Thomson,  
July 1910

Moved to Comely Bank:  
1912

Died: January 27, 1947,  
Beverly, IL



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## Rotary International Convention 2025



Would you be at the Rotary International Convention to be held between 21-25 June 2025 in Calgary, Canada, please get in touch with our RGHF Board Members: Visit us at Booth #750

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## Rotary's International Conventions over the years

*"Each and every one of us should consider himself or herself an ambassador of peace and better understand our fellow men across the water so that those people could get a better understanding of America."* - Harry D. Gannett, after attending the Rotary International Convention in Ostend, Belgium in 1927.

Rotary International conventions have been occurring since the first one in 1910, when roughly 160 representatives traveled to Chicago. Presided over by Paul Harris and Ches Perry, this event established the opportunity for Rotarians to meet and determine what some of the basic guidelines of Rotary would be and the direction the organization would move towards. It also allowed members to meet in the spirit of fellowship, offering them a chance to mingle and gain a better understanding of what they were trying to accomplish.

By 1912, the Duluth convention truly became international when Rotarians from Canada and Great Britain attended the meetings. In 1917, at the Atlanta convention, the idea of establishing a Rotary Foundation to "do good in the world" was suggested by Arch C. Klumph, who raised a total sum of \$26.50. Today the contributed to the Foundation total more than a billion dollars, fulfilling a promise made more than 100 years ago.

Then, in 1923, the St Louis convention determined that Rotary clubs had the right to operate independently and not have to follow the mandates issued by Rotary International with regard to service projects. The only requirement was that clubs had to be service-oriented. They had to do something beneficial. Rotary International could only suggest different programs, but the clubs were free to join them or not. This amendment made Rotary a grassroots movement, allowing all Rotarians to suggest and act on their own ideas and goals towards their communities and the world.

Today, more than 1 million Rotarians and their loved ones have traveled to all parts of the globe to share



of peace and fellowship by attending a Rotary convention. Countries on five continents have hosted these conventions. Hopefully, in the near future, Africa will provide the setting for a convention, leaving only Antarctica as the only continent on earth to greet thousands of Rotarians on their annual pilgrimages.

Recently, the Rotary Global History Fellowship received documentation regarding one Rotarian's attendance at a convention. Sent to us by John Farr of Encampment, Wyoming, it tells the story of his grandfather, Harry Farr, who attended the 1927 Ostend gathering. The first one ever held in Europe.

Harry Farr was a charter member of the Rotary Club of Greeley, Wyoming started in 1917. This club, at the time, was considered one of the smallest towns to charter a Rotary club. Later, it was instrumental in establishing other Rotary clubs, including Longmont, Loveland, Fort Collins, Sterling, Cheyenne and Rawlins.

Accompanied by his wife Hazel and son Ralph, the three voyagers went to New York City where they were treated to a dinner for 5000 people by the Rotary Club of New York. The conventioners filled six Cunard line ships known as the 'Rotary fleet.' Harry noted that the send-off dinner "was a typical Rotary meeting full of pep, lots of song and talk by prominent people bidding them bon voyage."

On their ship, the Oronia, every day at 11:00 a.m. a special Rotary meeting was held. Harry stated that International President Arch Klumph, of Cleveland was in charge of their ship. Again, the meetings featured lively singing and talks by leading Rotarians who were on board. Decoration Day was observed with a memorial service. At night, there was a "fancy dress ball" and "fine entertainment." Not to mention the other activities available to the travelers, such as tennis, shuffle board, etc.

On Saturday, June 4, the Wyoming party transferred from the ocean liner to a lighter, fast channel boat and sailed from the English coast to Belgium. On the smaller boat they found literature from the Ostend and Brussels Rotary clubs giving them information and advice relative to trips and points of interest during their stay.

That evening, they attended the "Great International Fellowship" gathering and on Sunday afternoon they went to the Hippodrome to witness the International Athletic contest with roughly 4000 other spectators. When the parade was over, the Maritime Historical Pageant started through the business district of Ostend. Mr. Farr commented that it was a very fine pageant, and it showed that the Belgians had worked for months. There were magnificent floats and hundreds of school children partook in this pageant. The last float in the parade was the Rotary car which had the world surrounded by the Rotary wheel, which is the symbol of peace and of the union of all countries. It was the Rotarians hope to realize some day by the application of their splendid motto, 'Service, not self'."

Monday, June 6, was the opening day of the convention. Starting at 9:00 a.m. Rotarians gathered at the 1000 square meter Ostend Kursaal (auditorium) to begin their deliberations. The overflow crowd stood for the singing of hymns ("God Save the King", "The Belgium's national anthem" and "America.")

The first speaker was Albert Bouchery who was responsible for the growth of Belgian Rotary and later became chairman of the Rotary board. He told how the Ostend club was only three years old and welcomed them from all over the world. He added that "for the past several months the press has devoted lengthy articles to the Ostend convention which has made the name of Rotary popular."

A few moments later, Rotary International President Harry Rogers spoke, saying that international peace was the ultimate goals of Rotary. "We believe in the advancement of understanding, good-will and international friendship through a fellowship of business and professional men united in Rotary ideal of service."

He continued, "The leading men of all businesses and professions and from all countries must join hands and be united unless we have a common idea....Let the slogan this year be 'Make Rotary effective'! Where it is felt, its influence felt. Where it does not exist, if possible, extend it. Let courtesy abound, widen acquaintanceships, friendships, and put the program over in every club."

The final speaker that morning was His Majesty King Albert of Belgium. This was the first time any royal person of a country had ever spoken at a Rotary convention.

The King arrived in a khaki uniform and was accompanied by an aide or two. The audience stood and



hearty cheer and loud clapping of hands and remained standing during his entire speech, which was made. Harry Farr noted, "The American Rotarians had been warned in advance not to whistle as whistling in a public meeting, is considered the same as hissing would be in America."

King Albert, after hoping everyone would enjoy Belgian hospitality, and telling the delegates he was a friend of them, reminded the attendees that, "The application of the golden rule in personal, business and community life stimulates the development of that sense of citizenship so difficult and yet so imperatively essential to a lively and active civic spirit is the root of all good government. Rotarian principles are those that make good of the State and develop, amongst members of a nation and of a society, true friendship. To accept the sacrifice to one's neighbor, to accept the idea of ethics in trade and in profession, is to be well aware of the responsibilities of a modern citizen, groups of individuals, working close together like you do for a common purpose, can achieve wonders."

He ended by saying, "The achievements of the past have been encouraging, the results in the future will be equally beneficial, and I confidently look forward to the future."

The opening day ceremonies ended with a concert and a fireworks display that Mr. Farr called, "The finest I have ever seen."

For the next two days, Harry heard talks and committee reports on such things as classifications, business award presentations and conducting the governance of Rotary in the days before the Council on Legislation. For roughly five days, the Farr family met and mingled with Rotarians from around the world. The atmosphere was filled with friendship and goodwill. He had the opportunity to voice his concerns and to be heard by the future leaders of Rotary. After the presentation of the new officers, the Eighteenth Annual Rotary Convention closed. The next day, the family left on an eight-week trip across Europe. They visited Amsterdam, Milan, Rome, London and Richmond, England, to name just a few.

Perhaps the most memorable part of the tour was the visit to the battlefields of World War One. Still, after 25 years since the war ended, Harry Farr told a story of seeing a young Belgian boy dig up a hand grenade and it explode in his hand. He said, "There have been several tourists killed on this hill by handling dangerous explosives."

With the Ostend message of peace, fellowship, tolerance and understanding, it must have been unsettling to see the results of the alternatives. Even though the fields they visited were practically all cultivated, the remnants of the trenches, pill boxes, machine gun nest and gun displacements were still visible.

If you have never been to a Rotary International convention, to fully appreciate the Rotary experience you must attend one. Each one will expand your horizons and bring you closer to the universal truths of Rotary.

*Fred Carvin - RGHF  
Author, "Paul Harris and the Birth of Rotary"*

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## **A critical moment for global public health: Polio eradication at the World Health Assembly**

**Global public health at a crossroads**





Seventy-eighth World Health Assembly, 19 May - 27 May 2025 ©WHO/Pierre Albouy

Against a backdrop of shifting geopolitical dynamics, economic uncertainty and ongoing humanitarian crises, global public health is undergoing upheaval. As delegates gathered in Geneva this week for the 2025 World Health Assembly (WHA), the urgency of sustaining momentum in disease eradication efforts was clear. Among the pressing issues discussed, polio eradication remained a top priority.

### **Member State remarks and Rotary International's call to action**

During the Assembly, Member States reaffirmed their full support for achieving and sustaining a polio-free world, acknowledging WHO and its partners' efforts to see the job done. Voicing concern about ongoing variant poliovirus transmission in Afghanistan and Pakistan, Member States committed to continued resourcing to the effort, and smart integration of polio functions within broader public health services. Key themes were strengthened routine immunization - including with inactivated polio vaccine - through Gavi, and the needs for strong oral polio vaccine cessation planning and the safe and secure containment of polioviruses in research and vaccine manufacturing facilities.

As discussions unfolded, Rotary International - a founding partner of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative - highlighted the urgent need for sustained political and financial support to ensure the final push toward eradication. Judith Diment MBE, Chair of Rotary International's Polio Eradication Advocacy Committee, confirmed Rotary's ongoing commitment and urged WHO Member States to remain "resourceful, resilient, and resolute" until eradication is achieved, stressing the dangers of faltering at this stage of the game.

Read [more](#).

Source: [www.polioeradication.org](http://www.polioeradication.org)

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## Our Foundation Newsletter



This newsletter is published by the Rotary Global History Fellowship. The comments and stories in this newsletter do not reflect the opinions of Rotary International, The Rotary Foundation of Rotary International or any other related organization.

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