
RC Shanghai - a Brief History

The Initial Charter (to October 1919)

Rotary was organized in Shanghai in July, 1919 through the efforts of Rotarian Roger D. Pinneo of Seattle, who was touring the Far East as the general representative of Admiral S.S. Line and Dr. Julian Petit, the club's first President. Rotarian Pinneo had previously helped organize the Manila Rotary Club on January 29th of the same year.

On July 9th Messrs. J. Petit, W.S. Fleming, A.B. Rosenfeld, J.J. Gorman and W.L. Johnstone met with Mr. Pinneo at the Palace Hotel to discuss the possibility of organizing a Rotary Club in Shanghai, Mr. Pinneo having come with authority to organize such from the International Association of Rotary Clubs. Doc Petit was designated Representative for the purpose of organizing and W.L. Johnstone was made temporary Secretary.

Record Date	Meeting Place	Address
1919	The Palace Hotel	

Two days later, July 11th the above gentlemen met again at the Palace hotel along with R. Buchan, E.H. Dodge, Hon. Thos Sammons the American Consul General, Dr. N.L. Downs, E.O. Baker and F. J. Raven. At this meeting the club was duly organized with Doc Petit as Temporary Chairman and W. L. Johnstone temporary Secretary, and the following cable was sent by organizer Pinneo to "Interotary Chicago: Shanghai organized. Julian Petit chairman, mailing particulars. Pinneo." A motion, duly seconded, was carried that the Shanghai Rotary Club be international in its character, ie in its membership and objects.

On July 17th the third meeting was held at the Palace Hotel where the report of the Committee on Constitution and Bylaws was read and adopted. On July 24th the report of the Committee on permanent Organization was unanimously adopted and the following Officers and Directors were elected:

- President: Julian Petit
- Vice President: A. B. Rosenfeld
- Secretary: E. O. Baker
- Treasurer: R. Buchan
- Directors: Hon. Thos. Sammons, F.J. Raven, W. L. Johnstone

The Membership Committee then proposed a complete list of 35 Charter Members and the charter list was closed.

At the next meeting held 31 July in the Palace Hotel, Doc Petit appointed Rotarian Treadwell as temporary Secretary and this was permanently affirmed a few meetings later.

On 2 September 1919 the club published the first issue of its regular news bulletin, the "The Rotary Pagoda."

Finally, in October 1919 the Rotary Club of Shanghai was given notice that was officially chartered as club number 545, the first club in China and just narrowly the second club in Asia. The club proudly adopted the two mottoes of Rotary: "He profits most who serves best," and "Service above self."

The charter membership of the club consisted of 37 members. A few months later in January 1920 the club received its Charter in the mail.

The Heyday (1919-1941)

The Rotary Club of Shanghai was a “Tiffin” club – as such it met for lunch at 12:30 on Thursday. Over the years it met in several venues in Shanghai but our records are sketchy regarding when the locations changed. In early 1920 the cost of Tiffin was a stately 1.25 (silver Mexican dollars - the currency of the day in Shanghai). One meeting a month was a closed meeting for club members only.

Record Date	Meeting Place	Address
1920	Café Parisien	25 Avenue Edward VII
1921	Astor House	Formerly Richards’ Hotel (now Pujiang Hotel) 15 Huangpu Lu
1922	Carlton Café	
1922	Union Club of China	
1927	Astor House Hotel	Formerly Richards’ Hotel (now Pujiang Hotel) 15 Huangpu Lu
1931	Old Carlton	33 Ningpo Road
1932	Metropole Hotel	180 Kiangse Road [Jiangxi Zhonglu] corner of Fuzhou Lu
1935	Peace Hotel	

From its beginnings in 1919 as a club made up entirely of American members, the RC Shanghai quickly developed into an international club reflecting the broad base of the multinational community in Shanghai. It was in fact considered in 1920 to be “the only international Rotary Club in the internationally governed settlement in the world,” and one of its prime objects was “the cultivation and maintenance of International goodwill in Shanghai.” The club began in 1920 to admit its first Chinese member but it was not until 1921 that it began to strongly welcome “native” members. Rotarians noted they had a unique opportunity in the Rotary Club to foster a multinational membership - in a city then full of clubs organized along national lines.

The Rotary Pagoda grew from a vibrant 1 page broadsheet to a multi-page booklet that from April 1920 began to accept paid advertising. By 1921 many members were advertising their products and services. The publication featured news from the Rotary world, from the club, submissions from the members, poetry, jokes, comments on public affairs as well as news and photographs about the club’s projects and events. The club secretary presented a weekly report and included news of classifications opened up and new members proposed as an aid to recruiting new members.

From the beginning the club had many vibrant committees: Editing Committee, Educational Committee, Entertainment Committee, Fellowship Committee, Membership Committee, Music Committee, Program Committee, Public Affairs Committee, Publicity Committee, Welfare Committee.

Under the leadership of the club’s Welfare Committee, RC Shanghai supported many worthy and substantial humanitarian projects in Shanghai that were well regarded within the community. We are currently aware of only a small sampling of these projects but they included:

- Beggar’s Camp
- School for Russian Boys
- School for the Blind

- Campaign to improve conditions of Child Labour in the Mills
- School Bursaries
- Christmas Toy Hospital
- Rotary Relief Fund
- Rotary Mobile Clinic
- Shanghai Rotary Club Golf Tournament

In 1926 Percy Chu joined the club at the young age of 28. The following year he was appointed Treasurer, a role that he maintained until he was elected Vice President in 1933 and President the following year - the youngest President to date. This was a momentous year for the Club because it was host to RI Founder Paul Harris to Shanghai in March 1935. The Shanghai Club held a reception and banquet honouring the 30th anniversary of the founding of Rotary by Paul Harris - and heard him give an impressive address titled, "Strength and Principles of Rotary, its past, present and future."

The club was also fortunate to see rising from its ranks many high ranking Rotary officials including:

- Dr. Fong Foo Sec, RI Director
- Dr. C.T. Wang, RI District Governor of the Far East, RI Special Representative for China and former Ambassador to the USA
- Wellington Koo, Minister of Foreign Affairs, former Ambassador to the UK and to the USA
- E.F. Harris, honorary commissioner for RI for China, Hongkong and the Philippine Islands

Before the war the club had risen to over 130 members from 27 different nationalities and fully a third were Chinese members.

For many years the Rotary Club of Shanghai maintained an administrative office with a paid Executive Secretary Mrs. A. Giovannini.

Record Date	Office Location	Address	Secretary
1934-41	Metropole Hotel, Room 103	180 Kiangse Road	Mrs. A. Giovannini, Executive Secretary
1942-5	Nanking Theatre	Nanking Road	Rtn T. J. Holt

The War Years (1941-1945)

Hostilities broke out on 8th December 1941 and the club held a regular meeting shortly thereafter on 11 December 1941, with 54 members and guests in attendance - including its two Japanese members. Two days later the Board of Directors decided to go into recess and for various reasons now formal meetings were held during the period of occupation. Members and Directors continued to have informal contact with each other where possible.

In 1942 many Allied Rotarians were repatriated - while the remaining American and British members of the club were interned in various Camps in and around Shanghai. It appears that 19 members were subsequently repatriated while the remainder of the internees remained in the following camps to the end of hostilities:

- Haiphong Road Camp - 5
- Pootung - 7

- Yuyuen Road - 2
- Ash Camp - 3
- Lungwha - 1
- Chapei - 9

In 1942 when the club's permanent Secretary was interned - the club's property and records were transferred to the custody of Rotarian T.J. Holt, owner of the Nanking Theatre.

Record Date	Office Location	Address	Secretary
1942-5	Nanking Theatre	Nanking Road	Rtn T. J. Holt

Towards the end of 1944 with serious shortage of food those Rotarians not interned arranged to give a Christmas food parcel to each internee and each member of his family from "Thursday Tiffin friends."

In August 1945 hostilities ceased and the last President Sung began communicating with members but because of practical difficulties at the time (finance, transport, internees still unreachable) it was not until 29 September that an informal meeting was held on the grounds of St. John's University with 30 club members and 10 outport Rotarians.

It was not until October 1945 that all interned Rotarians had been released and returned to Shanghai - as those in the Haiphong Road camp had been sent North. Subsequently on 9 November the first meeting of the club in almost 4 years was held with 44 members in attendance.

Reformation (1946-1951)

On the 29th of November 1945 the club's documents were accepted by RI for review and four months later on 27 March 1946 the club was readmitted to the worldwide fellowship of Rotary. RI maintained that because of forces beyond its control the club had been prevented from meeting and so it was readmitted under its original charter number.

Initially it was quite difficult for many of the surviving Rotarians to meet but they made efforts to do so and it appears that by 1948 Rotary was experiencing a bit of a renaissance in China - with four clubs being chartered that year including the Shanghai West club on 16 November 1948 (#7097). It is interesting to note that the Taipei Rotary Club itself was founded in 1948 as was the Kowloon Rotary Club and they may have been assisted by members of the Rotary Club of Shanghai.

Projects supported during this time included:

- Mobile Trachoma Clinic

This may have been the second heyday for Rotary but the civil war had a heavy impact on the club as it quickly became impossible for the members to meet in a public way and by 1951 it was apparent to RI that the club was finished, and so its charter was revoked on 16 October 1951 - 32 years after it was first recognized.

Record Date	Meeting Place	Address
1945 – Nov	Bankers Club	
1946	Great Easter(n) Hotel	635 Nanking Road
1947	Metropole Hotel	180 Kiangse Road [Jiangxi Zhonglu]

1950	Hong Kong Shanghai Bank Building	Room 408, 12 Chung Shan Road East 1, (Zhongshan Dong 1 Lu #12),
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The Quiet Years (1951-1993)

The early years of the People's Republic were not very welcoming to foreign expatriates and so both the foreign members and many of their Chinese colleagues engaged in business and commerce departed the mainland for destinations abroad including Hong Kong, Taiwan and places farther afield.

Many of these Rotarians became actively involved in the formation of Rotary clubs in their new homes and successful in new business ventures. Consequently many Rotarians abroad maintained a continuing interest over the years in exploring the fate of the Shanghai Rotary Club and its members who may have stayed behind and survived the turbulent period that followed the demise of the club.

After 1979 when Deng XiaoPing opened up China to commercial development the first wave of business people to take an interest were overseas Chinese compatriots. The slow trickle gradually became a substantial wave of business activity that included Hong Kong and Taiwan business people. Many Hong Kong business people centred their activity in the Pearl River Delta in Southern China, while many Taiwanese business people focused their attentions on Shanghai and East China.

Taipei Rotarians & PP Percy Chu (1993-1998)

Among the literally hundreds of thousands of Taiwanese businessmen who flocked to East China were not surprisingly many Rotarian business leaders.

Taipei Rotarians began to ask around and heard rumours in the early 1990's that a surviving former President of the RC Shanghai was still alive and well in Shanghai. Through persistent efforts they located PP Percy Chu (1934-35) who was by this time 95 years old and despite his age still as sharp as a tack and maintaining his love for Rotary. Under the leadership of PP Richard Zi (RC Taipei President 1993-94) they subsequently visited Shanghai in November 1993 where they had their first meeting with PP Percy in the Peace Hotel on the 13th.

News of this historic meeting quickly spread throughout Taiwan and the greater Rotary world as it became clear that not only was PP Percy perhaps the last surviving member of the Shanghai Rotary Club - but he also was possibly the last person alive who had personally met RI PP Paul Harris -- when he visited Shanghai in 1935 during Percy's presidency. PP Percy was invited by the Taipei club to join the RI Convention the following year that took place in Taiwan, "Gann-bei in Taipei" and he was a sensation with the Rotarians attending.

When PP Percy visited the RI Convention in 1994, members of the Taipei club promised to organize a birthday party to celebrate his 100th birthday. (PP Percy was born in October 1998, in Hangzhou) James Lee took the lead on fulfilling this promise by organizing a birthday party in Shanghai on 15 November 1997 that was attended by many Taipei Rotarians including future RI Director & Vice President Gary Huang. The previous spring with financial support from RC Taipei PP Percy was flown to Beijing where he was feted by the newly organized Beijing Rotarians fellowship group with the late Deng Xiaoping's daughter Deng Lin present in a rare public appearance. This resulted in 10 minutes of press coverage by CCTV about the extraordinary life of PP Percy.

In the year following his visit to the RI Convention in Taipei, Norma Ling approached Bhichai Rattakul, Chairman of the Asian Extension Committee, on behalf of the RC Seattle's International Service Committee -- seeking to assist with the rebirth of RC Shanghai as their club had assisted back in 1919. Bhichai replied that RI had approached the Chinese government with its interest in bringing Rotary back to China -but until it had an official invitation it could not act. This did not, however, deter individual Rotarians from pursuing this dream in their own ways.

In 1996 PP James Wang invited many Taiwan Rotarian friends to come attend the opening celebrations in Shanghai for his new ice cream factory. With many of its members -- including past presidents spending more and more time on the mainland, the RC Taipei board eventually authorized funding for Shanghai born Rotarian James Lee to organize fellowship gatherings in Shanghai. Maintaining a low profile given the sensitivities of the Chinese authorities at the time, James spearheaded early meetings of Taipei Rotarians in the Hilton Hotel in late 1997 and early 1998. Meetings as foreigners were quietly tolerated and the visiting members met under the banner of the Taipei Club. As of today the Shanghai club continues to ring in each meeting with the bell and gavel donated by RC Taipei ten years ago.

Because James was based in Kunshan at the time with travel still quite difficult he enlisted the support of former Taipei Rotarian Frank Yih & his wife Nancy to help organize these meetings in a proper Rotary manner. In 1998 as James health suffered Frank assumed responsibility for hosting the bi-monthly meetings himself until he was joined in Fall of 1998 by PP Andre Lys (RC Taipei President 1998-99) who was posted by his employer Air France to Shanghai and resolved to increase the frequency to monthly luncheon meetings. A highlight during this period was a birthday party for PP Percy held in October 1998 and attended by his elder daughter Jane Chu where he delivered an eloquent speech in perfect English to the assembled crowd. PP Percy continued to attend meetings in late 1998 but by December his health was ailing, he had become bed-ridden and was no longer able to join.

Record Date	Meeting Place	Address
1993	Peace Hotel, French Restaurant	Nanjing Road
1997-1998	Hilton Hotel	Huashan Road

Expatriate Rotarians & Friends (1999-2001)

In December 1998 however PP Lys was called back to France and Canadian Randal Eastman a newcomer to Shanghai and former Rotarian from RC Ottawa took responsibility for organizing what were then monthly meetings. After publicizing in Shanghai his hunt for "Rotarians and like-minded individuals" and attracting interest from former Rotarians and like-minded business leaders, in the Spring of 1999 this fellowship gathering decided to formalize its nature more closely along the lines of a Rotary club and adopted a slightly modified constitution and by-laws under the name of the "Expatriate Rotarians and Friends Shanghai" of which Randal Eastman was nominated President.

They reached out to their compatriots who were meeting in Beijing as the "Stiving to be... Rotary Club of Beijing" - then a branch of the RC Hong Kong and on 1 April 1999 shifted to a Thursday dinner meeting where the special guest was Rtn Hermann Heid, Chairman of the Beijing fellowship group.

Throughout 1999 and 2000 Shanghai was visited by many Rotarians from Beijing, Hong Kong and Taipei. PP Percy was in stable but fragile condition and was visited at home by many of the visiting Rotarians accompanied by Rtn. Frank Yih who had taken personal responsibility to help provide PP Percy additional medical support and who was subsequently assisted by generous donations to an informal “PP Percy Fund” that was contributed to by the Taipei, Beijing and Shanghai Rotarians.

Record Date	Meeting Place	Address
1999	Hilton Hotel	Huashan Road
2000-2006	Regal International East Asia Hotel	516 Hengshan Road

Shanghai Rotarians increased their meeting frequency to twice a month in March 1999 until 2000 when they began to meet on a regular weekly basis in line with Rotary norms. That same year after exploring various venues the meeting location was switched to a more accommodating hotel, the Regal International East Asia Hotel.

The club maintained a low profile during this time, both within China and within the Rotary world but began to raise funds for worthy projects in the community and abroad. It adopted a logo of its own - a stylized pagoda inspired by the old “Rotary Pagoda” newsletter. Its first substantial contribution was made to support a Special Olympics event in Shanghai in 1999. This was followed in 2000 by its first public fundraiser conducted in collaboration with the Inner Mongolian government to raise relief funds for farmers left destitute by two seasons of climatic disaster.

Autumn 2000 ushered in a new era for Rotary in China when after much behind the scenes negotiation by Ambassador Christopher Bramsen the RI President and team was officially welcomed to Beijing to meet with government leaders. Beijing and Shanghai Rotarians were present to welcome PP Frank Devlyn as well as PE Rick King and PN Bhichai Rattakul. As the RI team returned home PP Bhichai flew to Shanghai to meet with Jane Chu and the Shanghai Rotarians. This historic meeting convinced him that although Shanghai Rotarians maintained a low profile they were as active as their Beijing counterparts.

In late 2000 the club resolved that it was time to begin a substantial long-term service project in the local community. We were inspired by what our Rotarian colleagues had done to bring the Gift of Life program to India and reasoned that it would be more economical and face building to conduct heart operations in China if possible. We called on the assistance of a well-connected local friend and Honorary Member of the club, Mr. T.C. Tao, to see if any local hospitals would be approachable to consider initiating this project in Shanghai. In the Spring of 2001 TC introduced us to Dr. Pan Shih and Dr. Chen Qun in the Shanghai Chest Hospital who informed us in February of their willingness to work with the club to help poor children receive life-saving surgery. Club members visited the hospital facilities to see what needs were most pressing and the Shanghai Gift of Life project was born.

The Shanghai Rotarians established a Charter Committee headed by Rtn. Jock McGregor to coordinate the club’s efforts in lobbying the RI leadership for official recognition. Shanghai Rotarians then began beating the bushes within their home clubs and districts to raise support for our ability to be recognized officially within the Rotary world. We also began deliberations over an appropriate banner design for the future RC Shanghai.

Following their successful visit to China, the RI Board began serious deliberations about welcoming their comrades in China back into the fold. This topic was very controversial, but

it became clear in the Spring of 2001 that it was likely that before the end of the year the clubs would be granted some status, if not a full charter.

Sadly PP Percy, whose dream it had been to see the RC Shanghai reborn in his lifetime passed away in March 2001. He was mourned by Rotarians from around the world and it was with the wishes of his surviving daughter Jane that the club resolved to convert the PP Percy Fund into a PP Percy Scholarship.

In June 2001 the RI Board recognized their contributions and resolved that the two “fellowship groups” in China could apply for status as “provisional” Rotary clubs. The Board invited representatives from both clubs to come to RI Convention in San Antonio to receive on behalf of their clubs official certificates from the RI President confirming this decision. The Shanghai club delegated Rtn. Frank Yih to go to the convention on our behalf and before the assembled crowds RC Shanghai was welcomed back - 82 years after it was first founded.

Provisional Club (2001-2006)

During the summer months the RI officials resolved how to deal formally with two provisional clubs - that didn't quite fit into the RI system but had to be accommodated. Meanwhile the Shanghai Rotarians under the leadership of President Ivan Polacek prepared the paperwork required and by September 2001 the club received notice that it was officially granted status as the “Rotary Club of Shanghai (Provisional)” with 23 members from 9 countries. Subsequently the club was granted a new club number, 60725.

This year began the broader rollout of the Shanghai “Gift of Life” program internationally which became a cornerstone for the Shanghai club's humanitarian efforts conducted with the strong support from local members of the Shanghai expatriate community and Rotarians and clubs abroad. During 2001-2002 the club put a lot of effort into building relationships with Rotary clubs and districts abroad to help support this signature project with direct contributions and matching grants.

During the first year as a provisional club RI designated Past RI Director Rafael Paing Hechanova from the Philippines as Advisor responsible for overseeing the clubs' activities and guiding them in Rotary procedures. PRID Paing visited Shanghai several times and reported back to the board. In March of 2002 RI President Rick King visited Beijing and Shanghai to continue discussions with Chinese officials and to observe the workings of the clubs.

In 2002-3 Rotary year the RI board made a decision to place the two provisional clubs within District 3450 (Hong Kong, Macau, Mongolia) - a decision warmly welcomed by our many friends in Hong Kong. DG Gloria Chan personally visited to announce this decision and to welcome the club into the district. Club leaders were asked to participate in district events and in particular to meet with RI President Bhichai Rattakul when he visited Hong Kong to give him an update on the status of the provisional clubs in China.

During this year President Brinton and Rtn. Christian Brutzer led a strong campaign for the club members to contribute to the Rotary Foundation - which culminated in the club being designated a “100% Paul Harris Fellow” club that year. The club also led its first Rotary Foundation matching grant this year.

Second Charter (2006 to date)

The provisional club remained a part of D3450 throughout the presidential terms of PP Dragan Djordjevic and IPP Thomas Adaemmer. President Lee Wahhin took charge of the club for the 2005-6 Rotary year and was informed in the Autumn of 2005 that the RI Board was deliberating over granting the two Chinese clubs a full charter during this year.

In February this became a reality with the club being officially re-chartered by Decision of the RI Board on 8 February 2006. At the same time the RI Board appointed Ambassador Christopher Bramsen to initiate and lead the “Rotary China Team,” that would be based in Beijing with representatives from both the Beijing and Shanghai clubs to support the development of Rotary in the mainland. Simultaneously the two clubs were removed from D3450 and placed under the leadership of this new district-like administration.