



Rotary



Rotary Global
History Fellowship



Welcome to the largest fellowship in Rotary



Archie
Lead History Hunter

From the President's Desk

Dear Fellow Members,

In the fall of 2000, an idea emerged by a Rotarian in Pueblo, Colorado that suggested the history of Rotary should be incorporated onto the internet. By early 2001, five Rotarians had come together for the purpose of developing such a plan. It soon became known as the Rotary Global History Project and at a Rotary International board meeting it was approved as the "Rotary Global History Fellowship."

The RGHF is into its 25th year of existence - a fantastic achievement and a memorable journey so far. (<https://rghf.org/rghf-founding-members/>). What began as a simple yet powerful idea - to preserve and share the story of Rotary with the world - has today become a vibrant global fellowship of historians, archivists, researchers, and Rotarians who believe that understanding our past strengthens our future.

Rotary's story began in 1905 with the vision of Paul Harris, who believed in the power of friendship, ethics, and service. From that first meeting in Chicago to a worldwide network of service-minded leaders, Rotary's journey is a testament to what committed individuals can accomplish together. The Rotary Global History Fellowship ensures that this extraordinary journey is documented, preserved, and shared with accuracy and pride.

Why History Matters - History is not merely a record of dates and events. It is the collective memory of our values, struggles, innovations, and achievements. Through our archives, research publications, presentations, and digital initiatives, we safeguard stories that might otherwise fade with time. Every club chartered, every project completed, every milestone achieved contributes to a larger narrative - one that defines Rotary's identity and guides its future. When we document local club histories, biographies of distinguished Rotarians, or the evolution of Rotary programs, we are strengthening institutional memory and inspiring future generations.

As we celebrate 25 years, let us recommit ourselves to our mission. Let us encourage every Rotary club to document its journey. Let us mentor younger Rotarians to appreciate the value of heritage. Let us continue building bridges across nations through shared history.

History reminds us who we are. Service defines what we do. Together, they shape what we become.

RGHF Leaders

T.I.M. Nurul Kabir
Chairman

Jeetendra Basudeo
Sharma
President

Geri A Appel
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Steve Hellersperk
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Marlyn Marie Lyn
Kenney
Board Member

Adel Abdel Shafei
Board Member

Kent Vesterberg
Board Member

Thank you for your continued dedication to preserving the story of Rotary for generations to come.

Rotary Regards,



Jeetendra Sharma
President
Rotary Global History Fellowship (RGHF)

Women Leading the Way in Rotary



During Women's History Month, we celebrate the leadership, service, and lasting impact of women in Rotary. While Rotary was an all-male organization until the landmark 1987 U.S. Supreme Court decision opened membership to women, today women make

up 34% of District 6250 and continue to strengthen our mission of Service Above Self.

Trailblazers like Dr. Sylvia Whitlock, the first female Rotary Club president, helped break barriers and pave the way for inclusion. Leaders such as Razia Jan demonstrated Rotary's global impact through her work educating girls in Afghanistan, while Lyn Kenney continues to preserve this legacy through her work with Rotary history.

Kenney is the author of *Pioneers: The History of Women and Rotary Since 1911*, a comprehensive work that chronicles the long journey of women in Rotary—from early unofficial clubs to full membership and leadership. This powerful collection ensures the stories of these trailblazing women are documented and celebrated for generations to come. [To order Lyn Kenney's book *Pioneers*, click here.](#)

From advocacy to action to preservation, women have transformed Rotary into a stronger, more inclusive organization. Their contributions continue to shape our future and expand our impact in communities around the world.

Thank you to all the women in Rotary—past and present—for your leadership and service.

Why It Matters to Every Rotarian – and Everyone Considering Rotary

For seasoned Rotarians, Rotary history is a reminder of what we already know in our bones: this organization is built on relationships and service that outlast calendars and leadership terms. It reconnects us to the “why” when the “what” gets busy.



For newer Rotarians, history turns a weekly meeting into something bigger: you didn't just join a club – you joined a living legacy with 121 years of momentum behind it.

And for those who haven't joined yet, Rotary's story is the invitation: this is a place where you can do meaningful work with good people – and become part of something proven, trusted, and enduring.

When people know the story, they don't just attend. They belong. And belonging is how Rotary grows.

Rotary's Story Doesn't Preserve Itself



History doesn't organize itself into neat files. It doesn't digitize itself. It doesn't label the photos, archive the documents, or capture the "why" behind the work before the storyteller moves on.

Memories fade.

Records disappear.

The best stories – the ones that inspire the next Rotarian – can slip away quietly.

That's why the Rotary Global History Fellowship (RGHF) exists.

RGHF is Rotary's library and museum work in motion – a place where Rotary's legacy is collected, curated, preserved, and shared so it stays alive and accessible for the next generation. Not locked away behind glass. Not buried in a box. But available – for clubs, members, students, researchers, and future leaders who want to understand what Rotary is really about. The Rotary History Hunters are working hard to get the museum resources accessible – Will you support our mission? [Donate today to Support our History Hunters](#)

The History of Rotary Isn't Just the Past – It's the Fuel for What's Next

Rotary began in 1905 with something simple and powerful: a few friends gathering with purpose. No fanfare. No grand plan for a global movement. Just people who believed that friendship could be a force for good – and that service could knit a community together.



From that small meeting in Chicago, Rotary grew into a worldwide story of ordinary people doing extraordinary things: clean water delivered, disease prevented, youth mentored, communities rebuilt, peace advanced, and hope restored – one project, one partnership, one handshake at a time.

And now, as we celebrate Rotary's 121st year, there's a

truth we can't ignore:

A movement only endures when its story is preserved.

Join RGHF – the Rotary History Hunters



Supporting Rotary Global History Fellowship isn't about "another donation". It's about becoming a guardian of Rotary's story. A curator of the legacy. A steward of the records, the memories, and the meaning behind the pin.

When you join RGHF or support its mission, you help:

Preserve archives and historic materials

Curate stories that inspire clubs and strengthen membership

Keep Rotary history accessible, teachable, and shareable

Protect Paul Harris's legacy – and every Rotarian's legacy – for the next 121 years

You can't put a price on Rotary's history.

But preserving it takes people who care enough to step forward.

History Doesn't Wait – So Neither Should We

If Rotary's story matters – and it does – then protecting it can't be "someday." Not next year. Not when things slow down. Not after the next project. Because history doesn't wait.

Join the Rotary Global History Fellowship – support its mission today.

[Click to Join Today](#)

Keep the story alive for another 121 years.

FDF FIRESIDE CHAT LOG – PERSONAL ENTRY

March 1933, The White House, Washington, D.C.

**ARCHIE GEARHART, FIELD ARCHIVIST
(TEMPORARILY)**



Day 1 – Conditions: warm study, crackling fire, microphones everywhere, excellent echo off the mantelpiece.

- **09:18 PM EST:** Arrived early to help arrange papers for the President. Someone said this radio business will reach the whole country tonight. I asked where the card catalog was for the nation. They said, "Every living room." I'm still thinking about that.
- **09:42 PM EST:** Met President Roosevelt briefly. Remarkably calm fellow. He asked if the microphones were in the right place. I said they looked cataloged by size and temperament. He laughed and said we might make an archivist of him yet.
- **09:55 PM EST:** Engineers testing the radio lines to the networks. The room sounds like a polite thunderstorm made entirely of cables. One fellow handed me headphones. Heard Chicago, St. Louis, and somewhere in Kansas clearing their throats.
- **10:00 PM EST:** Broadcast begins. President explains the banking situation to the nation as calmly as if he were explaining overdue books. I've never heard a man reassure millions of people while sitting six feet away from me.
- **10:11 PM EST:** Mail clerk already predicting sacks of letters tomorrow. I suggested we start a separate drawer labeled "National Relief, Emotional."
- **10:18 PM EST:** President gestures toward the fireplace during a pause and whispers, "That's where they say the chats happen." I checked; no microphones actually in the fireplace. Mild disappointment.
- **10:27 PM EST:** Realization: millions of Americans are probably sitting beside their own fires listening to this at the same moment. For an archivist, that's the largest simultaneous reference desk in history.
- **10:33 PM EST:** Broadcast concludes. Engineers exhale. President smiles in that quiet "we may have steadied the ship" sort of way.

Closing note: Suit holding up well. Tie behaving admirably under presidential conditions. Still miss my card catalog, but tonight the whole country feels like one big reading room. –Archie
