

Oshkosh Rotary Banners

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The Rotary International Board recognized the growing popularity of Banner Exchanges in 1959. I have some Club data from about 1967.

Our Banner collection was once displayed like tree branches on a three foot dowel mounted on a base -- with the entire display stored inside of a large wooden box between meetings.

By 1983 the capacity of the display had been greatly exceeded and there were Banners left in a variety of places in the basement of the Pioneer Hotel. The display box was big and bulky and very seldom showed up for our meetings.

In 1993 Virginia and I talked about the mess and I suggested to the President that we might take on Banners as a project — approval was almost instantaneous. No one else has ever been involved in this project. We declined the offer of the Club to pay for the materials.

I spent an afternoon searching the Pioneer basement storerooms for Banners.

Several of our more elderly members have told me that the long-time Secretary Joe "Ford" Meyer had a lot of banners in his home and that they were lost, discarded, or buried with him when he died, instead of being returned to the club. Several years ago about 75 Banners in an unmarked cardboard box were found in a Castle-Pierce warehouse and delivered to our home by an employee. Likely these are the missing Banners.

Exchange dates were often unavailable and there is no specific year listed earlier than 1972. The Shemiran Club Banner from Tehran, Iran, (Henry Kimberly) is among the oldest.

The display banner size was selected to match the large club banner, but we use fabric-store materials rather than the very expensive stuff available from Rotary. Their organization is deliberately random. I keep the computer records and do the lay-out. Virginia is the seamstress.

If the Club own the building (rarely), then the exchanged Banners can be

mounted permanently on the walls. Otherwise, our method is the most effective we have seen in our travels. We have visited several clubs that started a display like ours and then pinned the exchanged banners on with safety pins after a seamstress was no longer available.

Periodically a Banner roster is presented to the Club President and Secretary. If you are planning to visit another area, you should examine the Excel File to learn whether there has already been an exchange. You can also eMail me at <scoville@vbe.com>.

Our Club presently has 637 Banners on 27 display banners. There is presently one more ready for mounting when we make display number 28. We also have 46 duplicates which we can make available for any temporary uses. There are 11 which are unsuitable for mounting — deteriorated fabric, paper, fragile, and one on sheet aluminum. Now and then I take a display banner home for minor repairs or to replace an exchanged banner which has deteriorated.

In about 1997 we presented the District with a banner display similar to the Oshkosh collection that included almost all of the Club banners from this district. There were three of the large banners to hold the display. Within a year or two the display disappeared and is likely lurking in a storage closet somewhere. We have since learned that a similar display was prepared and lost around 1988.

Our Banner collection includes nearly 300 Districts, every continent except Antarctica, 54 countries-- Australia and Mexico are the most visited outside of USA. 42 States in the USA -- missing States are Mississippi, New Mexico, North Dakota, Rhode Island, Virginia, & Wyoming, and no banner from Washington DC. In our own extended travels, we have exchanged 63 Banners.

Obscure Locations? We have no Banner from Evanston Illinois or Gary Indiana -- does anyone ever visit that part of the world?