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Charles W. Brosch, Jr. Memoir

B792. Brosch, Charles W. Jr.

Interview and memoir

1 tape, 90 mins., 3 pp.

SPRINGFIELD ROTARY CLUB PROJECT

Brosch, Rotary Club member since 1947, discusses the Roy T. Jefferson Memorial Building project, the Rotary International Golden Anniversary held in Springfield, and his correspondence with a Rotary president from Saigon.

Interview by P.J. Waggaman, 1988

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See collateral file: correspondence and a draft of Brosch's written memoir

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Preface

This manuscript is the product of tape-recorded interviews conducted by P. J. Waggaman for the Oral History Office on March 10, 1988. Florence Hardin transcribed the tapes and Francie Staggs edited the transcript. Mr. Brosch reviewed the transcript.

Charles W. Brosch, Jr. has been a Springfield Rotary Club member since December 19, 1947. In his monologue Mr. Brosch tells of his service as chairman of the district conference and his term as club president.

Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that it is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, narrator and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. Sangamon State University is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for views expressed therein; these are for the reader to judge.

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Charles W. Brosch, Jr., Springfield, Illinois, March 10, 1988.

P. J. Waggaman, Interviewer.

A: I am Charles W. Brosch, Jr. I joined Rotary on December 19, 1947, forty years ago. I was sponsored by "Doc" Carroll Neal, of the WCVS Radio station. My classification was considered nonalcoholic beverages. My Rotary assignments and responsibilities were numerous. In 1951, Wm. H. Kewley was elected president of the Springfield Rotary Club. Membership was approximately 230. I was chosen to be the chairman of our district conference, scheduled for Springfield. I was chosen to be the club president during 1954 and 1955. Prior to this date our club was really managed by our longtime secretary, Roy T. Jefferson who had thirty-three years of perfect attendance. Rotary then had their own private office in mid-block of Seventh Street, between Adams and Monroe. Just shortly before my becoming president, our secretary, Roy Jefferson, died. Our board decided that our club needed to establish a memorial for our longtime, faithful, dependable secretary. Since Roy was interested in Boy Scouting and having made them many personal contributions over the years, it was decided that the Scouts needed an additional building to serve as a commissary and sick bay for the Scout's Club at the lake. This then, was chosen to be the memorial and was dedicated as the Roy T. Jefferson Memorial Building. Springfield Rotary met at the lake and dedicated the new building with good attendance of Rotarians throughout the Abraham Lincoln Scout Council, involving many counties throughout this area of the state.

Our Rotary board decided to establish a fundraising program of some type to pay for the Jefferson memorial. This wasn't a very popular decision among some members. This was the only time anyone could remember where our club ever attempted to raise funds for such a purpose. Many felt our club was too dignified. The fundraising program was established and called "The World We Live In." We sold tickets to the affair scheduled for two or three nights in the Springfield High School auditorium. The program consisted of pictures shown on a large screen prepared, I think, by Life magazine who sent one of the country's best known commentators who narrated each picture. The program consisted of pictures of the world prior to any inhabitants and up to the current date. This show became the talk of the town and attendance was very great. Our club was not charged anything for the program or for the narrator, providing all profits went to charity, which was the case.

I don't want to fail to give much credit also to one of our longtime members, Mr. Paul F. Wanless, who had his employees to build the Jefferson Memorial at his cost, a considerable savings for our club.

Following the death of our secretary, it was decided to close the Rotary office, at which time all Rotary records were stored in my home. Eventually our current club treasurer, Francis Wenzel, became our secretary. During this span of time our club abided by Rotary regulations through the guidance of Mr. Carl H. Webber. Carl was a past president in 1948 and 1949 and past district governor in 1952 and 1953. Our club was grateful to have Francis Wenzel assume the club secretarial responsibilities.

Since Springfield was the capital city in the state in which Rotary International was born, a grand Rotary International Golden Anniversary was scheduled and held at the St. Nicholas Hotel. All Rotary clubs throughout central Illinois was invited and the attendance was great. We were fortunate to have Mr. Herbert J. Taylor, who was president of Rotary International, in 1954 and 1955 at this particular time. His wife also attended the various ladies' functions during the three-day visit. President Taylor is the author of the "Four-Way Test" which all Rotarians throughout the world live by in all their domestic and business affairs. The "Four-Way Test" consists of, first: "Is it the truth?"; secondly: "Is it fair to all concerned?"; thirdly: "Will it build goodwill and better friendship?"; and fourth: "Will it be beneficial to all concerned?"

Also, other dignitaries attending this Rotary event was our own district governor, Lloyd Coffman and his wife, of Roadhouse, Illinois. Also, the Honorable William G. Stratton, governor of Illinois, and Mrs. Stratton, and the Honorable John E. MacWherter, mayor of Springfield, and Mrs. MacWherter; the mayor had been a Rotarian for twenty-six years at this particular time. Also attending were many other officials and honorary Rotary members throughout central Illinois, with their wives.

Following this celebrated event, the Springfield club received many compliments regarding our Central Illinois Rotary Golden Anniversary. President Herb Taylor and wife were escorted by local Rotarians to all the Lincoln shrines, including New Salem. Pictures of these events became available. Also, President Taylor had come to Springfield, prepared and arrangements made, by our own active Rotary member, John W. Chapman, who then was the lieutenant governor of Illinois. He made arrangements for the international president, Herb Taylor, to address each house of the legislature, which was done, and he concluded his remarks by having passed out to all legislative members a small lavender gold-lettered pedestal for their desks. It contained the "Four-Way Test" that he himself was presenting to each as a personal gift. By coincidence, the legislature was in the midst of a two-day filibuster at the time President Taylor was to speak. After he concluded his presentation, the filibuster was over. Rotary International President Herb Taylor allotted some time to make a personal sick call on Will Taylor, not related, who was bedridden at home after suffering a severe stroke. It was a very happy occasion for those of us in attendance, but particularly Will Taylor who felt honored with the visit. Will Taylor, my neighbor on Dial Court, was president of our club in 1922 and 1923. He was district governor in 1928 and 1929, and director of Rotary International in 1930 and 1931.

Will Taylor was the editor of the Springfield Rotary Review for thirty years and an active member for thirty-two years. Will Taylor died shortly thereafter.

One of the many interesting personal experiences in Rotary was my getting acquainted with the Rotary president from Saigon. We met in Seattle, Washington during the international convention in 1954. He and I exchanged many letters and gifts for several years depicting scenes of each other's countries. He had a strong desire for anything pertaining to Abraham Lincoln. For some reason, our communication was stopped. I still have some of his letters in my file. I have always felt that my association and activities in Rotary helped me considerably with my many other experiences in the business world. I will close off my remarks by saying, "Thank you, Rotary, for helping me in many ways."

End of Tape