

PREFACE

The originally intended task of the Australian Rotary History and Archives Committee appointed by the Australian Rotary Institute was to issue a re-print of Harold Hunt's *The Story of Rotary in Australia 1921-1971* with a companion volume covering the next 25 years. It is regrettable that production costs placed the viability of the project in doubt so that the committee found it necessary to recommend a single volume covering the 75 years as an alternative. It is even more regrettable that, in the absence of anyone with the literary and research skills to do justice to the assignment, the choice should have fallen upon one whose only qualifications are length of service and some familiarity with the subject.

This is not a history of Rotary in Australia and Papua-New Guinea; nor is it a single, cohesive story. It is, rather, a series of stories and reports of some aspects of Rotary service and activities during the past 75 years.

On April 21, 1921, there was one Rotary club in Australia with a total membership of 37. On April 21, 1996, there were 41,787 members of 1178 Rotary clubs in Australia and Papua-New Guinea. Of these, 1,029 clubs had been in existence for more than ten years; 792 had been serving for more than 20 years. A very brief description of only the significant projects of each of these clubs, without any reference to district or multi-district activities or to any other aspect of Rotary service, would occupy at least six volumes of the dimensions of this modest book. One can understand, therefore, why this discourse can provide no more than a glimpse of some of the work performed by Rotary clubs and Rotarians in 75 years of service in Australia: a kaleidoscopic view of a rich pattern into which the myriad pieces have dropped at random. And for each piece we see, there are hundreds of equally attractive pieces that did not come into view.

Most of the information herein has been provided by others: in books, reports, newspaper stories and articles, club and district histories, minutes of meetings, Rotarians' reminiscences, responses to questionnaires and interviews. There is no list of references to these numerous sources but there is a comprehensive bibliography in which all are acknowledged. Some, of course, deserve special

mention. These include The Story of Rotary in Australia 1921-1971 by Professor Harold Hunt of Melbourne, A History of Service 1921-86, the 60 years story of the Rotary Club of Melbourne by John W. Thompson; two scholarly works by Emeritus Professor Alex Mitchell of Sydney: The Rotary Club of Sydney 1921-1981 and District 975 of Rotary International 1927-1983; Rotary in Queensland - An Historical Survey by Sir Arnold Bennett of Brisbane; and, of course, the files of The Pinion 1924-1940 held in the Archives of the Rotary Club of Sydney, and Rotary Down Under, 1965 to the present.

The absence of a regional magazine for 25 years leaves a serious gap in our knowledge of Rotary club activities between 1940 and 1965. Few annual reports have been preserved by clubs and those that do exist are not readily accessible. Many of those still in existence provide information about the officers, growth of membership, meetings and other statistics with information about projects confined to a list, such as the following enlightening example: "Vocational - courtesy awards, careers advice at High School, Four Way Test debate. Community - park cleanup, tree planting, bus-shelter in Kurrajong Street, Guide Hall, 2 sponsored for RYLA. International - exchange students (USA), toasts to overseas clubs, carpenters' tools to school in Fiji." The report did suggest a year of useful service and no doubt reminded the members of their own achievements; but it is not very helpful to a researcher 25 years later. The same report, incidentally, provided a full list of guest speakers and their subjects, leaving to posterity more information about what these Rotarians heard than what they did.

The inclusion of those chapters (Nine and Ten) briefly describing the purpose of the various meetings of Rotarians and the general organisational structure of Rotary may require some explanation. The History and Archives Committee hopes that this book might be used as a source of information, not only for experienced Rotarians who wish to know more about their great movement, but also for new members and potential Rotarians, for whom an explanation of the general organisation and procedures of Rotary at club, district, regional and international levels might be helpful.

I thank all those who have generously provided information, including the 488 Rotary club historians or secretaries who responded to the History Committee's questionnaire and I apologise to the great majority of them whose club activities are not recorded in this book. Their reports are now lodged in a more important repository, the Rotary Archives, in which, it is hoped, a vast store of material will be collected to assist future researchers.

Paul Henningham

ROTARY IN AUSTRALIA 1921-1996

PROLOGUE

"One evening I went with a professional friend to his suburban home. After dinner as we strolled about the neighbourhood my friend greeted by name various tradesmen at their stores. This reminded me of my New England village. The thought came to me why not in big Chicago have a fellowship composed of just one man from each of many occupations, without restrictions as to their politics or religion, with broad tolerance of each other's opinions? In such a fellowship could there not be mutual helpfulness?

"I did not act upon my impulse at once; months and even years passed. In the life of great movements it is necessary that one man who has faith walk alone for a time. I did walk alone but eventually in February 1905 I called three young businessmen to meet with me and I laid before them a very simple plan of mutual co-operation and informal friendship such as all of us had once known in our villages. They agreed to my plan."

So wrote Paul P. Harris in My Road to Rotary as he simply described the beginnings of Rotary.

The story is too well known to Rotarians everywhere to need re-telling; but, for the information of those who are not Rotarians or who only recently have enlisted in Rotary ranks, Paul Harris, was a Chicago lawyer aged 38, whose happy childhood had been spent in the care of his grandparents in Wallingford, Vermont (his "New England village") and who admitted to being lonely in the big, bustling city. His three friends were Silvester Schiele (a coal dealer), Gustavus Loehr (a mining engineer), and Hiram Shorey (a merchant tailor). They met on the evening of February 23, 1905 in Gus Loehr's office in the old Unity Building in Dearborn Street Chicago.

Silvester Schiele was elected the first president of the still unnamed club, the objects of which were friendship and mutual co-operation. Though still holding their place in Rotary history as origi-

nal members, Gus Loehr and Hiram Shorey, as Paul Harris said, ". . . failed to follow through. On the other hand Harry Ruggles, Charley Newton, and others who were quickly added to the group, with hearty zest joined in developing the project."

Paul Harris declined any foundation office but was the "guiding hand" who nominated the office bearers and recommended the activities of the club. In the third year he was elected president and gives the first hint of his future plans for Rotary: ". . . my ambitions then were - first, to advance the growth of the Chicago club; second, to extend the movement to other cities; third, to intensify community service as one of the club's objectives." Paul Harris, of course, is remembered and honoured as the Founder of Rotary - and, indeed, is in danger of being deified for creating the movement which began with four members of one club in one country; and which, 91 years later, has 1,180,000 members of 27,700 clubs in 188 countries and geographical regions.

Why Rotary?

"At a third meeting of the group," wrote Paul Harris, "I presented several suggestions as a name for the group, among them Rotary, and that name was selected as we were then holding our meetings in rotation at our offices and places of business. Later, still rotating, we held our meetings at various hotels and restaurants. Thus we began as 'Rotarians' and such we continue to be."

It was the enjoyment of each other's company which seems to have engendered feelings of goodwill that extended beyond their own circle to embrace the whole community, that expressed itself, under the guidance of Paul Harris, in the first "service" project: provision of a "public comfort rest room" in Chicago City Hall. This was not achieved without some resistance from a few members who saw this new role for their club as a threat to the "mutual assistance" principle on which it was founded. There were some resignations, but the Rotary club continued with renewed vigour.

In 1908 a second club was organised in San Francisco; and a third in Oakland, California, in 1909, which was followed, in the same year, by clubs in Seattle, Los Angeles, New York City and Boston. By now it was accepted that the objectives of Rotary clubs were "fellowship and service".

In 1910 the number of clubs grew to 16, the National Association of Rotary Clubs was formed and five "principles" were adopted in the form of five objectives. Rotary then became international when a club was formed in Winnipeg, Canada and, in 1911, the movement crossed the Atlantic with clubs organised in Dublin, London and Belfast.

The name of the association was changed in 1912 to the International Association of Rotary Clubs. By now there were 50 clubs with some 5,000 members and the system of districts (then called "divisions") was established for administrative purposes: five in U.S.A., two in Canada and one in Great Britain and Ireland.

The growth continued, seriously retarded by World War I, until, in 1921, the 1000th club was formed in York, England, and the first international convention to be held outside the U.S.A. convened in Edinburgh, Scotland, at which the most significant decision was to include a new Rotary objective: the advancement of international understanding, goodwill and peace.

Also in that year the International Association of Rotary Clubs appointed two Canadian Rotarians, James W. Davidson, F.R.G.S., a past president of the Rotary Club of Calgary, and Lieutenant Colonel J Layton Ralston, C.M.G., D.S.O., K.C., president of the Rotary Club of Halifax (later to serve as Minister for Defence in Canada), to be honorary commissioners to introduce Rotary to Australia and New Zealand.