

17,000 Canadians share now Hal Rogers' dream

Fun, leadership, personal development, pride in one's community, importance of family, service work...caring about the world in which we live. These could be words taken from sociologists describing the shift in attitudes of the "me" generation to a more socially conscious society of the 1990s. These words, though, are the cornerstones, the aims and objectives of the Association of Kin Clubs, phrases developed in 1920 and becoming relevant again 70 years later. The combination of fun, service work and personal development has created a winning formula that has attracted more than 17,000 young men and women who, today, comprise Kin clubs coast to coast.

Similar to many other successful organizations, one person's dream and vision of the future are the driving force behind its success. Harold Allen Rogers is that person. Born in London, Ont., on Jan. 3, 1899, Rogers finished public school and went to work as a junior clerk with the Home Bank of Thorndale, Ont. He moved to Hamilton when his father took over the management of a wholesale plumbing and heating supply business. Soon, Hal Rogers found himself a member of the staff and prepared for a sales career.

Two months later, Rogers was on his way to Europe and the First World War, first enlisting as a member of the Argyle and Sutherland Highlanders and, once overseas, leaving for combat duty in France as a member of the 54th Kootenay Battalion. He described his war experiences in the 1987 book, *Only in Canada, Kinsmen and Kinettes*.

"I'd lived a parochial life before I joined up. When I was assigned to the Kootenay battalion, this was my first experience with young Canadians from the mountains, the Prairies, from Quebec and the Maritimes. I can never forget how we shared a common belief that what we were doing was supposed to make Canada a better and stronger nation. Sure, we went through hell in the trenches, but what made it bearable was the comradeship, the feeling of working together that I received through my buddies."

Rogers fought at Vimy Ridge, Lens, Hill 70, Ypres, was gassed at Passchendale and was wounded at Amien — where he received a slice of schrapnel in one leg that he still carries with him. Upon his return to Hamilton, Ont., he rejoined the plumbing supply firm, but being a relative newcomer to the city, had few friends his own age. This feeling was magnified by the loss of the fellowship and camaraderie shared with his army buddies.

In an effort to meet with young men his own age, he approached the local Rotary Club for membership. His application was rejected because another member of the club already filled the employment category of "plumbing wholesale." (Rotary allows only one person per employment category.) That member was Charles Rogers, Hal's father.

More determined than ever, Rogers decided to form his own club. The initial steps are recalled in the 1979 book, *The Cross and Square*.

"I stopped a chap on the street and introduced myself. I had noticed him in church occasionally and he im-

pressed me as someone who might take an interest in my plan for a club.

"He said his name was Harold Phillips. We shook hands. Then I went on to explain that I was a comparative stranger to the city and had been toying with the idea of starting a service club where young fellows could find companionship and participate in club programs.

"Phillips thought that it was a good idea. He said he had been in the city a little over a year but knew very few people. We agreed that we'd each try to interest another young chap in the project and then get together for a talk. A week later, four of us met to discuss the scheme and an agreement was reached on going ahead with it. The following week, on that Saturday night in February, a dozen like-minded young men sat down to dinner in the Namking Cafe and proceeded to organize the first club. That was the start of it."



SERVICE WORK

Dinner meetings and socials provided the framework for the addition of another ideal, that of service work. Early club projects included welcoming young men to the city and providing entertainment for children in a home for orphans.

Being young professionals, Hamilton Kinsmen soon followed their careers to various parts of the country, taking Kinsmanship with them. Montreal, Toronto, Vancouver and Winnipeg soon followed in establishing clubs. By the end of 1926, nine cities had Kinsmen clubs. The 1926 national convention in Winnipeg saw the organization adopt a constitution and by-laws and fix the maximum age for active membership at 40.

The association continued to grow throughout the 1930s and at the outset of the Second World War, Canada had 103 Kinsmen clubs. With the call to arms, Kinsmen mobilized in two ways. First, as soldiers fighting for Canada. And second, at home, becoming a war service club, assisting in the total war effort. It was during the Second World War that one of the largest Kin projects of all time, Milk for Britain, took place.

Responding to a radio appeal for milk for British children, Rogers began to rally Kin troops across Canada to raise funds for the purchase of powdered milk. The goal for the first year was to raise enough money to purchase one million quarts. Within nine months, Kinsmen and Kinettes had supplied more than three million quarts. By the end of the Milk for Britain campaign, the Kin family had raised well over \$2 million and sent 50 million quarts of milk to Britain. The wartime effort saw the emergence of 41 new Kinsmen clubs and the formation of a new part of the organization, Kinettes.

Kinsmen wives had, for years, supported the activities of their husbands and, in various parts of the country, had begun to create their own clubs on an informal basis. The Kinette movement began to grow and at the association's 1942 national convention, Kinettes were given official recognition in the national bylaws and duly certified as an auxiliary organi-

zation.

The end of the Second World War, marked a new era in service work for Kinsmen. The association's motto, "Serving the Community's Greatest Need," took on a more global perspective as the association helped to found the World Council of Young Men's Service Clubs (WoCo) in 1945. Included in this group was the Association of 20-30 clubs (U.S.A. and Mexico). Active International (U.S.A. and Canada), Apex (Australia), Round Table Clubs (Great Britain and Ireland) and, of course, The Association of Kinsmen Clubs of Canada and Newfoundland. Kinsmen now had a network through which to channel their fund-raising efforts to all parts of the world by working in cooperation with their service club brethren in other countries.

With the end of the 1940s came the formation of another Kin auxiliary, K-40 clubs. The upper age limit had always been a contentious issue. What happens to a Kinsmen when he reaches 40? Attempting to maintain its identity as a young men's service club, delegates at the 1947 national convention endorsed the formal establishment of K-40 Clubs. Kinsmen over 40 would still enjoy the fellowship and service work, but would not be allowed to hold executive office; thus ensuring that the younger members assumed these responsibilities and learning experiences associated with them.

As Canada prospered in the 1950s, so, too, did the Kin family. Club expansion was foremost in everyone's minds, yet so was member retention. To assist in keeping Kin interesting, many national award programs were developed, giving Kinsmen goals to attain and excellence to strive for.

In 1964, the Kinsmen Club of North York began working with a relatively unknown disease that struck down children by the age of four. From this one service project, support grew for the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation so that it is now the association's major project.

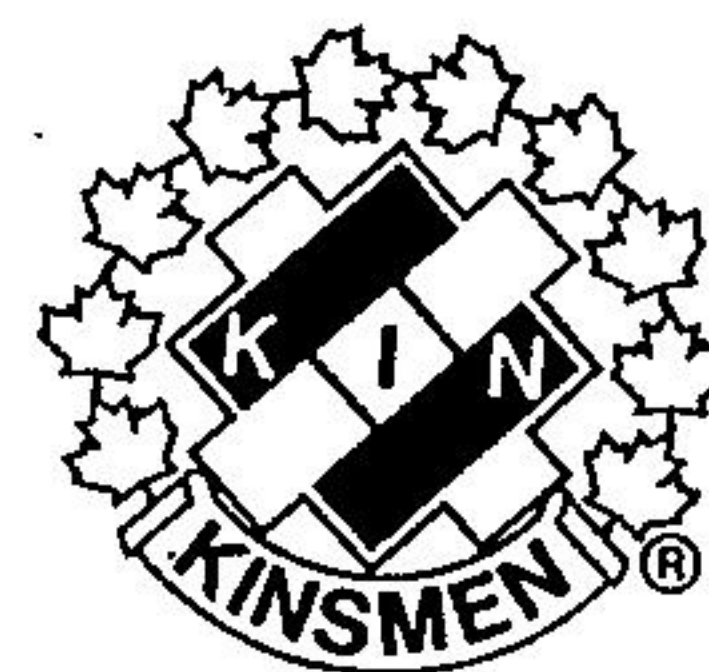
The association celebrated its 50th anniversary in 1970 in grand style as the entire country supported a national project, that of raising \$350,000 to assist in the construction of the Kinsmen National Institute on Mental Retardation, built at Toronto's York University.

The decade of the 1970s gave the Kinsmen a heightened profile through their involvement in the Particip-action Movement, particularly with the construction of Participarks. Kinsmen led the way in building these fitness-oriented parks and opened more than 100 by the early 1980s.

Sixty years of Kin culminated with the opening of the Hal Rogers Kinsmen National Headquarters, a three-storey, 14,000-square-foot building in Cambridge, Ont.

The 1980s brought many changes within the Kin family, most notably, the raising of the maximum age limit to 45, the equalization of Kinettes as full partners in the association and, in 1989, the change in the organization's name to the Association of Kin Clubs to reflect a new commitment to bilingualism.

As the association begins its eighth decade, many challenges are waiting to be met.



Kin system

The Association of Kin Clubs is not a secret society with strange rituals, weird handshakes and grand poo-bahs. Rather, it is a registered non-profit corporation.

As with any volunteer-driven organization, the association's strength lies at the grass-roots level — everyday people, Kinsmen and Kinettes, that form the local clubs. The Association of Kin Clubs is made up of Kinsmen, Kinettes, K-40, K-ette and Kin Kid Clubs. There are currently 585 Kinsmen Clubs, 450 Kinette Clubs, more than 400 K-40 and K-ette Clubs and a handful of Kin Kid Clubs.

Each Kinsmen and Kinette club elects its executive officers for a one-year term. Club members chair various service projects and

socials that are chosen by the club at its dinner meetings.

Every club belongs to a zone, a geographic grouping of clubs, usually eight to 12 clubs. Elected annually is a zone executive, headed up by the deputy governor (Kinsmen) or zone Kinette co-ordinator. This level in the organization acts as a communicator to the clubs, organizes inter-club socials and even zone service projects.

Each zone is included in a district, a geographic grouping of zones, of which there are eight in Canada. Again, an annual election chooses a district executive, which is chaired by the district governor for Kinsmen or district Kinette co-ordinator. The eight district governors and district Kinette co-ordinators sit on the national board of directors.

The national president is elected at the annual national convention. Traditionally, the national vice-president from the previous year is elected as president. He campaigns on a slate, partnered with the national Kinette vice-president. They then appoint up to four directors who are akin to an inner cabinet.

Assisting the elected volunteers are the staff at the Hal Rogers Kinsmen National Headquarters.

Kinettes open doors by changing the membership rules

By Rob Savage
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TORONTO — Every Kinsman is a member of the Association of Kin Clubs, but not every association member is a Kinsmen.

The Kin association has various divisions. Along with the Kinsmen, there is its counterpart for the women, the Kinettes.

Similar to the Kinsmen's enrolment rules, Kinettes have to be at least 21 years old and under 46 to become members. The Kinettes, like the Kinsmen, have various executive levels — from individual club executives up to a national executive.

Bob Elliott, the Kin Clubs executive director, stresses the Kinettes handle their own affairs. The women aren't obligated to pursue the same fund-raising goals as the men. The Kinettes, he says, run fund-raisers for the issues they feel are important.

"They are autonomous enough to go out and raise their own money."

At one time, women could only become Kinettes if their husbands were Kinsmen.

However, that rule was eliminated in August, 1988.

Elliott says getting rid of that stipulation has opened the door to women who want to join a service club.

The move has been successful. While Canadian service clubs have suffered recently from declining membership, the Kinettes' enrolment increased 10 per cent from June of 1988 to this past June. The membership in June, 1989, was 4,884.

Wendy Reddington, national Kinette co-ordinator, says the vote taken in 1988 to create a "parallel partnership" between Kinsmen and Kinettes has changed the group's status. The Kinettes are now associates with the Kinsmen, rather than an auxiliary group.

Reddington says the move towards equality is not complete and some programs aren't yet totally equal.

However, there are important changes, she says. For example, the Kinettes are starting to accept greater financial responsibilities and aren't as dependent on the Kinsmen for help.

Another important change this year effects the top Kinette post. The national co-ordinator will be replaced by an elected president.

THE LAST

"I am the association's 41st national co-ordinator," Reddington says. "And I will be the last association national co-ordinator."

As the changes come about, the Kinettes will be working to improve their public image and bring in more members.

Reddington says one of the "handicaps" the Kinette organization suffers from is a certain modesty about its achievements. While she feels the group has always done admirable work, it kept a relatively low profile when it was an auxiliary group.

"We do fantastic things for the community and have been for years," she says. "But because we don't cry out, we often miss out on the media awareness."

Reddington says education will be the key to the changes in public awareness. Educating members about the merits of their achievements will allow Kinettes to go out and speak with confidence to the public.

"We've never had to have our own pride. We had it, but we didn't have to go out and sell it."

"Now we can go out and talk to anyone and encourage them to join us."

Reddington compares the Kinettes to Canada as a nation. She says the Kinettes are only now learning they can do their own flag waving.