One View of the History of the Rotary Club of Friendswood

*- Submitted by Gerry Stacy, Club Historian*

I was named by our club President, Desiree Hopping, to serve as Club Historian this year. I am honored to take my first steps into that role through a series of interviews that I have started.

The Rotary Club of Friendswood was chartered on March 22, 1975, with 34 members. We have had 44 individuals who have served as club President. Two of them, Ralph Hobratschk and David Smith, served twice as club President due to unusual circumstances. At least 19 of our Past Presidents are still living, and most of them are in the Friendswood area. Time permitting, I would like to interview all of them, so that new members of our club can understand some of our history, from the unique perspective of the persons leading the club.

Our senior living Honorary Member is Charles Baumgardner whose interview as a Past President I undertook first. Charles was the person who introduced me to Rotary and proposed me for membership. He was an active member of the club for 32 years, and he has been an Honorary Member for about three years. There were three other Past Presidents who were in the club when Charles was inducted: Ralph Hobratschk; David Smith; and Jim Woltz. As members with the most seniority, they are the persons that I have chosen to interview next to obtain the oldest perspective of the club. That perspective sets the stage for the next interviews

Between July 1, 2007, and June 30, 2009, our club had a major break with the past. For personal reasons, the club President 2006-2007 chose not to be actively involved in club activities when her Rotary Year ended on June 30, 2007. The next two elected club Presidents were unable to fill out their terms due to their job losses. As a result, even though we were able to carry on as a club, we lost continuity with the past. The club’s situation was precarious, but then a minor miracle occurred.

On July 1, 2009, Christine Turner began her term of office as club President. Starting her year with strong and positive leadership, she brought order to a chaotic situation. Her board meetings set goals and a clear focus for club activities. Her officers and board members were tasked to do their jobs so that the club’s goals could be achieved. She asked all of us Rotarians to look for prospective members and looked to the Membership Committee to educate those prospective members. As a result, the club situation turned around dramatically, and it set the stage for the next club President to continue rebuilding. And since then, we have had several club Presidents who have led our club successfully.

In this year of 2020, AD or CE, the Rotary Club of Friendswood is both strong and focused on the future. We have about 60 members, whose average age is lower today than in 2007. We have had several successful projects which enhance our position in the community, and our standing in the Rotary District 5910. Stay tuned - “the best is yet to be!”

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