

EDINBURG ROTARY CLUB

1925 - 1993

This year, 1992-93, the Edinburg Rotary Club turns 67. While this may be retirement age for some, the Edinburg Rotary club is young, active, and growing. We have just embarked of an aggressive recruiting campaign and developed an impressive list of prospective new Rotarians. An important part of growth is to study your past. With the help of other Rotarians, especially Chase Hodges, whose 1983 account of the Edinburg Rotary Club history is the backbone of this report, I hope to recount some of the events that have brought this club to what it is today.

The first Rotary Club was organized in Chicago in 1905, by Paul P. Harris. Rotary has grown continuously, and become an international organization in over 167 countries and geographic territories. Today there are more than 24,000 Rotary Clubs with a total Rotary membership of more than one million men and women. The Edinburg Rotary Club is proud to be part of this world renown organization.

In the early days of Rotary, clubs were only organized in the larger cities in the United States. In Texas, both Houston and San Antonio organized Rotary Clubs in August 1912. These clubs were the progenitors of all South Teas Rotary Clubs. Since all Rotary Clubs must be sponsored by an existing club, it is fairly easy to trace the growth of Rotary in South Texas.

San Antonio sponsored Corpus Christi in 1914
Corpus Christi sponsored Brownsville in 1916
Brownsville sponsored San Benito in 1919
San Benito sponsored McAllen in 1920
McAllen sponsored Edinburg in the latter part of 1924
Edinburg was chartered January 10, 1925

(In 1927, Edinburg sponsored a club in Falurrias)

The Rotary World is divided into districts. Originally the entire state of Texas was included in one district, however Rotary grew so rapidly that soon Texas had to be divided into more districts to allow Rotary International's liaison officers, the District Governors, time to serve the autonomous clubs. The first district, of Texas as a whole, was district no. 12. The first district governor was W. R. Richardson of Austin, who served in 1915-16. There were intervening districts, but in 1925, the fledgling Edinburg club came under district no. 47. The first district governor of district 47 was Sid L. Hardin of Mission. Sid later moved to Edinburg and was a member of the Edinburg club until his death. The last governor of district 47 was Ohland Morton, also of Edinburg, in 1947-48. For one year, 1948-49, Edinburg was in district 125. From 1949-50 through 1956-57, we were in district 185. In 1957-58 our present district 593 was designated as a new district with R. D. Cox of McAllen as its first governor.

Edinburg has furnished four district governors to the Rotary world:

- ; John Kirkpatrick served the uncompleted term of Wynn Seale of Kingsville in 1934-35
- ; Ohland Morton served in 1947-48
- ; T. Lawrence White served in 1963-64
- ; H. A. Hodges served in 1972-73

Sid Hardin served a district governor in 1925-26 as a member of the Mission club. He later moved to Edinburg.

W. R. Montgomery had been quite instrumental in the organizing of the Edinburg Rotary Club, therefore he was elected president when it was chartered in January 1925. As the Rotary year runs from July 1 to June 30, his term as president was not a full year, therefore he was elected president the following year and served one and one-half terms.

Five presidents, Fritz Hagadorn, Herndon and Tom Aderhold, Bill Koen, and Steve Reynolds share the distinction of having had fathers who were also presidents of the Edinburg Rotary Club.

Past Presidents

W. R. Montgomery	1924-26
Ed A. Brown	1926-27
R. E. Porterfield	1927-28
George Brown	1928-29
J. W. Kirkpatrick	1929-30
Merle Edwards	1930-31
A. C. Statham	1931-32
Douglas Mackenzie	1932-33
E. M. Smith	1933-34
Jack Trolinger	1934-35
A. A. Aldridge	1935-36
A. W. Taylor	1936-37
Fred Hagadorn	1937-38
H. A. Hodges	1938-39
Jim Courtney	1939-40
S. W. Patrick	1940-41
A. M. Tarbutton	1941-42
Victor Bobo	1942-43
Ohland Morton	1943-44
James Keeble	1944-45
Carl Van Way	1945-46
J. C. Hall	1946-47
Herndon Aderhold Sr.	1947-48
C. E. Koen	1948-49
Alfred Laughlin	1949-50
Henry Warren	1950-51

Doc was relentless in his efforts to see that every member had made up. He was known to call a member and tell him that he would be by in ten minutes to take him to a neighboring club to make up. Some Rotarians still have Doc's pride in attendance. I have heard members of our club tell of experiences trying to make up Rotary. One member gathered a group of Rotarians while traveling on a train through Russia. Others have made up by being brought to the meeting on a stretcher. I know of one instance where Rotarians have gone enmasse to a hospital room to hold an emergency meeting to keep up a Rotarian's perfect attendance.

The Edinburg Rotary Club has met in a variety of locations. I'm not sure of the chronologic order, or of all the locations, but some of the ones I have heard of, or know from experience were diversified and interesting. The Edinburg Hotel, located where the First National Bank now stands, was the meeting place for many years. The Echo has been "home" several times. The basement of the Methodist Church Sanctuary, with some church ladies catering, served as a meeting place and I have heard some of the best meals were served there. Hec n Bec Restaurant, Monte Cristo Country Club, and Western Sizzlin Steak House have served as meeting places in the not too distant past.

Membership in the Edinburg Club has varied. It peaked during the period from 1955 to 1962. At that time, it ranged from 110 to 120 members. There were more than 100 classifications.

Edinburg Rotarians have been an involved group. The Rotary student exchange program was one of the favorite. In the 1959-60 school year, the C. E. Koen's hosted Miss Margarita Heinbeck of Brasil, who was the exchange student to Pan American College. At the close of the school year, the Koen's took Margarita overland to Washington D.C.. As one of the Koen children, I remember this trip and how excited Margarita was. She gave presentations to all the valley Rotary Clubs. Margarita kept in contact with my parents for several years after her visit. The last I heard, she had returned to her father's homeland of Germany. There she met and married a man with investments in plastics. Together they returned to Brazil, where they are raising a family.

During the presidency of Charles Fortson, 1956-57, the Rio Grande Valley was visited by a president of Rotary International. He was from Italy. A joint meeting of all the valley clubs was held in the McAllen stadium. The event was quite well attended and went very smoothly.

Edinburg Rotary Club's twenty-fifth anniversary coincided with Rotary International's seventy-fifth anniversary in 1980. The event was marked by the presentation of The Paul Harris Fellowship award to Sid

Hardin and by the fact that we had 98% attendance that day. That same year, RI President James Bomar made a visit to the Monterrey, Mexico Club. Among the group of Valley Rotarians was our own president, Mike Villarreal. Mike paid his own way to the \$100 per plate affair.

During the 1934-35 Rotary year, A. A. Aldrich, the president of the Edinburg club, attended the Rotary International Convention in Mexico City, Mexico. He related a couple of incidents to Chase Hodges, who relayed them in his recount of the club history. The Mexican Railways parked the sleeping cars on tracks within walking distance of the Palace where the sessions were held. They constructed bathing facilities next to the cars, and the scheme worked out very well. The second event he recalled was, as he came to the desks for registration, his next door neighbor was Paul Harris himself, the founder of Rotary.

In the 1970-71 year, then president Fritz Hagadorn, started the policy of carrying a picture of Pan American University on the weekly bulletin. The policy continues today. At the end of Fritz term as president, his mother pinned his father's past president's pin on his lapel.

Rotary is a civic organization, and Edinburg is no exception. Some of the noteworthy contributions of the Edinburg Rotary Club are still very much in existence. Under the leadership of R. P. Ward, with strong assistance from Coach Bobby Cannon, "Boys and Girls Incorporated" was established. This was the first attempt to establish a city wide summer program for the youth of our town.

From these beginnings came the Edinburg Recreational Department, which has grown to two city swimming pools, one of which has an Olympic sized pool, and four baseball fields for the use of the Pony League.

Being a youth oriented organization, Rotary was instrumental in the development of the Little League Baseball Program. Today, this has grown into the Edinburg Pony Baseball Association (EPBA). The EPBA serves hundreds of young boys and girls from 6 to 18 years of age. Rotarian Bob Oaks was very instrumental in organizing the EPBA. He not only rallied many of our members to the efforts needed to keep things going, but he also widened the scope of baseball activities to bring district and regional tournaments and play-offs to Edinburg. Rotarians like Manuel (Manny) Garcia and Gene Espinosa are still very active in the organization, and are doing a job even Bob Oaks would be proud of. August 24, 1993, the local board voted unanimously to pursue the presidents Award for Balanced Club Service which entails completing various projects within the four lanes of service. To accomplish this, it was decided not to be physically active with the EPBA. The club would continue to support the EPBA

with a \$250 Pony League Team sponsorship and also a \$100 sponsorship to the Boys and Girls Club Youth Basketball Team. "We want to continue to look for other Youth Projects in our community that we can make a contribution."

Edinburg Rotary has branched out into other fields. Rotarian Mark Fryer was very instrumental in getting the club to sponsor and support the Edinburg Youth Soccer Association (EYSA). Now Mark is joined by Rotarians Ed Cook and Bruce Kroeker as coaches for soccer teams.

Edinburg Rotary has been involved in the cultural atmosphere of the city. In the early thirties, a number of citizens felt we needed to make available programs of cultural value to both the older and younger members of our community. At that time, if we wished to hear good music, listen to distinguished speakers, or enjoy almost any cultural program it was necessary to go either to San Antonio or Houston. Several members met and formed Cultural Arts Inc. in cooperation with the then Edinburg Junior College. With the help of the college, who paid for one half of the price of the tickets for the college students, and through the devoted and unceasing labor of many good citizens, a large number of whom were Rotarians, this organization operated and flourished for 21 years. In that time, we heard such musicians as Richard Crooks, Lily Pons, Jascha Heifetz, Jose Iturbi, the Pamplona (Spain) Cathedral Choir, and numerous others, equally famous. We also had distinguished speakers including; the historian Will Durant, poet Carl Sandburg, editor Norman Cousins, Mrs Eleanor Roosevelt, several U.S. Senators, a former English premier, and a host of other interesting and famous persons.

The Rotary International Convention of 1986 approved the acceptance of women as Rotarians. Some clubs were eager to be the first to bring in women, but not Edinburg. The Edinburg club did its homework and found some real female Rotarians. On November 1, 1990, eight Rotarians were indoctrinated into the club. Four of these new Rotarians were women, Teresa Morales-Best, Martha Noell, Carol Rausch, and Judy Vinson.

Every Christmas for many years, Edinburg Rotary has had a Christmas Party. The 1988 Christmas Party inaugurated a new tradition --- THE TURKEY BOOK. It all started very innocently with the exchanging of gifts. Each Rotarian was to bring a small gift to exchange. Doug Martin brought a book entitled "HOW TO RAISE TURKEYS". Mark Fryer was unlucky enough to select the book from all the gifts under the tree. The next year, Mark returned the book, and poetic justice prevailed, Doug Martin picked the TURKEY BOOK from among the gifts. It was then agreed that no other gag gifts would be allowed, but the Rotarian with the TURKEY BOOK would disguise it the best he could and use it for his gift. The list of

TURKEY BOOK owners reads as follows;

1988 Mark Fryer
1989 Doug Martin
1990 Jon Gillespie
1991 Susan Scott
1992 Sam De La Garza
1993 Skipper Smith

Edinburg Rotary boasts some of the best cooks west of the Mississippi. This along with the dedication and hard work of all its members, the annual Rotary Bar-B-Que has become a tremendous success since the first one in 1985, held at the Ebony Hills Country. The now famous Cajun Potatoes, along with the best bar-b-qued top butt found anywhere, promise to make the annual Bar-B-Que only more of a success each year.

Another successful fund raiser is the Christmas Sale held at Haggars which began in early December 1992. Lloyd Davis, Rotarian and local manager of the Haggar plant, managed to get several clothing manufacturers to supply overruns and seconds which we could sell and keep the mark up for profits.

Rotarians are found in almost any worthy cause. Rotarian Doug Martin, as part of Valley Proud, has been very instrumental in the acquiring and planting of trees. Valley Proud has a goal of planting 40,000 trees between Feb. 14, 1991 and Earth Day (April 20, 1991)

March 7, 1991, the Edinburg Rotary Club showed its athletic prowess. In two lines of bowling, it became evident that the Kiwanians were no match for the Rotarians. In game one, led by Bill Carlson's 185, we defeated them 821 to 753. In game two, we were defeated 803 to 846, but this failed to include President F. J.'s score of 199. The tournament total pin score was Rotary 1624, Kiwanis 1599.

March 27, 1991 marked a historic day for Edinburg Rotary Club. Rotarian Martha Noell became the first Edinburg Rotarian have a baby. Mary Frances Noell was born in the Edinburg Hospital at 12:16 PM, weighing in at 7 lbs 14 1/2 oz. Even this historic event was not Martha's first contact with The World of Rotary. In 1971, while attending Edinburg High School, Martha Scalise (later Noell) was selected as the Edinburg Rotary Club's Girl of the Month. This is an honor bestowed upon enterprising young high school students, who follow the Four Way Test in their every day life.

Saturday, June 22, 1991 ceremonially ended the Edinburg Rotary year with a formal dinner at the newly remodeled ECHO Hotel. Outgoing President F. J. Brewerton summarized his

year in office. Some of the notable events included planting of trees on Arbor Day, the increase of membership, four social events, and the ever growing annual BAR-B-QUE. Incoming president Byron Lewis was responsible for the program in which his Rotariann, Keely, narrated slides form their trip to the Rotary International Convention held in Mexico City. The cap of the evening was when F. J. Brewerton was given a Paul Harris Fellowship paid for in total by fellow Rotarian Herndon Aderhold.

Rotary International is very attendance orientated. Every month, in his newsletter, the District Governor gives the attendance record of each club in the district. Edinburg has come close to perfection many times, and in the 1950's even made perfect attendance, but in recent years we have fallen behind The Pharr Club which has 99.90% many times. Then in September 1992, The Edinburg Rotary Club posted 100% attendance, knocking Pharr out of first place. We have continued to keep up our attendance, even though it is not always 100%, it has stayed on top in our district. In fact, on Dec. 29, 1992 Pharr announced in its bulletin that "Edinburg beat us in attendance again"

June 17, 1993 the installation banquet was held at the ECHO. Outgoing president F. J. Brewerton bestowed honors on Rotarians and emceed a ventriloquist act. Rotarians receiving honors were: Bill Koen receiving the Paul Harris Fellow Award; Manny Garcia receiving the Distinguished Service Award for his involvement in the Edinburg Pony League; Lloyd Davis was presented as Rotarian of the Year; Special Recognition was given to Victor Huerta for his involvement in the United Way, Skipper Smith for his work as Sergeant at Arms, Bill Carlson for his involvement in preserving the environment, and Judy Vinscent for a year of terrific programs. On the other side, Gary Gallup received the new Traveling Dog Award House Plaque for the worst attendance. Lloyd Davis was installed as the new president.

After attending the President Elect Training Seminar, Lloyd Davis reported that 15% of all incoming presidents in Texas are female.