

Summit Old Guard's 4,000th Meeting

A Brief History of the Organization

IN THE BEGINNING, #1

- The organization had its first meeting on December 2nd, 1930.
- The initial group consisted of E. Marvin Heberd, its founder, and 31 members.
- The word “old” did not refer to chronology, but to endearment.
- Additionally, the word guard referred to the preservation of good human values.
- Since it was founded in Summit, NJ, we have the Summit Old Guard.
- Guiding principles of the SOG were to provide weekly opportunities for socialization, fellowship and to hearing a rewarding presentation on an interesting subject for retired men .
- Officers of the SOG were Director, Vice Director, Recording Secretary, Corresponding Secretary, Treasurer, and Historian.

IN THE BEGINNING, #2

- Membership dues were \$1.00 /year initially.
- Meetings , held each Tuesday, consisted of socialization and then the formal meeting that started at 10:30 AM.
- Following the call to order, the program started with the singing of a number of songs, the pledge to the flag, reports of the secretaries, some jokes, and the then committee reports.
- Next, there would be a 45 minute presentation followed by a Q&A session.
- Following that, the person who made the presentation would be awarded an orchid certificate of appreciation and the Old Guard Salute (i.e., a standing applause by the SOG members).
- Lunch and/or some activities (chess, bridge, etc.) would follow.

IMPORTANCE OF MUSIC TO SOG

- As noted earlier, songs were an essential part of Old Guard meetings.
- In fact, the singing of songs was “a must” at meetings.
- The desire was to have the songs reflect organizational values.
- Initially, existing songs were used after the lyrics had been changed to reflect needs of the organization.
- For example, “The Old Guard Glory Song” made use of the “Battle Hymn of the Republic” music.
- In another example, the song “When Old Friends Get Together” made use of the music for “When Irish Eyes Are Smiling”.
- In 1948, Charles H. Hall wrote the “Old Guard Song”.
- One verse of the “Old Guard Song” is sung at every meeting.

THE SOG's MEETING SITES

- In the early days the SOG met each Tuesday at the Summit YMCA.
- Meetings were held on the third floor of the “Y”, with the climb making it difficult for some elderly members.
- After many years of this, the meetings were moved to the first floor. Thank Heavens!!
- After some years at the “Y”, meetings were held at the Brayton School in Summit (near Memorial Park).
- Then, in warmer months, the meetings were held at the Memorial Park Field House. On occasion, a meeting was actually held outdoors in the park.
- In more recent years the meetings have been held at the New Providence Municipal Building.

IMPORTANCE OF MEETING PRESENTATIONS

- While the opening songs and jokes were great, nothing came close to the importance of the meeting presentation.
- For each month there would be a program chairman (volunteer) to arrange for the speakers.
- Because of the significant pool of talent within the organization, a member of the SOG would on occasion be the speaker.
- However, more often the speaker would be an outside expert on some topic of interest to the membership.
- Popular topics, as you might imagine, included making and keeping money, as well as healthcare items. Others included NJ and US history, travelogues, how things work (such as governmental agencies, business and educational organizations, etc.).
- According to some current long-term members, a few of the most popular speakers were Gov. Christi Whitman, Brett Schundler and Bobby Thompson.

OLD GUARD ACTIVITIES

- Activities took place after the meeting or between meetings.
- In the early days there were such things as chess, bridge, discussions groups and golf.
- Later such things as bocci and fishing were added to the roster.
- More recently, walking, canoeing, and mathematics joined the list.
- To keep up with advances in computing technology, a group called Technology Users Group (TUG) joined the list in 2009.
- As new games and activities make the scene over time, there will probably be members who will want to form new activities groups.

TRIPS COMMITTEE

- From the very start of the SOG in 1930, there has been a Trips Committee.
- In the early days there were trips to New York City for visits to museums and Broadway shows.
- Later on more distant places were visited, such as Philadelphia, Trenton, and West Point to view historic sites.
- Then, there was a boat trip to Bermuda and later a boat trip to New England seaports.
- In the last few years there have been trips to New York City, Philadelphia, West Point, and many fine restaurants in the area.
- All it takes is a good suggestion and a group of interested members to initiate a trip.

GROWTH IN NUMBER OF SOG CHAPTERS

- As noted earlier, the first chapter was formed in Summit in 1930.
- The great success of this organization caught the attention of many nearby communities.
- The second chapter was formed in Westfield, NJ in 1933.
- Then came Elizabeth in 1936, Plainfield in 1941, Ramsey in 1946 and Nutley in 1947.
- Many other chapters formed over the following years, particularly along the Jersey Shore (i.e., Toms River, et al).
- Number 25 was Bellville in 1978 while Cedar Glen Lakes came along as Number 26 in 1979.
- There were also 10 out-of –New Jersey chapters, including Oil City, PA.

MAJOR ANNUAL EVENTS

- Every summer the SOG held its Annual Picnic (for members only), where the menu consisted of hot dogs, burgers, salads, beer and soda.
- Initially, it was held at Memorial Park in Summit.
- In more recent years the picnic has been held at a park in New Providence.
- THE BIG social event of the year was always Ladies Day, a very festive affair for members and their wives.
- It was held at the Grand Summit Hotel in Summit, and consisted of a meet and greet cocktail hour, a sumptuous lunch and a speaker.
- At the end of every year the Council held a luncheon at a local restaurant.

SUSTAINING OUR MEMBERSHIP

- To sustain our membership, existing members were encouraged to get retired men (friends, neighbors , etc.) to attend a meeting and then join the organization.
- Today Hugo Pfaltz, Jr. is a member who joined based in large measure on his father's enjoyment of membership in the SOG many years earlier. This is an example of sequential family membership.
- In a similar way, Herb Waddell (a member since 1997), was the driving force in getting his son Steve to join earlier this year. This is an example of contemporaneous family membership.
- Our total current membership is approximately 300, a figure that we have held for a number of years..

NOW, WE LOOK FORWARD

- Just think, in only 12 years we will be celebrating the 100th anniversary of our founding.
- What will the organization look like at that time?
- Later in this program we will hear from John Luckstone, an earlier Director of the SOG, who will provide some thoughts on that very subject.
- THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION TO THIS SEGMENT ON HISTORY OF THE SOG.