

## **Brief history of the Rotary Club of Beijing** **Compiled by Gilbert Van Kerckhove**

Sources: many historical documents and reports, many from Hermann G. Heid.

The first meeting leading towards the establishment of the Rotary Club Peking took place over tea on January 18th 1923 when fifteen Americans and one Chinese met in the Wagon Lits Hotel in Peking.

Julean Arnold on June 18th 1923 assembled a committee of five key men to his home to discuss the requirements of RI and the idea of bringing 25 Charter Members together. This committee invited twenty-five potential charter members to a luncheon in Arnold's home on July 11th during which the project, obligations and essential features of a Rotary Club Peking were explained. On July 13th the Committee met again and selected the temporary name THE THURSDAY TIFFIN CLUB.

The first meeting of The Thursday Tiffin Club took place on July 27th 1923.

RI rejected the initial charter application in 1923 because there were too many same or similar classifications in the fields of missionaries, doctors and educators. Not only that, RI objected to the fact that too many of the proposed charter members resided at the same address. But it was quite normal in those early days that foreigners lived in concession areas allocated to specific nationalities.

On April 24th 1924 the Thursday Tiffin Club disbanded. A committee of three is appointed to select 15 possible charter members – in strict compliance with Rotary requirements. Julean Arnold is appointed Special Representative of the Board of RI to oversee the formation of the RC Peking.

On July 11th 1924 Admiral Tsai Ting Kan, who had been elected President of the newly organized club, sends the charter application to Secretary General.

The RC Peking with 22 charter member, was finally admitted by Rotary International on August 30, 1924 with Admiral Tsai Ting Kan serving as its Charter President and Julean Arnold as Director. The Club meets every 1st and 3rd Thursday at 12:45 p.m. at the Masonic Temple. The Rotary Club of Beijing was established on 30 August 1924 as the third club in China, with clubs having already been established in Shanghai in 1919 and Tianjin in 1923.

On the 2nd of September 1924, Julean Arnold, the Commercial Attache` of the American Legation in Peking, received a telegram from "Ches" R. Perry, General Secretary of Rotary International. The telegram read PEKING CLUB ELECTED MEMBER ROTARY INTERNATIONAL AUGUST 30TH NUMBER 1814 HEARTY CONGRATULATIONS

In July 1929 the club changed its name to RC Peiping after the Chinese Legation in Washington confirmed to RI that THE PRESENT CORRECT SPELLING IS PEIPING

The Club ceased to function on December 8th 1941 when the Wagon Lits Hotel, which served as the club's headquarter, was taken over by the Japanese for their own use for many years. Many foreigners were interned and the Chinese members found it unwise to hold meetings elsewhere.

The club was revived on August 30, 1945 when 17 of the previous 44 members and 12 visiting Rotarians – most of whom from various internment camps – attended the meeting. But due to the exorbitant cost of lunch, which many members could not afford, it was decided to hold only one meeting per month and offer Chinese luncheons. In fact the General Manager of the hotel permitted members to bring their own lunchbox.

Rotary International re-admitted the RC of Peiping with thirty charter members on August 14th 1946, giving it the old Club No. 1814. Dr. C.T. Wang had become the first District Governor over Districts 96-97-98. The Club met fortnightly at 5 p.m. at the Wagons Lits Hotel.

On July 18th 1950, acting on the recommendation of the Secretary of the RC Peiping, RI approves once again the change of the name. This time to Rotary Club of Peking. This in view of the fact that the city is now the capital of China.

On June 26th 1951 RI terminated the membership of the RC Peking and declared the Charter null and void.

Hermann G. Heid convened the first fellowship meeting in Beijing on June 16th (or 18th?) 1996. Among the eight persons attending he was the only Rotarian. Soon thereafter the Rotary Club of Hong Kong inducted the other seven and within one year the group had expanded to around 40 members.

In June 1998 Beijing-based Rotarians celebrated their 2nd anniversary which fell together with their 100th meeting. The evening meeting was highlighted when Rtn Bob Wilson of RC Hong Kong South presented to the group the original bell of the Rotary Club Peking which had been donated to the club in August 1925 by Rtn S.F. Howard. Since then the original bell has rung at every weekly meeting.

They created a banner. Admittedly, this banner was somewhat provocative and it was borderline Rotary-legal. It had upset some but brought smiles of admiration to most. It said "*Rotary Club of Beijing*" proceeded in small print: "Striving to be".

The item "Provisional Rotary Club Beijing" was placed on the agenda of the June 2001 RI Board meeting. By unanimous decision the RI board passed the motion to grant provisional status not only to Beijing but Shanghai as well, on 16 June 2001,

At their board meeting early February 2003 the RI board approved a change in their policy for the chartering of the two China clubs. While the previous requirements for chartering was "the approval and invitation by the Chinese government and the approval by the board of RI" the new wording is "the approval and invitation by the Chinese government and / or the board of RI".

The Rotary Club of Beijing (Provisional) on 31 March 2005 had 53 members and 7 honorary members. President: Mosud Mannan - President Elect: Carl-Ludwig Dörwald

### **RCB is back!**

Rotary Club of Beijing  
District 0052  
Club Number: 60724

On 8 February 2006 The Rotary Club of Beijing was formally chartered by RI, signed by RI President Carl-Wilhelm Stenhammar.

In that Charter year the Club had 57 members from about 16 different countries with Carl-Ludwig Doerwald - Charter President 2005-2006.

On Sunday 21 May 2006 we had the Charter Presentation Lunch, at the China Club, attended by the RI President Carl-Wilhelm Stenhammar, half of the Board of RI and more than 150 Visiting Rotarians, with a total of over 200 guests.

Later that day we had the Rotary Gala Evening at the Kempinski Hotel. The Gala Evening had more than 600 guests, including RI President Carl-Wilhelm Stenhammar, half of RI Board and more than 150 Visiting Rotarians. RI President Carl-Wilhelm visited China from 20 to 23 May 2006.

RCB received the new charter on 3 April 2014 referring to the original charter date of 30 August 1924.