

Rotary Club of Palgrave's Weekly Rotary Minute

By Doug Nicholson

The ladies of our club play a very important role in our history, and future, but it was not always like this in the world of Rotary. At the first Rotary Convention in 1910, Chairman Ches Perry asked Irwin Muma, president of the Rotary Club of Los Angeles, about the rumour that his club had a ladies auxiliary. Part of his reply was that they did not have a ladies auxiliary plus an added comment "I think it is a hard enough job to handle two or three hundred men without having anything to do with ladies!?"

This provided fodder for the newspapers of the day, "Women peril is seen?" "Chicago Daily News, "Can't manage women? Men are alarmed?" "Chicago American "Rotarian afraid of women?" "Chicago Tribune!"

In 1921, Women of the Rotary Club of Chicago established themselves as an Illinois non-profit corporation with membership restricted to wives, daughters, sisters and mothers of Rotarians, and the club grew to 250 members.

In 1978, in direct contravention of their constitution, the Rotary Club of Duarte CA admitted three women as members. RI revoked the Club's charter, prompting the club and the three ladies to file a discrimination lawsuit. The case bounced back and forth between various clubs, RI and the courts, slowly rising to the highest level possible, the Supreme Court of the U.S.A. In a 7-0 ruling May 4, 1987, the Supreme Court ruled against RI, stating that by admitting women, The Rotary Club of Duarte could not have their charter revoked by RI. The RI board took action that it would not enforce male-only membership in any country whose law clearly required the equal treatment of men and women. At the 1989 Council on legislation, the RI Board approved an enactment to eliminate the word male from the constitutional documents of RI. Women quickly assimilated into clubs in North America and then other countries. In due course, women became Club presidents and District Governors and now of course women and men are simply "Rotarians."

The Rotary Club of Palgrave is a much stronger and vibrant club due to the change in the constitution, and may I say to our feminine members, thank you, thank you, thank you for being Rotarians!

Please visit www.rotaryclubofpalgrave.com for more information on our Club and all the wonderful ways you could get involved.