

## PAUL P. HARRIS

### Founder of Rotary

Paul P. Harris was the founder of Rotary.

He was born in Racine, Wisconsin, on April 19, 1868, and when he was three years old he was taken to Wallingford, Vermont, to live with his paternal grandparent. The Black River Academy at Ludlow, Vermont, and Vermont Academy at Saxtons River prepared him for his studies at the University of Vermont, Princeton University and the University of Iowa. Following his graduation from the law school of the University of Iowa in 1891, he determined to spend the next five years in seeing the world and in coming to know his fellow men before settling down to practice law in Chicago.

He worked as a reporter on newspapers in San Francisco and Denver, was a teacher in a Los Angeles business college, worked on a California fruit farm and in a raisin-packing factory, was an actor in a Denver stock company and a cowboy on a Colorado ranch. Then he went to the southern part of the United States where he picked oranges in Louisiana and traveled extensively as a salesman for a marble and granite concern. He made two trips to England working on cattle boats and later traveled to Europe to visit the granite regions of Scotland and the marble regions of Ireland, Belgium and Italy for his company. These five years of knock-about experiences broadened his vision, and the acquaintances which he made in college and on these travels were of material assistance in the early extension of Rotary.

In 1896 his five-year period of wanderings was over and, as he had planned, Paul Harris went to Chicago to practice law. One day in 1900 he dined with a lawyer friend in Rogers Park, a residential section of Chicago. After dinner he took a walk with his friend and was impressed by the fact that his friend stopped at several stores and shops in the neighborhood and introduced him to the proprietors, who were his friends. Paul Harris' law clients were business friends, not social friends but this experience set him to wondering why he couldn't make social friends out of at least some of his business friends—and he resolved to organize a club which would band together a group of representative business and professional men in friendship and fellowship.

For the next several years he devoted a great deal of time to reflection on conditions of life and business and, by 1905, he had formulated a definite philosophy of business relations. Talking it over with three of his law clients—Silvester Schiele, a coal merchant, Gustavus Loehr, a mining engineer, and Hiram Shorey, a merchant tailor—he decided, with them, to organize the club which he had been planning since 1900. On February 23, 1905, the club's first meeting took place and the nucleus was formed for the thousands of Rotary Clubs which were later organized throughout the world. The new club, which Paul Harris named "Rotary" because the members met, in rotation, in their various places of business, met with general approval and club membership grew rapidly. Almost every member had come to Chicago from a small town and in the Rotary Club they found an

opportunity for the intimate acquaintanceship of their boyhood days. When Paul Harris became president of the club in its third year he was ambitious to advance its growth and to extend the Rotary movement to other cities because he was convinced that the idea of the Rotary Club which had appealed to a small group of friends in Chicago could be developed into an important movement.

The second Rotary Club was founded in San Francisco in 1908 and then other clubs were organized until in 1910, when there were 16 clubs, it was decided that they should be united into an organization which would extend the movement to other cities and serve as a clearing house for the exchange of ideas among the clubs. Representatives from the clubs met in Chicago in August, 1910, and organized the National Association of Rotary Clubs. When clubs were formed in Canada and Great Britain, making the movement international in scope, the name was changed, in 1912, to the International Association of Rotary Clubs, and in 1922 the name was shortened to Rotary International. Paul Harris was the first president of the National Association and the first president of the International Association.

When he passed away in January, 1947, he was President Emeritus of Rotary International.

While Paul Harris devoted much of his time to Rotary, he was also prominent in civic and professional work. He was honorary vice-president of the International Society for Crippled Children and served as chairman of the Committee on Professional Ethics and as member of the Board of Managers of the Chicago Bar Association and as representative of the Chicago Bar Association at the International Congress of Law at The Hague. He also served as a member of the International Committee of the American Bar Association.

Mr. Harris received the Ph.B. and LL.D. degrees from the University of Vermont and the LL.B. degree from the University of Iowa. The Boy Scouts of America gave him the Silver Buffalo Award, and he held the following governmental decorations:

- Order of Southern Cross (Brazil)
- Order of Merit (Chile)
- Order of Cristobal Colon (Dominican Republic)
- Order of Merit (Ecuador)
- Officer of Legion of Honor (France)
- Order of the Sun (Peru)





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