

INTERNATIONAL DISTRICT ROTARY

historical submission by Lloyd F. Hara

President 1984-85

In 1983, Lloyd Hara was asked by District Governor Swenson if he would form a new Rotary Club to draw from Seattle's International District/Pioneer Square District as its primary source of new members. Some 30 years earlier, several Seattle #4 members, Don Weaver Sr., (Crescent Foods) and Mike Dederer (Seattle For Exchange) tried to start a club, but could not generate sufficient interest or support. Lloyd sought advice of Don and Mike along with Walt Weber, a University District Rotary member and incoming District Governor.

Lloyd felt the new club should consist of members who were business people who had cultural ties or interest in matters affecting the International District or Pioneer Square. The club would be characterized by a multi-ethnic flavor. Lloyd did not want to recruit members from other active service clubs like the First Hill Lions or Kiwanis. Surprisingly, he discovered that the Kiwanis Club in the area had deactivated and he solicited interest from former Kiwanis members. Several former Kiwanis members did join Rotary, but quit shortly after the new club was formed. Most members were personal friends of Lloyd or friends of Lloyd's friends. A second good source of members was the Chinatown Chamber of Commerce.

It was decided to meet initially at the Four Seas Restaurant where Abe Lum and Wilber Chinn served as hosts. It was soon suggested that Wilber's son, Doug, become an active member once we formed. This disappointed several other restauranteers who also wanted the club to meet at their establishment.

The club charter application was slightly altered from the standard Rotary charter by striking out any reference to male membership. The application was returned unapproved because the new club had deleted the male gender clause and several other minor elements to comply with the interest and realities of the new members. The club debated whether it was better to accept the traditional charter or not. Finally, it was decided to approve the standard charter language and go through the formal process to change the by-laws at the legislative convention.

The first meeting installed Lloyd Hara as President, Bob Beardemph, President-Elect, and Mike Maksimowicz as Secretary. The District Governor, Walt Webber swore in the new Officers and Board members. After six months of provisional meetings, the International District Club was born; officially called Rotary Club of Seattle - International District. Seattle #4 asked if the new club's name could be changed because they felt that the two clubs might be confused with each other. The club decided not to change its name.

As Past President Lloyd Hara remembers, "We ran the usual luncheon program, but had a higher degree of political and community-related issues. We also had visitations to each other's business, somewhat like an open house in order to get to know each other better. We had the traditional holiday programs and our annual dinner at South Seattle Community College."

For a new club, the group was ethnically very diverse and generally a younger club with most members in the late 30's early 40's. Only Lloyd and Bob were Rotarians with other clubs. These factors allowed opportunity for a new group of people to be challenged and get involved. It also was the start of non-traditional activity.