

THE STORY OF KIWANIS IN PATCHOGUE

As depicted in the Silver Anniversary Journal

Kiwanis is an international organization having clubs in the United State, Canada and Mexico. It is dedicated to the advancement of human and spiritual values, to the encouragement of daily living of the Golden Rule, to the promotion of higher social, business and professional standards; to provide enduring friendships; and to foster justice, patriotism and international good will. Its motto is "WE BUILD" and its chief concern is that of youth service and underprivileged children.

More than a quarter of a century ago, thirty-six business men, with the common objective of community service, joined together under the sponsorship of the Freeport, NY Kiwanis Club and formed the Kiwanis Club of Patchogue. On May 8, 1938, at the Cedar Shore Hotel in Sayville, Kiwanis International formally presented the Charter to the Club's first President, Douglas E Brown.

From its inception, Kiwanis meetings have been held every Tuesday evening in the Link's Old Oak Hotel (situated on the present site of Brookhaven Hospital's Outpatient Services) where huge platters of beef and pitchers of beer were served for all-inclusive price of \$1.00. In 1949, this venerable landmark was destroyed by fire and the Club moved its headquarters to the Patchogue Hotel where it met until its closing in 1961. Following a brief stay at the 112 Motel, which burned out its meeting room in April 1962, the Club has since held its meetings at Tojen's Restaurant on Medford Ave. Each week the Club conducted interesting meetings, featuring fun, fellowship and informative guest speakers, and as it gathered strength in membership from among the cream of business and professional citizenry, so also did it grow in prestige and recognition for its accomplishments in such fields as public and business affairs, support of churches and their spiritual aims, agriculture and conversation, boys and girls work, vocational guidance and underprivileged child service.

Both in the uneasy period of depression, when the clouds of war had already settled over Europe, the first five years of the young Club's existence were years of trial and tribulation, which at times saw it on the verge of dissolution. Membership dropped at one point to a low of fifteen when an effort was made to drop all who failed to support the Club's endeavors, but the hard core that was left to see these formative years through and built a solid foundation for the more fruitful years that followed.

During the war, the Club worked hard and well on the home front with those of its membership not in military service assisting the draft board; rations board and supporting blood banks. The Club continued its work already started in Child Welfare and in support of St Charles Hospital at Port Jefferson equipment needs, supplying such much needed items as a portable X-ray machine, Kenney Packs, Whirlpool Bath and special operating room lights, representing many thousands of dollars which were raised by the membership from the community at large, who had come to regard the Club as a dedicated force for community betterment whose endeavors were worthy of their full support.

Kiwanis' interest in the children of St. Charles Hospital has been further expressed in the form of Christmas parties and magicians shows conducted by its own members. It was while returning from one such Christmas party in December 1945 that Kiwanian August (Augie) Schoenfeld was fatally injured in an automobile accident.

Shortly after the conclusion of the war, Patchogue became conscious of the need for a general hospital. It was at a Kiwanis meeting in 1946 that the first step was taken when a committee was appointed for the purpose of creating an organization toward the foundation of a hospital in the Patchogue area. The committee held public meetings to discuss the project and generate community interest. It was the first organization to make formal pledges of money toward its construction and it formed the nucleus of what eventually became Brookhaven Memorial Hospital Assoc, Inc.. Kiwanis continues with its support of Brookhaven Memorial Hospital and is proud of the role it has had in its development.

In 1948 the Key Club was organized in the Patchogue High School. Sponsored and supervised by the Kiwanis, the Key Club is composed of male students of Sophomore, Junior and Senior classes who display qualities of leadership and readiness to serve their fellow students. The Key Club can be said to be Kiwanis at the High School level. It can be pointed out to its credit that the Key Club has continued as an active segment of student life for 15 years.

Dear to the heart of Kiwanis is its work of Child Welfare, its help to underprivileged children. Less known to the general public because of its confidential nature, Kiwanis' helping hand has been extended unobtrusively to countless deserving children whose need it could fulfill.

The Club's general program of boys and girls work consists of planned outings to such events as the Dodger and Yankee baseball games, visits to the Suffolk Air Force Base, to the World's Fair, to places of interest in and about New York City. Each year, early in December, the members collect toys and gifts to be distributed as presents from Santa Claus to the needy children in the local area. Proudest of all, however, is the club for its many contributions over the years to such worthwhile recipients as the local chapters of the Association for the Help to Retarded Children, the Industrial Home for the Blind, The Girls Scouts, the Boy Scouts, the Little League, the Suffolk County Hemophiliac Association, the YMCA, Brookhaven Memorial Hospital, St Charles Hospital, Suffolk County Department of Child Welfare and winners of two substantial scholarships given each year to deserving graduates of Patchogue High School.

To support these activities, many means of fundraising were employed. Over the twenty-five year period, well over \$100,000 has been raised with the cooperation of the people of Patchogue and the surrounding areas. In the early years, direct solicitations were common, with a few thinly veiled "sales" such as newspapers. As the Club matured, a growing determination developed to give full value in return for monies received, resulting in such early ventures as the Kiwanis Auctions, which saw Kiwanians collecting all sorts of "white elephants" from neighbors and distressed merchandise from local merchants. These various items were auctioned off for whatever they would bring at public sale. Radio auctions were similarly employed, and eventually went into "show biz" with the highly successful Kiwanis Kapers, which only the best of local talent employed, but also big name entertainers. The first of these was held in 1953, each receiving wide public acclaim and bringing unprecedented receipts into the Child Service Fund. The year between and each year thereafter saw the Annual Charity Ball become a Kiwanis and community tradition, thru the efforts of Jack Ellsworth big name orchestras such as Glenn Miller and Tommy Dorsey were brought to Patchogue and played to capacity crowds. These events have not only served to provide the funds needed to support the Club's charitable undertaking, but also to serve to enhance the social life of the community. These events have been consistently enjoyed by all and have been successful financially. In 1962, as a change of pace, the Kiwanis Kapers joined with the annual Charity Ball to provide the greatest affair yet from a social and financial point of view.

It is a basic rule of the Kiwanis Club that all monies received, with the exception of dues and "fines" are kept separate and apart from the general fund and used exclusively for charitable purposes. It has been the steadfast policy of the Club to disburse all such funds at the end of each year, leaving an empty treasury as an incentive for the following administration. This policy has been the catalyst to inspire the members to accomplish their goals.

Kiwanis in the field of Public Affairs for a number of years conducted its "I am an American Day" breakfasts in honor of naturalized citizens in the Patchogue area. Each year on a Sunday morning early in May, Kiwanis invited new citizens to attend breakfast together. Outstanding civic leaders including our Congressional representative and Supreme Court justices addressed the group.

The Patchogue Kiwanis Club has been interested in advancing its ideals in other communities and has successfully sponsored and formed a number of new Kiwanis Clubs. The Club was only two years old when it sponsored the Smithtown Kiwanis Club. In 1946, it sponsored and formed the Bay Shore Kiwanis Club, in 1957 the Riverhead Kiwanis Club, in 1960 the Sayville Club and in 1961 the Port Jefferson Kiwanis Club.

The effects of the Patchogue Club have not gone unnoticed by the other Kiwanis Clubs. During the past quarter century, four Patchogue Kiwanians have been elected Lt. Governor, in 1951 Kenneth Jost, in 1956 Clifford Wade, and in 1961 Edmund Tuton. Recognition of the quality of work that the Patchogue Kiwanis Club does was given in 1956 when the NY District First Place Achievement Award and the International Second place Achievement Award was bestowed upon it at the New York State and International conventions.

Although Kiwanis membership is limited to men of the community, the "Kiwani-annes" wives of the members, are its most active supporters, and much of the club's achievements are directly attributable to their work and loyalty. A Kiwanis Club without a varied social program could be a dull organization. Kiwanis has maintained full calendars of social functions through out the years. The "Ladies Nites" have taken on the form of moonlight sails, costume parties, picnics, clam bakes, and dances besides the Annual Charter Night Dance. Most of the social functions have been limited to members and their guests, although some of the Balls have been very successful community affairs.

Fellowship among the members often develops enduring friendships. In 1945 Patchogue Kiwanis had a fine bowling team that defeated the Rockeville Centre Kiwanis team for the "Division Championship". A friendly rivalry has developed between Patchogue Kiwanis, Rotary and Lions. The three service clubs field soft ball teams for a service club series. From time to time the three service clubs have joint meetings to achieve their mutual goals of community service.

Kiwanis interclub meetings are a regular part of Kiwanis fellowship. From time to time, groups of Kiwanians visit other clubs, often traveling in a chartered bus in a convivial spirit. Often the Patchogue Club acts as a host of a visiting Kiwanis delegation. On such occasions new acquaintances are renewed and ideas exchanged.

Although the guiding force is its officers and directors, every member is expected to actively participate in its endeavors. Kiwanis works through it communities composed of its members. The varied committees offer opportunities for the members to work in fields of community service in which they have specialized interest, boys and girls, Key Club, vocational guidance, public and business affairs, support of churches, agriculture and conservation, international affairs and scholarship and awards are some of the working committees of Kiwanis. Regular attendance at its meetings is a requisite to continued membership and many members are justly proud of their attendance. Many members have perfect attendance for 20 consecutive years. Ira Scholosberg, now deceased, transferred to the Patchogue Kiwanis Club shortly after it was founded and maintained perfect attendance for 27 years. Lou Hodkin, presently an active member, has maintained perfect attendance for 20 consecutive years. Edmund Tuton remains the only active Charter Member having given a quarter century of devoted service to the goals and ideals of Kiwanis.

Many of the early records of Kiwanis were lost when Links Old Oak hotel burned and now exists only in the memories of its early members. Their anecdotes and recollections of the Club's early days are sources of inspiration to the second generation of Kiwanians. Many of the accomplishments of the past have meaning only to those who participated in them, are reveries of "old times" to compare with the present. Patchogue Kiwanians have every reason to be proud of its past achievements and to look upon them as a reflection into the future.