

Rotary District 5520 Brief History

Rotary District 5520 as it now exists, was a part of the early history of the Rotary movement, which Paul Harris and 3 of his friends founded in 1905, in Chicago, Ill.

As the Rotary movement expanded west, our first Club was in El Paso, Texas, the 119th club to be formed. That was in 1914 before the concept of Districts were established, so El Paso was a part of National Association of Rotary Clubs.

One year later Rotary Districts were instituted and our area was assigned to Districts No. 12 and 13. Albuquerque Rotary Club was chartered next, in July 1916. New Mexico had only been a part of the United States a short time. We still had a bit of the "wild west" left in us even though El Paso and Albuquerque were developing into trade centers, also our climate and low land costs were attracting people to settle here and raise a family.

Another 4 years would pass before Rotary would extend to Roswell, New Mexico in 1920 as club No. 740. Districts No. 12 and 13 had been subdivided and renumbered. We were now a part of Districts No. 18 and 21 where we remained until the 1922-23 rotary year. It was during this year that the boundaries of what is now District 5520 were established, and have remained the same, except for three clubs in Texas which were moved to District 5730 in 1983.

In 1922 Rotary changed from the National Assn. of Rotary Clubs to Rotary International, and our District Number was changed to 8. It changed again in 1924 to No. 42. At this time we had 15 clubs with the addition of Santa Fe, N.M. in Jan. 1924 (Club No. 1610). We were growing with Rotary International as Rotary had passed the 100,000 member mark, that year.

The growth of Rotary International and our District was nothing short of sensational, and it is amazing that Rotary International was able to keep up with the explosion in Clubs and members on a world wide scale. Making new districts and realigning existing ones was one of the ways they allowed for this growth. Although our boundaries remained the same, in 1937-38 our District's number was changed to 115, then to 170 in 1949-50, and finally to District 552 in 1957. By this time we had grown to 42 clubs with prospects for more.

We are now 61 clubs with over 3500 members and still growing. Our District has had two Rotary International Presidents, H.J. Brunnier, and Clinton P. Anderson. Five men have served on the Rotary International Board, Brurnnier, Anderson, Pearson, Monroe, & Sonny Brown. (Monroe was from Clayton, N.M. that recently joined our District). Counting the two governors each year for the first seven years we have had 89 dedicated rotarians serve as District Governor.

PDG Harold DeShurley - Historian

All About District 5520

Size Location

District 5520 occupies a land area of some 280,000 square miles in the southwest part of the USA. It is bordered: on the north by Colorado on the south by Mexico, on the west by Arizona and the east by Texas. Distance wise, 400 miles wide by 700 miles long. The climate is generally mild with sunshine most of the time. There is some snow (2 to 300 inches in the ski areas) in the population areas. Rainfall ranges from 5 inches in El Paso to 26 inches at the higher elevations. Temperatures vary from an average of 95° (Jun-Aug) to 35° (Nov-Feb). All four seasons are enjoyed in a spectacular diversity of scenery. Finally, we are surrounded by six of the seven climatic zones such as, desert, tundra, alpine mountains and eastern great plains.

Population

Population growth has been steady and dramatic during the past ten years. Approximately two million souls live here with the majority in population centers such as, El Paso, Albuquerque, Santa Fe, Las Cruces and Roswell. Ethnically, we boast a mix of 49% Caucasian, 50% Hispanic, .7% Native American, .2% Black and .1% Asian. Native Americans can be found in 20 Pueblos and 4 Nations throughout the district with the largest being the Navajo Nation. Overall population increase is projected at 13% through the year 2010.

Recreation

Recreationally speaking, there is something for everyone. There are 46 state parks and monuments, 13 national forests and others. Hiking, camping, swimming, boating, skiing, golfing and hunting await the enthusiasts in these areas. Both New Mexico and West Texas offer a cultural mecca of art galleries, museums, theaters, Santa Fe Opera, the world famous Carlsbad Caverns and the Gila Cliff Dwellings.

Education

We are proud of our public and private school systems. Public schools offer pre-elementary to the Junior or Community Colleges. These are followed by baccalaureate institutions offering programs in all disciplines. Those who are inclined can go on to post-graduate programs to achieve Masters and Doctoral Degrees. There are more than 23 institutions of higher learning to include Vocational/ Technical training in a wide variety of skill areas. Specialty offerings are available to Native Americans at remote campuses. All public schooling is funded by the state, local, county and federal governments.

Transportation

Transportation axes throughout the district are extensive and well maintained by all levels of government. Three major interstate highways cross the district. At the southern boundary is the E-W 1-10. Across the middle is the E-W 1-40 and up the middle is the N-S 1-25. All cities, towns, hamlets and villages are serviced by hard surfaced two - four laned roads. Air service is provided by 8 major airlines and three commuter airline companies reaching all major population centers. Rail service is provided by two major carriers, Atchison-Topeka and Santa Fe Lines and the national Am-Trak systems. Southern Pacific Rail moves commercial and industrial freight in all directions throughout the district. Major transportation hubs are at El Paso and Albuquerque.

Manufacturing

A unique manufacturing complex has developed, especially in the border communities at El Paso/ Juarez - Maquilas (Twin Plants). Twin plants have grown into the hundreds along the border with Mexico. They represent for American manufacturers and others, a new approach to manufacturing by using low cost labor to manufacture products which are then returned across the border to U.S. plants for packaging and distribution. Not all manufacturing is done in this manner. Hundreds of plants are found throughout the district fabricating clothing, electronics, and other consumer products.

Economics

The economic climate of our district is healthy. Manufacturing continues to expand particularly in food processing, electronics, clothing and in dairy products. The NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) programs are helping to expand industry on both sides of the borders improving the unemployment rates. Clothing manufacturing remains steady with the big three - Farah, Lee, and Levi Strauss. Oil production in West Texas remains steady and availability of petroleum products remains high. A measure of this success can be found in the average price of unleaded gasoline. Lastly, per-capita income of \$16,300.00 is steadily rising with a growth rate of about 4.7% per annum.

Military Presence

Our district houses some of the finest military personnel in the military forces. The Air Force operates tactical as well as training facilities at Albuquerque, Alamogordo and Clovis. In El Paso, the U.S. Army operates Fort Bliss, the largest Air Defense School and installation in the world where training in Air Defense Systems is conducted for personnel from all over the world. Additionally, the Sgts. Major Academy is co-located with Ft. Bliss providing superb leadership training for senior non-commissioned officers from the U.S. and from allied forces around the world.

Agriculture

Because of the high desert terrain and mountainous areas, agriculture is confined to the Rio Grande Valley. Commercial crops consist of Pecans, cotton, onion and cattle fodder.

