

History of Serra KCK - the beginning

These notes come from a conversation with Bernie Dierks regarding the start of the Serra Club of Kansas City in Kansas. Bernie joined Serra in September of 1970. He remains active in our Club. Thanks to him for his willingness to help.

Prior to the founding of our Club there was a group of leading Catholic men of the Archdiocese who were members of the Catholic Layman's Conference, an organization that served Archbishop Hunkeler in an advisory capacity. They represented several professions and business experiences. When Archbishop Strecker succeeded Archbishop Hunkeler, he made it known that one of his top priorities was to have a Serra Club in the Archdiocese.

Several of the members of the Conference were members of the Serra Club of Kansas City, MO, although they lived in Kansas. Archbishop Strecker gave them the option of continuing as the Conference or forming a Serra Club. They decided to become Serrans and the Conference was disbanded.

These leaders of the new Club represented the Greatest Generation. Having survived the Great Depression and World War II, these men had a unique understanding of the important things in our lives and a deep appreciation of their Catholic faith. Mike Sambol, George Gorman's father-in-law, was the first president. He was ably assisted by Steve Ziller, John Phillips, Jim Owens, Ed Sayers and Howard Manning to name a few. Some of them decided to remain in the Kansas City, MO Club. Several members attended Serra Conventions; however, there wasn't any assistance or guidance from Serra International in the Club formation.

The Catholic Layman's Conference met twice a month over lunch at the Terrace Club in Kansas City, Kansas. Due to the larger membership they were required to move from there. The twice-monthly lunch continues with Serra. Jim Owens would bring Archbishop Strecker to every meeting he could attend. He preferred sitting with the members rather than at the head table.

The core of the early membership recruited new members from parishes as we do today. The directory says there were 51 members when chartered. New member orientation sessions were held regularly. Then and now, the majority of new members came from Johnson County.

When the Club began, there was a minor seminary at Savior of the World in Wyandotte County. The late Very Rev. Thomas Culhane was the rector, as well as, the first chaplain of our Club. The members supported the Seminarians in various ways. In the event of a play or other activity at the Seminary, all members were encouraged to support it through the use of a phone committee. A picnic was held for all of the Seminarians at Savior each summer.

Member Maurice Reno owned property at 135th St. and Metcalf. It had picnic areas and a ball field. In the summer, college age and older Seminarians were guests for a picnic. The Priests played the Seminarians in a ball game. Archbishop Strecker took his turn at bat.

There was no Priest-Seminarian golf and dinner then, nor was there much contact with the religious sisters. Most of the vocation efforts revolved around prayer, including the 31- club and encouraging parishes to pray the Serran prayer for vocations at Mass. Members would attach the prayer card in hymnals to encourage its use.