



**Waunakee
Rotary
Club**
April 7, 2011
Vol. 45 No. 32

Waunakee's Rotary Club, despite being founded nearly 40 years ago, has a storied history that takes it from the small town of Sparta, Wis., through a rainy Chicago night and a life-changing phone call.

Charter member Jim Schmitz described the journey toward the club's January 1973 founding as if it were yesterday.

Starting with his birth in Sparta, he described a hot summer in the late 1930s through an entrepreneurial childhood.

When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor Dec. 7, 1941, Jim said life in Sparta was different.

"Our lives changed drastically," he told the club at its March 31 meeting.

That's because nearly 40,000 troops flooded then Camp McCoy, just outside of Sparta.

To make ends meet, Jim and his friends set up shop in downtown Sparta and shined shoes for soldiers.

"We said 50 cents for boots, 25 cents for low-quarters and we won't charge extra for socks," he laughed remembering.

He and his buddies also delivered papers, making a nickel on his first time out.

High school came and went for Jim, including a tournament appearance at shortstop for Sparta's baseball team.

"The shortstop wasn't very good," he said. "I came off the field and said sorry to my coach who replied: 'Don't blame yourself kid, blame me. I'm the one who put you in there.'"

Jim journeyed to Madison where he received a degree in economics and finance before taking a job with Household Finance.

Joining the Army, Jim was commissioned as a second lieutenant, then traveled to Fort Sherridan, Ill., where he was in charge of the stockade.

One morning, Jim recalls a sergeant approaching and saying there was an escaped prisoner.

Not knowing what to do, Jim locked down the base and began a search.

Later that evening, the state police in Illinois caught the escapee outside of Chicago.

"He looked like a drowned rat," Jim recalled of the rainy night drive back from Chicago.

Jim took jobs at Household Finance in Rockford, Ill., and Indianapolis before a friend called from the Milwaukee office, bringing Jim back to Wisconsin.

Then, in what he calls the best day of his life, he was asked to come to Waunakee to take over a bank purchased by Household Finance.

A couple of members of Madison's Rotary club approached Jim shortly after his arrival in Waunakee about starting a Waunakee chapter of the club.

Jim said he saw several business owners in town that "knew of each other but never talked to each other."

Rotary was the answer to bringing them together, he said.

The first meeting took place in DeForest and it was music to Jim's ears.

"It was the best day of my life," he said. "This is the finest organization I've ever been a part of."

Other news:

•Joy McMerty said volunteers will be needed to help hide eggs for

OFFICERS

BRENT ZIEGLER, PRESIDENT • JOHN CULLEN, PRESIDENT ELECT
PHIL WILLEMS, CLUB SECRETARY
BOB PULVERMACHER, RECORDING SECRETARY • JOY MCMERTY, TREASURER

DIRECTORS

ELLEN SCHAAF • JOHN CULLEN • LINDA OLSON

Calendar of Events:

- April 19 – Easter Egg Hunt at Endres Mfg.
- April 24 – Russian exchange members arrive
- May 6-8 – District 6250 Conference

the big Easter Egg Hunt at Endres Manufacturing Co. the morning of April 19.

•Linda Olson said the Russian exchange visitors are coming next month and hosts can expect them to arrive April 26. The International Committee is seeking three additional families to host and along with folks to drive the visitors around.

Guests: Dr. Bob Klostermann, guest of Rich Harris; Paul Vilwoc, guest of Jim Ableidinger; Jody Pulvermacher, guest of Bob Pulvermacher; Ryan Dostalek, guest of Roberta Baumann.

Birthdays: April 7, Connie Blau.

Anniversaries: None.

Prayers: April 7, Pat Durden; April 14, Leonard Allen; April 21, Susan Vergeront.

Programs: April 7, Club Assembly; April 14, Ray Statz, Qual Line Fence history; April 21, Annie Ballweg, Girls on the Run; April 28, Todd Schmidt, classification talk.

Greeters: April 7, Rich Wipperfurth and Henry Zander; April 14, Jim Ableidinger and Mike Ableidinger; April 21, Peggy Acker-Farber and Leonard Allen.