Harlingen Rotary Club Notes as Compiled by Norman Rozeff from the Chronological History of Harlingen

2/23/23 The Harlingen Rotary Club is chartered. By 1985 it has 178 members and the North Harlingen Rotary Club has 100.

1942 In this year the service clubs in the city are Rotary, Kiwanis, 20-30, Optimists, American Legion, and the Veterans of Foreign Wars. Women's clubs are Afflatus, American Legion Auxiliary, Business and Professional Beta Sigma Phi, Child Study, Fine Arts, Parents and Teachers, City Federated, Garden, Senior Study, Junior Fine Arts, Junior Study, Music Lovers, RGV Art League, Composers and Authors.

1/26/72 The North Harlingen Rotary Club is chartered through the efforts of Rotary District Governor Gene McCollough and Brad Crockett, president of the Harlingen Rotary Club. Only the latter's territory north of Harrison Avenue would be shared. With its 35 new members James R. Hand, Jr. was elected president, Jack B. Tate, secretary-treasurer, Ralph Jennings, Sr., Fred Parce, Ben Percival and George Hart, Jr. directors, and J.B. Brady, classification committee chairman. The club had the distinction of being the first of its type to induct a woman, Verna Young, on 11/10/87. Rotary International was to drop it "male only" provision in 1989.

April 15, 2010 In connection with the City's Centennial Celebration the Harlingen Rotary Club dedicates its 2010 Walk of Fame. One hundred honorees were selected as the most influential citizens in the 100 year history of the city. Each had a pavement tile that designated his or her name. Future years will see additions to the 800 tiles fronting the entrance to the Harlingen Municipal Auditorium. The club also issued a handsome 16 page booklet briefly detailing the accomplishments of the honorees.

Prominent Harlingen Rotarians:

1914 In this year George A. Toolan comes to the Valley. He was born in Lansing, MI on 4/3/82 and educated in its high school. He becomes secretary of the Chamber of Commerce and president and secretary of the Valley Association of Chambers of Commerce. He helps to organize five Rotary Clubs in the Valley while active in community building and publicity work. He married Maude O. Wheeler 10/7/05. This man of Irish descent is a Catholic, an Elk and a Rotarian.

1918 William H. Hundley is here this year. He is general agent for the Gulf Coast Lines for whom he has been employed for 24 years. He will also become a director for the First National Bank of Harlingen. He was born on 1/28/76 in Commerce, TX, where his father C.J. was the first medical doctor in the eastern part of Hunt County. He was educated at common schools and married Ray Juniger 9/9/07. He is a Mason and a Rotarian.

1918 A.A. Kimmel establishes a business with his name, A.A. Kimmel and Company Hardware and Implements. It is in a brick front building on Jackson to the east of that of
H. Letzerich. This native of Williams County, Ohio first came to Riviera, Kleberg County in 1908. By 1925 his brother Roy is helping him manage the store, and by 1929 the company is called the Kimmel Implement Co., Inc. and deals in hardware, implements, machinery and is agent for International Harvester. Now at 219-211 N. Commerce, it boosts a floor space of 4,000 square feet. Kimmel was born in Montpelier, OH 9/27/84. He married Josie M. Heaton of Norton, KS on 11/19/06. In WWI he serves on the Registration Board. He serves as a City Commissioner 4/21-4/23 and again 1/36-12/38. In 1928 he is president of the Retail Merchants Association and treasurer of the Rotary Club. Serving as commissioner again in 1942, he runs for re-election in May 1944. Mrs. Kimmel is active in the Business Women's Club, the Red Cross, and with her children Gordon A., Julia M., and Edna Mae.

1919 The present Harlingen Chamber of Commerce takes shape with A.A. Kimmel as president and J.B. Challes, who had come to Harlingen in 1918, as secretary-manager. In 1921 it incorporates with A.L. Brooks as chairman and Challes remaining as secretary-manager but now being paid. John Challes, after a career in insurance and service to the Rotary Club, will die at age 90 in May of 1971.

12/4/19 Harlingen Masonic Lodge No.1132 receives its charter. Dr. Cash was a prime mover in its founding as he was later for the Rotary Club.

1920 (fall) This is the period that 17 year old Vance Delone Raimond treks 550 miles in a covered wagon from Converse, LA. With his parents, one brother and five sisters, they journey to the Valley because the year before his father, enticed by the Al Parker Land and Development Co., has purchased 15 acres north of Santa Rosa. They farm it and prove unsuccessful in this endeavor. Moving on to La Feria his father takes jobs as city secretary and town barber. From his father Vance learns the municipal bond business. Born 2/2/03, Vance is to marry Mary Lee Scott in 1930 after she has come here with her family from Madison IN. They move to Harlingen in the 1940s when Vance and two partners establish the Harlingen Airfield Bus Company which is to grow over the decades into the Valley Transit Co. He will eventually become its president and sole owner. Vance was a Mason, Shriner, Kiwanis, Rotarian, and First Methodist Church member. He was port director of the Arroyo Colorado Navigation District, served the Red Cross, American Heart Assoc., Boy Scouts and numerous trade organizations. In 1996 he was 93 years young. In honor of their service and contributions the Boy Scout District headquarters on Expressway 83 west of Harlingen is named the Vance D. and Mary Lee Raimond Scout Center.

1922 Charles Matthew Dunkin, born in Kentucky in 1879, moves to Stuart Place from Cushing, KY. He is to be the father of Dial Dunkin, prominent banker, and the husband of Minnie. This First Methodist Church member is dies at 81 on 3/19/60. Dial B. "Bus" Dunkin will become president of the Harlingen National Bank, promote the Texas State Technical Institute, and be president of both the C of C and the Rotary Club. In 1971 he will be one of 20 inducted into the Harlingen Historical Hall of Fame.

1922 Dr. Noah Albert Davidson and his wife Dorris Drury Davidson establish themselves in the community this year. Tragedy is to strike them when their five year old son N.A.
(Sonny) born here 4/7/31 is to die after being scalded. They had daughters Barbara Davidson (Boyett) and Lella Joyce "Joy" Davidson (Judin). The latter born 11/24/29 will go on to be Harlingen High School valedictorian and be graduated from Baylor University, later to volunteer in many community activities in the Valley. She is to die 2/5/06 at age 76 leaving five children and her sister. Her mother died in November 1999 at age 96. Dr. Davidson is a Rotarian and served on the school board. He is to die in 1947.

1923  Hill Cocke comes to the Valley. He begins his Valley career first in citrus in the Mission area then he finds employment as a brick salesman for Guenter Weiske's Mission Brick Company in Madero. In 1941 he is to found the Valley Ready Mix Company which is to have the first concrete factory in the Valley. It will grow into Varmicon.
In August 1951 the city welcomes a new facility. The Lon C. Hill Memorial Library (now city administrative offices) opens at 502 E. Tyler. The air-conditioned facility with its 51,000 square feet is built incrementally at a total cost of $107,052. The building fund was first started as a project of the Rotary Club, of which Hill Cocke is president, as a war memorial and was later enhanced by the city's $35,000 contribution. These were supplemented by individual donations of $5,000 each by H.E. Butt, Hill Cocke, and J. Lewis Boggus, and $20,000 by Lon C. Hill, Jr. and family. He was also instrumental in raising $1,000,000 to move the old Valley Baptist Hospital from its F Street location to the present modern one.

1924  This year L.R. Daniels comes to the Valley. It is also the year that this native of Transylvania, LA born 4/14/63 marries Clara A. Cazavas of New Orleans on 12/24/24. He served in WWI as first lieutenant with the Victoria Rifles. Before coming to Harlingen to be owner and manager of the Harlingen Steam Laundry he served as president of the McAllen C of C and four years as the LRGV C of C as well as president of the McAllen Auto Club. He is a charter member of the McAllen Rotary Club, a member of the Presbyterian Church, and a Shriner. At home, 418 E. Tyler, with Mrs. Daniels is daughter Alva.

1925  This is the year that Miller Harwood arrives in Harlingen. He was born in Gonzales TX 12/18/87. He attended the U. of Virginia and UT, marrying Clair Leverton 11/24/09. He served as city treasurer, was Rotary Club president, and a member of the First Presbyterian Church. Together with L.W. Hoskins he will develop the East Taylor Street area.

In 1925 Dr. and Mrs. J.M. Green construct the two-story Prairie Style house at 822 E. Taylor. They have been here two years. Born in Weimar, TX 11/19/87, he was educated at Northwestern U. in Chicago. He married Ruth Rylander 1/5/14. He is in investments and real estate. This Baptist is also a Rotarian, city commissioner of streets, and will have an office in the lobby of the Reese-Wil-Mond Hotel. By 1930 the house is occupied by Tyre H. Brown and his family.

1926  This is the year Frank E. Davis becomes a Harlingen resident. He goes on to become a pioneer in the gift fruit shipping business as president of Pittman and Davis
shippers. He will serve as president of the school board for 13 years, a president of the Rotary club, and be involved in other civic endeavors.

In January 1925, it is F.F. Vincent who is to sell the Rialto Theater to Jack Pickens and W.H. Hall of Dallas. They immediately make plans to renovate it. By mid-May Pickens buys out Hall's share. Pickens is to become vice-president of Valley Theaters, Inc. Born in Waxahachie 9/1/98, he was educated in Gilmer, TX. He served 18 months in the army during WWI. He married Claudia Lewis on 1/3/23. This Methodist was a Mason, Rotarian, Elk, and a Chamber of Commerce member.

L.W. Hoskins born in Terrill, TX 12/30/87 makes his way to Harlingen this year. He will be president of L.W. Hoskins Realty. With only a high school education, he serves in WWI as a first lieutenant in the Air Service. He marries Dorothy K. Kuykendall in June 1921. This Episcopalian is also a Mason, Odd Fellow, Knight of Pythias, Rotary, and American Legion member.

1926-28  S. Finley (Finn) Ewing is Mayor. Born 6/22/75 the son of a Presbyterian minister in San Angelo, he studied at UT. He served 18 months in the army in WWI before marrying Ada McLendon on 1/19/19. He helped to organize the Valley Mid-Winter Fair Association. He is active in the American Legion, twice being commander and served as Rotary Club president. As one of the city fathers he pushed to have planking erected at street crossings. He ran for office on the slogan "Progress with Cooperation." Mrs. Ewing is to be active in the Presbyterian Church and other organizations. During WWII he will be president of the Brownsville Shipbuilding Corp. It manufactures craft for the military services.

1927  Robert W. Baxter begins constructing the Valley's tallest building at nine stories on the southwest corner of A and Jackson Streets. The lot is empty because the multi-storied frame building that once stood on it burned to the ground several years previously. By late September some tenants have moved in. Initially called the Baxter Building, it is renamed the Rio Grande National Life Insurance Building in January 1929 after he forms this company. He is a principle of the $100,000 stock company together with Drs. James R. Doss and J. W. Davis of McAllen. The Rio Grande Pharmacy occupies part of the ground floor. The building was home to the offices of numerous professionals including Dr. George Gallaher. Several decades later the widow of entrepreneur John McKelvey will purchase the property, and it will be called the McKelvey Building.

Baxter was born 6/22/85 in Montecello, AR and attended public schools. He was a graduate of the University of Michigan and became a lawyer. In 1917 he served in the Arkansas legislature and was for six years county attorney for Warren, Arkansas. He was also an alderman in Dermott, AK. He married Sallie Murphey of Warren 7/21/18. Residing with them at 610 E. Van Buren are children Robert, Tommy, Murphey, and Brian. This Rotarian's bid to be elected city commissioner in 1928 falls short.

It is 1927 that Van Snell's father, who is in real estate in Hammond, LA, is attracted by Valley opportunities, buys land near Donna, and then moves there where he takes up citrus culture. Van will go on to Edinburg Junior College where he meets his future wife Kitty. He then works at the USDA Laboratory in Weslaco before entering a lengthy eventful career as cannery manager with H.E.B. He works 32 years building and managing the Harlingen Canning Company. He was one of those instrumental in the
development of the Port of Harlingen, served the Chamber of Commerce, helped to found Tropical Savings and Loan Co., was a Rotary and First Methodist Church member, and was president of the Harlingen Housing Authority Board as well as one which disposed of the former Harvey Richards Field area. Preceded by his wife of 60 years, Kathryn Vaughn Snell, Van Snell is to die in Harlingen at age 94 on July 16, 2005. He leaves a daughter, Ada Kay St. John of Mercedes, and a son Kenneth of Austin along with grandchildren and great grandchildren.

This year also Lawrence J. and Marie Powers come to Harlingen where he will work as a salesman for Bruington and Wilcox, realtors located in the Reese-Wil-Mond Hotel. Their children are to be Charles R. "Charlie " Powers, Mary Margaret, Pat L., and James Michael "Mike" Powers, the latter who will distinguish himself. He was born on 6/12/25 in Jerseyville, IL. Graduating from HHS in 1942 he commenced attending Texas A&M College before serving in the Army Air Corps during WWII. He then attended UT, Austin before returning to Harlingen to work with his father and brother in Powers Insurance and Real Estate until 1957 when he joined the Harlingen State Bank, later to become the Harlingen National Bank. He served with this bank for 43 years, 17 as president. He served the community on the Harlingen Airport Board, Economic Development Commission, Civil Service Commission, C of C, Salvation Army Advisory Board, Rotary Club (for 52 years), and as a life-long member of St. Anthony's Church on its Financial Committee. Dying on 9/6/06 at age 81 he had survived his first wife, Olive "Leigh" and left behind his second wife, Charlotte Prenzier Guild Powers, son Greg M. Powers, his wife and grandchildren together with his brother Pat.

1927 Walter Leonard Lancaster came this year from Osage, Iowa and later worked at the CPL Service Center. This 61 year old First Methodist member dies 7/3/61.

It is in 1927 that thirty year old John A. Crockett, his wife Pat, daughter Eleanor, and his son Richard move to Harlingen from Bryan, TX. This UT and Tulane Medical School graduate becomes the first eye, ear, nose, and throat specialist in the city. He had served in the Great War where he was seriously wounded in the Battle of the Argonne Forest. In Harlingen he studied the effects of sunlight on the body and published papers on this and other subjects. An active Rotarian he was its secretary in 1929, its president in 1930, and District 47 governor in 1931. He also served on the school board for a number of years. Due to his wife's allergies they moved to Austin in 1940.

Coming around 1928, Lloyd H. Thompson is president of the First National Bank by 1929. He was born in Jacksonville, IL on 2/25/80 and educated at Winfield High School. He married Orpha M. Tucker of Lamont, OK on 6/6/06. He is the former president of the C of C and a Methodist Church member as well as a Mason, Shriner, Rotararian, and Elk. Their summer home is Boulder, CO. Residing with them at 201E. Taylor are their children Carrol Lee, Lois Eileen, Phillip A., and Laile H. Mrs.Thompson is active in the Red Cross and Harlingen Study Club.

New to the city this year is Frank Stacey. Born in Austin on 7/24/97, he is a UT graduate who serves eight months as a second lieutenant in France in WWI. Here this Methodist Church member and Rotarian manages the City Storage Garage, Inc.

1929 Earle Freeman Rumbo comes to the Valley in 1929 to join his brother-in-law Clyde Boothe in selling Reliable Business Safes. He had grown up and gone to school in Ennis,
marrying Edna Boothe in 1921. Their son Robert was born in 1924. In 1932 Earle is to start a 45-year career with the Etna Life Insurance Co. A First Methodist Church member he is also a Mason, Shriner, and Rotarian. In 1940 the Rumbos will complete their house at 621 E. Filmore. He is to die 11/28/77 and she at age 84 in 1985.

1939 Parke T. Moore, a native of Cherokee, OK, comes to the area. He will become involved in governmental agencies such as the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, and Federal Land Bank. In 1946 he will be a founder of the Valley Co-op Oil Mill in Harlingen just prior to its construction and in 1948 become its president and general manager until his retirement in 1978. This Rotarian and First Presbyterian member will die 9/28/86 leaving his wife Mabel and two sons, Parke T. Moore, Jr. and Richard, both of San Benito.

1934 This is the year Morrison Holmes Connelly comes to Harlingen. Born January 6, 1909 in Trenton Texas, he grew up on the family ranch and worked in the family pharmacy. In 1930 he received his Bachelor in Education from Southwest State Teacher's College then much later in 1945 his master's degree in the same subject from UT. Once in Harlingen he accepted a teaching position at the Stuart Place School. He married Mildred Oline in 1938, and they had one daughter Morline Connelly Haley. The next 13 years he then served as principal at Sam Houston, Bowie, and Travis Elementary Schools and Harlingen High School before becoming Harlingen Superintendent of Schools for three years. Following his 17-year school tenure he became vp of the insurance division of Flynn Investments for 10 years. In 1970 he started the Connelly-Cocozza Insurance Agency before returning to Flynn in 1975. In April 1988 he was to commence the Connelly and Bartnesky Insurance Agency. This man was active in Rotary, the United Fund, the public library, parks and recreation, the First Methodist Church, a student aid loan service, and obtaining medical funding for needy children. He was to die January 27, 2007 at age 98, leaving a grandson and his children.

1941 Orazio “Ray” Cocozza comes to the Valley this year as a 21 year-old enlisted man in the army cavalry at Ft. Brown. Born 5/16/20 in Chicago, IL, he married Billie Jean Brewster after his service discharge, returned to Chicago for a brief period then settled in Harlingen where he worked for the Food Machinery Corp. (FMC). When this firm left for McAllen, Ray opened a dry cleaning establishment here. M.H. Connelly encouraged him to join him in a new insurance venture. After Connelly’s departure Ray headed the firm and took in Bob Shepard and then Bob Walton, both just out of college. Upon Ray’s retirement they bought the firm, now Shepard, Walton, and King. The Cocozzas had four children, two of whom preceded him in death. After 56 years of marriage Billie was to die in 1999. Ray would marry Joan Stanley in 2000. Ray became known as “Mr.Terrific” due to the use of the phrase and his everlasting optimism. He was also known as "Mr. Rotary." He was a civic leader for many years being active in Rotary for which he was district governor, the Literary Center, and St. Anthony’s Church. This man “unselfish of his time and talent” was to die 11/16/06 at age 86 due to complications of leukemia.
1950  Gene F. McCullough is a prominent attorney who was on the first Water Board, served as mayor 1950-52 when the new library was dedicated, and was instrumental in the reactivation of the Harlingen Air Force Base. He was Rotary District Governor.

8/3/80  Edward J. Sokolosky with A. G. Edwards since 1972 is promoted to senior investment broker in its Harlingen office. He attended Central State University and the University of Oklahoma, is treasurer of the Harlingen Country Playhouse and a member of the Harlingen Rotary Club.