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Tattered Tidbits: Alpine Historical Society

CURLY COLLIER – MORE THAN FOUR DECADES AS ALPINE KIWANIAN

Wilson Smith Collier, known to every one as “Curly” earned his nickname from his buddies during WWII. He joined Kiwanis on October 6, 1967 and is one of their long time members.

Curly is the perfect person to be featured this month because it is the 60th Anniversary of the Alpine Kiwanis Club. The club was chartered by Kiwanis International on January 1, 1951. The word Kiwanis means, “We trade or share our talents.”

Curly Collier was born on April 19, 1921 in Vernon, Texas. When he was a young boy his family moved to Manitou Springs, Colorado where he lived until he enlisted in the Army Air Corps. He served in WWII from 1940 to 1945 as an Air Corps Supply Sergeant. He married in 1942 and had two boys Tom and Lucky. He divorced his first wife and in 1957 married Pauline. They were married for 45 years until her death.

His first job, after his military service, was with a tractor company in Raleigh, California. In 1949 he started working for Shaw Sales and Services Company in Anaheim. In 1950 he was transferred to San Diego as a parts salesman. He was hired by Hawthorne Machine Company in 1966 where he became their sales manager. His family moved to Alpine in 1967 and he retired in 1985.

One day when he was filling up his car with gas, at the Alpine Texaco Station, Bob Wilson, the owner, said to Curly, “We have a Kiwanis Club in Alpine and I want to see you there next Saturday.” As they say, “the rest is history.” That was in 1967 when there were only 13 members. Today the Alpine Kiwanis Club has 134 members. They are the third largest Kiwanis Club in the California –Nevada-Hawaii District of Kiwanis International.

For the past 43 years, Curly has contributed in so many ways to Kiwanis. He started the alpine Kiwanis Miracle Miles of Quarters Golf Tournament to help raise money for Rady Children’s Hospital. He even had a bench dedicated to him for all his years of service. It is located at Rady’s and says, “In Honor of Curly Collier – Acts of Kindness for Children 1994 – 1995 Kiwanis Division 31.”

Debbie Jackson told me that there is also a Curly Collier Endowment at Rady Children’s Hospital. It was created by members of Kiwanis International of San Diego and Imperial Counties to honor Mr. Collier and support the Sam S. and Rose Stein Trauma Center at Rady’s. Curly has helped raise \$790,000 dollars for Rady Children’s Hospital.”

Debbie also shared this story with me. “The year I was President of the Alpine Kiwanis (2004-05), Curly was one of my Board members. I asked him if he would consider getting a computer? It was so much more efficient to communicate with the Board through email. I offered to help him find a used one if he would consider learning how to use it.

“He found one on his own and became very adept at using it. In fact, he thanked me many times for asking him to do that because it opened up his communications with family members and his many friends around the country.”

Kristin Gauss, says, “Curly is truly an awe inspiring individual who has never let his age get in the way of his charity work for Rady Children’s Hospital. To meet an individual like Curly you feel special, but to call him a fellow Kiwanian and friend I feel privileged.”

Mark Grant says, “When I joined Kiwanis in 1989 Curly came up to me and asked if I would help with the Rady’s Golf Tournament. What could I say? At first I thought, what have I gotten myself into? Every moment with Curly has been very special. The Kiwanis motto is ‘Service above self.’ Curly is a roll model for that motto. He has done so much for the community and his top priority has been Rady Children’s Hospital. He is the most humble man, unselfish and the type of guy that would do anything for you.”

When I asked Dick Rabell about Curly he said, “How do you write about a legend? Curly encouraged me to work for The Ronald McDonald House, which is just across the street from Rady’s. I believe he asked me to do this about 15 years ago. Since that time I think about Curly when ever I am working at R.M.H. He is truly an inspiring man and it’s by honor to have known him in Kiwanis for 30 years.”

Another member, Joe Brunold told me this story. “I had the privilege of attending many Kiwanis Conventions with Curly. The only problem with that is we could hardly take a step without someone stopping us to chat with Curly. He has a wonderful reputation throughout Kiwanis and he is truly a pleasure to be around. If all of us could support the children at just 10 percent of what Curly has done, the world would be a much better place.”

During his years with the Alpine Kiwanis, Curly has served as President from 1970 to 71 and Lieutenant Governor from 1976 to 77. He also received every honor the Club can bestow.

By Carlette Anderson



Curly Collier