

Rotary Club of Columbus Collectin (MC 273)

Biographical/Organizational Note

The following mission statement and local club history is from [the website of the group](#):

Rotary is an organization of business and professional leaders united worldwide who provide humanitarian service, encourage high ethical standards in all vocations, and help build goodwill and peace in the world.

Rotary club membership represents a cross-section of the community's business and professional men and women. The world's Rotary clubs meet weekly and are nonpolitical, nonreligious, and open to all cultures, races, and creeds.

Columbus Rotary Club History by Michael Herndon, with thanks to Bunky Pease:

The Rotary Club of Columbus was organized by fourteen men who met at 1:00 p.m. on Monday, November 15, 1915 at the Ralston Hotel. By classification they were a minister, a baker, an undertaker, an attorney, a hotel manager, an office supplies dealer, an osteopath, a railroad manager, a soft drink manufacturer, a coal dealer, a grocer, a merchandise broker, and two insurance brokers. The group received a charter on February 1, 1916 as Club 200 of Rotary International. Charter members in addition to the founders were a telephone manager, a telegraph manager, a theater owner, and a seed dealer.

Between March 15 and the end of 1916 the Club inducted 27 new members, a first-year increase of 150%. One of those inducted on March 15, 1916 was James B. Key, who served as president of the club in 1920. Later presidents included son Jack B. in 1935, grandsons James W. "Billy" in 1965 and Jack B. Jr. in 1976, and great-grandson Jack III in 1997, five presidents in four generations of the Key family.

The vision and enthusiasm of those first members attracted others like them, and The Rotary Club of Columbus was soon composed of the area's business and professional leaders. Our 2007 membership ranges between 335 and 340, and includes descendants of eleven of those members of 1916. An early accomplishment of those early Rotarians was to bring the annual Georgia-Auburn football game to Columbus, where it was played from 1916 through 1958. Since 1949 the club has played a key role in the establishment and growth of Columbus College, now Columbus State University.

The club's close relationship with Fort Benning began in 1917, when a committee of Columbus Rotarians was instrumental in the establishment of a U.S. Army camp here. The installation was named "Camp Benning" in response to a 1918 Rotary Club resolution recommending the name. Benning's commanding officer has been a member of the club since 1919, since joined by the Chief of Staff, the Chief of Chaplains, the Public Information Officer, the Chief of Protocol, and the Commandant of the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation. George C. Marshall was an active member of the club from 1927 to 1932, while he was Assistant Commandant of the Infantry School. There are several retired military members, including six general officers.

The club has a 94% attendance rate, the best of all clubs of its size in Rotary International, for which there are three primary reasons: fellowship and the pleasure we take in each other's company, interesting programs, and Executive Secretary Mary Reed. Speakers through the years include General George Patton, Coaches Bobby Dodd and Terry Bowden, Dr. Norman Vincent Peale, Dean Rusk, Dale Murphy, Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas, General Alexander Haig, and numerous other luminaries. A particular honor for the group was the attendance of Rotary founder Paul Harris at a club meeting.

The Columbus club supports the Objects of Rotary through a number of local efforts and projects in Central and South America and Eastern Europe. Our president has represented us at every R.I. Convention since 1916. They have sponsored four new clubs: Fitzgerald in 1937, Warm Springs in 1947, East Columbus in 1965, and Muscogee in 1991. Five of its members have served as District Governor. The club has produced 475 Paul Harris Fellows and 81 Will Watt Fellows, and a number of current members are sustainers in both programs. There are 7 Major Donors and 10 Paul

Harris Society Members. They have sponsored a foreign student under Will Watt's Georgia Rotary Student Program for the past 56 years.

Scope and Content

The collection consists of board minutes, correspondence, attendance records, publications, photographs, artifacts, scrapbooks and account books.

1915-2009 21 boxes, 9 oversized items (24 l.f.)

Permission to Publish

Permission to publish material from the Rotary Club of Columbus Collection must be obtained from the Columbus State University Archives at Columbus State University. Use of the following credit line for publication or exhibit is required:

Rotary Club of Columbus Collection (MC 273)
Columbus State University Archives
Columbus, Georgia

Provenance

This collection was donated to the Columbus State University Archives by the Rotary Club in 2011.

Box and Folder List

Series 1 – History of the Rotary Club of Columbus

- Box 1: Board meetings, 1915-1963
- Box 2: Board meetings, 1964-1999
- Box 3: Correspondence, 1917-1997
- Box 4: Attendance Records, 1950-1984
- Box 5: Directories, 1919, 1937, 1950's & 1960's
- Box 6: Directories, 1970's
- Box 7: Directories, 1980's, 1990's & 2000's
- Box 8: Miscellaneous Records

Series 2 - Rote-A-Bit

- Box 1: **Rote-A-Bit**, 1936-1947 & 1961-1970
- Box 2: **Rote-A-Bit**, 1971-1982
- Box 3: **Rote-A-Bit**, 1983-1990
- Box 4: **Rote-A-Bit**, 1993-1999
- Box 5: **Rote-A-Bit**, 2000-2009

Series 3 - Photographs

- Box 1: Rotary Club photographs

Series 4 - Rotary International Conventions

- Box 1: Conventions, 1918-1959
- Box 2: Conventions, 1960-1987

Series 5 - Artifacts

- Box 1: Various Club Artifacts
- Box 2: Various Club Artifacts
- Box 3: Various Club Artifacts

Series 6 - Plaques

- Box 1: Various Club Plaques
- Box 2: Various Club Plaques

Series 7 - Rotary Scrapbooks and Account Books (Oversize)

- Folder 1. 1962-1963
- Folder 2. 1963-1964
- Folder 3. 1980-1981
- Folder 4. 1984-1985
- Folder 5. 1985-1986
- Folder 6. 1986
- Folder 7. 1987-1988
- Folder 8. Account book, Nov. 1986-Aug. 1991
- Folder 9. Account book, Sept. 1991-June 1996