

 OUR
FIRST
TEN
YEARS

A Decade of Fellowship and Service
1977 - 1987

Senior Men's Association
Affiliated with the Darien Community YMCA

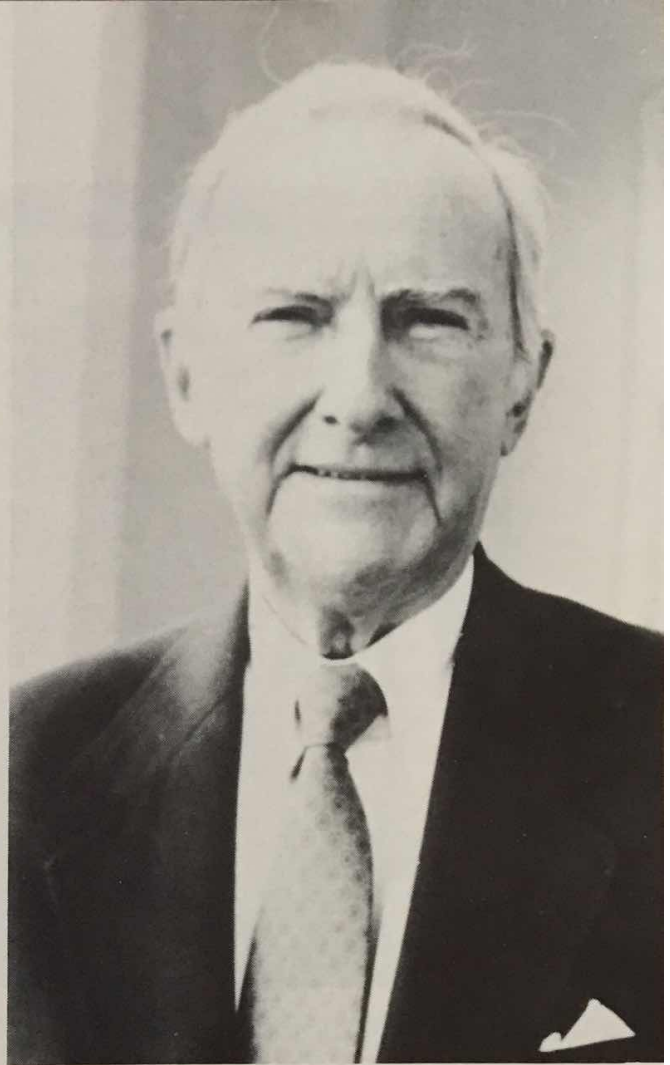
Foreword

In celebration of the first ten years in the life of the Darien Senior Men's Association, the pages that follow attempt to record the highlights of SMA's founding, its purpose, its activities and its accomplishments in serving the community and creating genuine fellowship over the years.

It is hoped members will enjoy this account of an unusually successful association of men that means and has meant so much to so many.

Our First Ten Years

*A decade
of fellowship
and service*



Phil Coulter, founder and first president

Was there really a need for a retired men's club in Darien?

Sponsors of the idea were uncertain at first. In past years, many men who had come to this highly mobile community from other parts of the country had moved away once they retired. Would a club labeled "for retired men" attract enough retirees who remained?

The idea had originated with the Darien Advisory Commission on Aging in late 1976, and won the backing of Kenneth R. Harlacher, general director of the Darien YMCA, and First Selectman William H. Patrick.

In mid-1977, the commission asked former IBM executive Phil C. Coulter, then on its staff, to survey activities available to older adults and work towards starting a "Retired Men's

Club." Coulter went on to become the founder and first president of the Darien Senior Men's Association.

As a key part of his research, he visited and studied the Retired Men's Association of Greenwich, which had been operating since 1954, and the newly-formed Senior Men's Club of New Canaan. In calls on Darien ministers, he was told they believed such a club would have appeal for some of the elderly men in their congregations. He also found strong support among his friends.

Some facts seemed clear. . .

The number of men remaining in the area once they retired was increasing.

While there were several organizations in town for older women, none existed strictly for retired men.



Here are SMA's past presidents and the dates they served: (from left) Luther F. Thompson (May 1981-1982); Lawrence M. Horton (May 1982-1984); Fred W. Farwell (May 1985-1987); Robert E. Howe (Sept. 1979-May 1981); Alfred M. Street (May 1984-1985); and Phil C. Coulter (Oct. 1977-May 1979).

Below: Dallas L. Pulliam (May - Sept. 1979).



Most retirees seemed to realize they had to do something, they had to keep busy, to be happy. Many had been long-time commuters, or perpetual business travelers, too occupied with their jobs and trips to

become involved in community activities. They had little real connection with Darien outside their homes. How could they best meet the human need for fellowship and accomplishment? Ample evidence indicated that retirees who moped around and did little else would reach the end of the road sooner than more active people.

Coulter and those working with him stressed that while promoting fellowship would be a strong feature of the club, community service would also play a vital role. Until recently, most community service jobs had been performed by women, but with increasing numbers of women working full-time, more male volunteers were needed.

In early fall 1977, Coulter, Ken Harlacher and a few others met at the Darien "Y" to plan the next step – an organization meeting. "We were a little apprehensive," Phil says, "but decided to move ahead anyhow."

An invitation was sent to every home in town – more than 6,000 in all – inviting men interested to attend a meeting October 21, 1977 at the Darien "Y." The invitation stressed that organizers were planning an association where men could "join together on a weekly basis in stimulating activities that challenge both mind and body."

Besides Ken Harlacher and Phil Coulter, sponsors listed on the invitation included: Theodore F. Allen, retired vice president, Remington Rand Division, Sperry Rand Corp.; Charles P. Caruso, former product manager, Palmer's Super Market; John J. Curtis, a retired stockbroker and manufacturing executive; Robert E. Fatherley, retired textile executive; and Martin M. Foss, Jr., former executive vice president, Galey & Lord Division, Burlington Industries.

Also, William J. DeGroot, retired Shell Oil executive and past president

of the Darien chapter of AARP; Dr. Lawrence M. "Pete" Horton, pastor emeritus of Noroton Presbyterian Church and chaplain, Norwalk Hospital; Robert E. Howe, retired executive vice president of Sinclair Refining Company and former mayor of Sinclair, Wyoming; and John M. Keese, III, former international sales manager, Sperry Rand Corporation.

Also, Dallas L. Pulliam, former general manager, lighting products, Graybar Electric; Malcolm P. Taylor, retired chairman, Taylor-Reed Corporation and past president and director, Stamford Hospital; and Luther F. Thompson, retired director of music education, Darien Public Schools.

Sponsors were pleased when some 60 men attended the first meeting. Besides a presentation of the group's plans, the audience was treated to an outstanding program, put together quite by accident. Coulter, in New York City two days before, had rented a "Football Follies" movie from CBS for \$75, unaware that Pete Horton had already lined up former America's Cup skipper Bob Bavier as speaker, plus a film showing high-

This was the cover page for the invitation sent to more than 6,000 homes announcing SMA's organization meeting and inviting men interested to attend.

FOR MATURE MEN ONLY

A
SPECIAL
INVITATION

OCTOBER 21, 1977

lights of an America's Cup race. Sponsors had felt shaky about SMA's prospects before that first meeting, but now they relaxed. There was obviously strong interest in forming the club. Wives of retirees were particularly enthusiastic about it.

The Greenwich association's historian provided some good practical advice: "There is a lot of drudgery in running a club," he wrote, "and you have to find men who are ready and willing to do it."

SMA's organizers found the right men – a mix of those possessing strong local ties and long-time commuters. Besides Phil Coulter as president, officers included; Robert E. Howe, first vice president; Dallas L. Pulliam, second vice president; William DeGroot, secretary; Ray Bartlett, assistant secretary; Richard

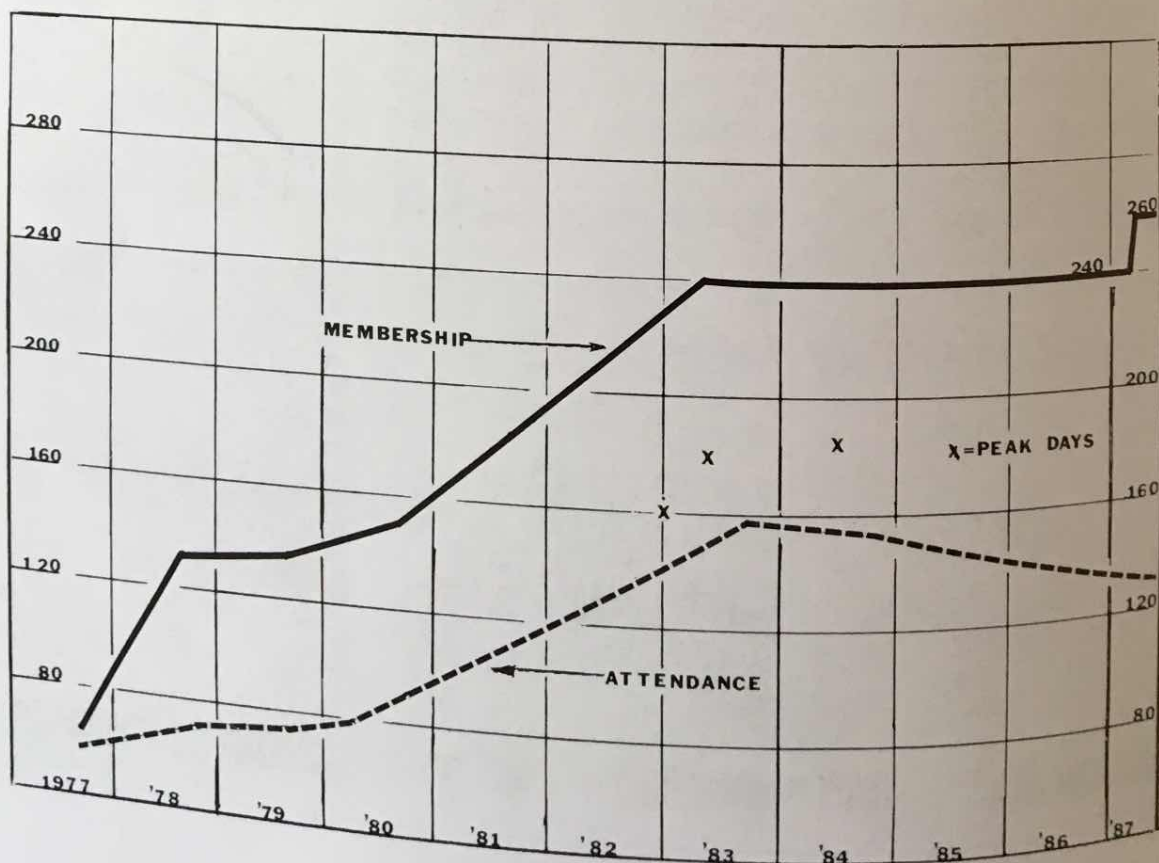
Seipt, treasurer; and Crandall A. Sanborn, assistant treasurer.

"Mac" Taylor was chairman of the nominating committee; Luther Thompson and Pete Horton headed the all-important program committee; and Charlie Caruso the hospitality committee.

Luther, incidentally, was the first man to pay his dues. Coulter says Luther's \$15 was the only money in the club's treasury in the early days.

From the beginning, a willingness to take on responsibility characterized SMA members. When Pete Horton was elected president for a second term in 1983, he said this was an important reason he had accepted. "I've learned," he said, "that once you assign a job in SMA, you know it will get done – and without constant prodding."

While average attendance at meetings has dropped in the past few years, it is expected to increase again with the rise in total membership to 260.



Rogers Heads SMA for '87-88

Harold H. Rogers (right) was installed as president of SMA on May 8, 1987. Other current officers are: (First row below, from left) Russell K. Heilmann, first vice president; Lathrop Herold, second vice president; Jack A. Obermeyer, secretary. (Second row) Allen B. Lutz, assistant secretary; Paul S. Welch, treasurer; and John F. Flowers, assistant treasurer.

Rogers, Heilmann, Herold, Obermeyer and Welch are directors, along with Anthony R. Savina, Donald Thompson, Lester E. Waddington, John A. Clark, Jr., Edwin H. Pierce, and Fred W. Farwell.



Rapport Between "Y" and SMA

The "Y" furnished welcome aid during the organizing period, and the strong rapport continues to this day. In effect, the "Y" is SMA's home. It provides without charge the large room where SMA meetings have always been held, and smaller rooms when needed for directors' meetings and groups like the bridge and investment clubs. The "Y" maintains SMA's bank account, handles all disbursements, provides secretarial services, use of a copying machine and various other assistance.

The relationship has been one of mutual aid, for SMA has also made many contributions to the "Y."

The story of the association's meeting room illustrates how this mutual aid pact has worked. In the early 1900's, the room was the carriage house for the Arthur Maury estate. Later owners included Hendrik Willem Van Loon, author of the best-selling "Story of Mankind," who bought the property from Maury; the Christian Science Church, which intended to use the carriage house as a dormitory; and the Deanwood School.

After obtaining the property in 1966, the "Y" added a wing, and then a swimming pool. Apparently the old carriage house was destined to become a skating rink, but when the SMA first met there it was a gymnasium — a large, plain room with bare, green walls. It had 30-foot high ceilings, almost twice the present height, and large windows also rose to a considerable height. Climbing ropes hung from the ceiling; other gymnasium equipment was scattered around the sides.

A Successful Remodeling

Obviously the room needed remodeling. SMA told the "Y" it

would provide the labor if the "Y" would buy the materials. Eventually each agreed to supply half the funds required. The total came to \$6,212, and the cost was split down the middle, each paying \$3,106, thousands of dollars less than if a contractor had been hired to do the job.

As it was, only one paid professional, a carpenter, was engaged — to direct the unusual work crew composed largely of retired business executives and professional people. In all, some 20 SMA volunteers contributed mightily with hammer, putty knife, paint brush, brains and brawn, as Bob Howe described it at dedication ceremonies on March 23, 1979.

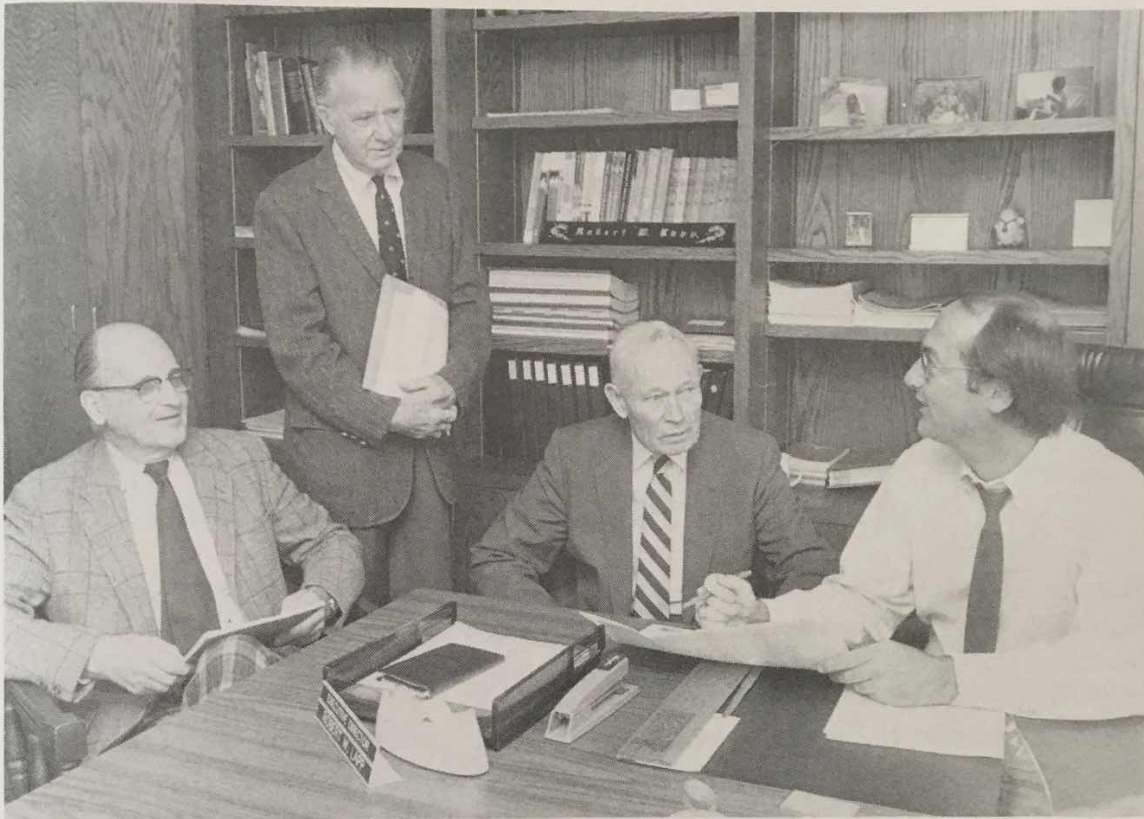
SMA members Steve Wood, a prominent Darien builder, and architect Charlie Johnson played important roles in planning and securing the lowest possible prices for materials.

The remodeling involved removing the gym equipment, installing a suspended ceiling with new lighting, and adding paneling around the room. Windows above the new ceiling were blocked off, and a coat of paint applied all around, giving the old gym a fresh, modern look.

The renovated area was named "The Darien All-Ages YMCA Community Room" in recognition of SMA's services.

Contributions to the "Y"

Through the years SMA has also made many other valuable contributions of cash and equipment to the "Y," including a permanent audio system for the meeting room, a tape recorder, 35mm slide projector, movie projector and portable screen, all for use by both the "Y" and SMA; a 26" color TV, a VCR and video camera, and later a portable TV set for use with these; a heavy duty tripod for the video camera; and a movable



The Darien YMCA and SMA have worked together closely since SMA's founding. In this photo, taken in 1983, SMA's three top officers at the time — from left, Fred Farwell, second vice president; Al Street, first vice president; and Pete Horton, president — are conferring with the "Y's" executive director, Bob Lapp, on coming activities.

table for the slide and movie projectors. SMA also donated 64 new chairs.

Individual members have made additional contributions. Jim Bell gave a permanent projection screen and an overhead slide projector for the meeting room; Earl Watt a sturdy flagpole; Jim Danver a clock and a flag that had been flown from a staff at the White House; and Marty Flaherty a sink and hot water heater.

In addition, the estate of Jack Curtis donated \$500 to SMA which was spent to renovate the lobby of the meeting room. The lobby, in turn, was dedicated as the "Jack Curtis" room. Dave Gordon donated a table for use in the room.

Another \$500, donated by friends to the Steve Wood Memorial Fund,

was contributed to the "Y" to outfit a new exercise room, which was then named the Steve Wood Exercise Room.

Other cash contributions included \$1500 for the Y's scholarship fund and \$500 for a new copying machine; another \$1500 for a scholarship fund named after Ken Harlacher, who died in December 1982; \$500 for secretarial services; and \$150 to buy uniforms for the girls' basketball team. In all, cash contributions have amounted to \$8,250.

SMA members have also performed many essential repair jobs for the "Y." Building several cabinets and repairing furniture were among the many chores performed by Luther Thompson. Installing a permanent audio system in the meeting room

During coffee break, Ken Getman, Bill DeGroot and Harry Rollins view displays relating to the day's program.



was one of numerous assignments handled by Les Waddington. Ross Kitchen, Les Steffens and others put Plexiglas windows in the meeting room and lobby to help reduce heating costs. The list of projects is lengthy. In the early years it even included providing volunteer Santa Clauses for the Y's Christmas parties, among them John Cousins, Bob Howe and "Mac" Taylor.

Rapid Growth in Early Years

The first complete membership roster, issued in December 1977, listed 84 men. Of these, 50 are still members (their names appear on the inside back cover). Overall, of the 421 men who have joined, 102 have left due to moving away or for other reasons, and 59 have died, giving us a present membership of 260.

After the first meeting, membership increased rapidly through 1978 — "We never had to beat the bushes for members," Pete Horton says — but grew at a slower pace in 1979. Membership spurted again, however, as word spread about SMA's excellent programs and activities. On peak days, when 160 to 180 attended, not only were meeting room facilities severely strained, but so was the "Y" parking area. Eventually, as cars had

to park along the busy Post Road, it became necessary to hire a special-duty policeman to control traffic. SMA shared the cost with the "Y."

To prevent the situation from worsening, the Constitution was amended on January 28, 1983, limiting membership to 240, and restricting the number of out-of-town members.

During this period of rapid growth, our club contacted the Stamford "Y" and suggested that it, too, might want to start organizing a senior men's group. The Stamford "Y" welcomed the idea and a number of our members helped the new group start up.

Today our membership is again on the increase, following a lifting of the membership limit to 260 on June 10, 1987. Directors felt that at least some of those on the long list waiting for admission should be accommodated, since overflow crowds have rarely been experienced over the past two years.

A Diverse Membership

The diversity of membership is an outstanding feature of SMA. Consider the seven men who have served as president, for example. Phil Coulter is from Indiana; Dallas

Pulliam from Missouri; Bob Howe was born in Colorado; Luther Thompson was brought up in Greenfield, Mass.; and Pete Horton comes from Buffalo, New York.

Although Al Street was born in New York City, he can claim to be the only Connecticut native on the presidential roster since he came to the state at age two weeks. Al was succeeded by another New Englander, Fred Farwell, a native of New Hampshire; and he, in turn, by current president Hal Rogers, who was born in Mount Vernon, N.Y.

As for the membership as a whole, it represents a tremendous variety of job backgrounds. Twenty-six members were associated with oil companies, 12 with Mobil Oil alone. After Mobil, American Cyanamid with nine has the largest number of alumni on our roster. Then come General Electric with eight, Pitney Bowes with five and IBM, Electrolux, GTE and Pan-Am with two. Twelve members are ex-bankers, 11 were in insurance, 10 in publishing and seven in education. Six were in medicine, four in radio and TV, and three in advertising, accounting and the telephone business.

SMA also has lawyers, real estate men, accountants, labor relations people, a broker, an architect, one former Darien Selectman and one still serving in that office, and the Judge of Probate. Other SMA members were in the clergy, the catering business, Blue Cross, the British Army, U.S. Marines, Amtrak, the U.S.O., the United Nations, Cancer Society and other businesses and professions.

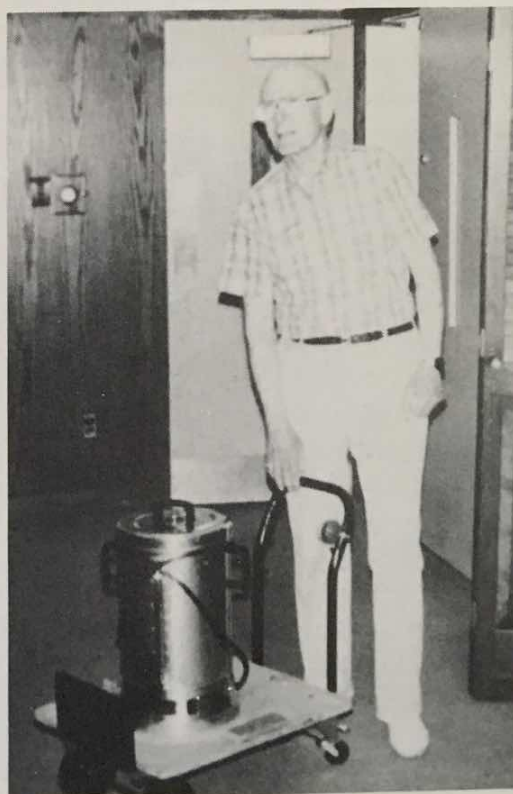
After the Bell Rings

Meetings are held Friday morning from early September through the third week in June, starting at ten



Besides presiding at meetings, "Rog" Rogers usually sets up and runs the projection equipment for guest speakers.

Al Zobel has headed the refreshment committee, which makes the coffee break so pleasant, for some six years.





Fred Farwell clangs the meeting to order.

"Mac" Taylor is about ready to lead members in singing "America."



o'clock. Following a half-hour business session, there is a coffee break until 11, then the day's program runs until noon.

The lively, informal conduct of the meeting has contributed greatly to SMA's success. Members begin to arrive well before 10 o'clock, and gather for small talk both outside the "Y" if weather permits, and in the meeting area.

Two or three minutes before ten, the president vigorously rings a large bell. An old iron cow bell was used to call meetings to order in SMA's early years, but in June 1980, Dave Gordon, a former marine engineer who sailed out of Scotland, presented the club with a handsome cast brass hand bell. Dave's bell is a replica of the type used 50 years ago aboard ships for "chow call." It is inscribed with the names of past presidents, and its clang is loud and resonant enough, in a melodious sort of way, to interrupt conversations in progress, even outside, and move members to their seats.

Russ Heilmann announces the program fare for future meetings.



"Mac" Taylor then leads members in singing "America" and in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag. "Mac" has been handling this chore since the organization's beginning days.

After guests are introduced, the secretary reads minutes which are usually extraordinarily complete. Bill DeGroot, SMA's first secretary, set the tone and style for these. His reports, often several pages long, frequently contained editorial comments on what had happened at the previous meeting. Bill would look up in the Darien Library the subject discussed by the speaker and now and then add what the speaker did not say "because I thought mine was more interesting."

Editorial comments have appeared only rarely in secretaries' reports in recent years, but the thorough coverage and the touches of humor are still there.

Next come reports of various fellowship activities and community programs, and the SMA Cares Com-

mittee report. Headed by Ray Gross, SMA Cares obtains information from area hospitals about the condition of members who are patients. Ray provides appropriate cards for signing by all members and mailing to those ill.

The half-hour business session almost invariably concludes with jokes told by Howie Gilbert and Harold "Red" Mottern. Both in their eighties, they have shared the joke chore and created laughter at meetings since 1978.

Howie, formerly in the insurance business, says he told few jokes before joining SMA, "but people here seemed to like my stories, so I've kept going." He reads his jokes in a booming voice bigger than he is that reaches every corner of the room without help from a microphone.

"Red" Mottern was in retail merchandising and has been telling jokes as long as he can remember. He never uses a note and never runs out of yarns. "The secret," says "Red", is "I remember the punch lines; then I can always reconstruct the stories."

"Red" Mottern (left) and Howie Gilbert have been entertaining members with stories at the end of the business session for almost ten years.





The talented "Blue Notes," who sing their rollicking tunes before SMA once a year, have become one of the most popular features on the club's schedule.

At SMA's hobby show, Bob Howe, teamed with Bill Kendrick, created this dummy, and dressed it with the equipment for their hobby – fly-fishing.



Next comes coffee break, a pleasant half-hour for refreshments and conversation. Members make a small contribution, usually a quarter, to help cover the cost of the coffee and pastry. A volunteer crew handles the preparation and clean-up chores.

High Caliber Programs Are Important in SMA's Success

Luther Thompson suggested back in 1977 that every member should belong to the program committee. "If you have an idea you think would make a good program, come to the next meeting of the committee and present it," he would say. The committee as a result often had more good program suggestions to choose from than they could use. "That's how we kept ahead of the program dilemma that plagues so many organizations," says Phil Coulter. He points out that SMA has been able to line up exceptionally fine programs without paying a single person. Among the speakers have been



John C. Emery, Jr., chairman and chief executive officer of Emery Air Freight, is one of many top executives who have addressed SMA.

such top executives as Reginald Jones, former chief executive officer of General Electric, Frank T. Cary, former head of IBM, John C. Emery, chairman and chief executive officer of Emery Worldwide Air Freight, Joseph B. Flavin, chairman and chief executive officer of the Singer Company; Richard C. McCurdy, former president of Shell Oil; and Harold W. McGraw, chairman of the board of McGraw-Hill.

For variety, in September 1981, a meeting was held at the Ox Ridge Hunt Club in Darien. Manager Tom Goodspeed gave SMA members a tour, demonstrated riding and jumping techniques, and discussed proper grooming and care of horses.

At other meetings, Pete Gogolak, former placekicker for the New York Giants, told of escaping with his family from Budapest, Hungary, in 1956 during the Hungarian Revolution; Donald Marshman presented a humorous history of Hollywood movies – “Then and Now”; Ginny Gail Seipt, daughter of member Dick

Seipt, talked about producing sports programs for NBC-TV; Stew Leonard described what he believes are the most important ingredients in making his Norwalk store so successful.

Each year Luther Thompson arranges several excellent musical programs, some presenting groups from Darien schools, others such fine organizations as “The Blue Notes,” a singing group sponsored by the Junior League, and the Park Street Singers from the Park Street Congregational Church in New Canaan.

Each year also a number of unusual programs are presented by members themselves. Many have given travel talks based on their own trips and illustrated with their slides. Through the years, visits to more than 30 countries have been described in these talks. The Nile in Egypt, Nepal and the Himalayas, the Galapagos Islands, Persia (before it became Iran), and the Arctic regions were among the areas covered.

Current secretary Jack Obermeyer, a retired U.S. Navy Captain, recently gave members a first-hand account of what happened at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Jack had arrived there to take up new duty just three weeks earlier.

In what has become almost an annual event, Lathrop Herold presents tape recordings from his collection of outstanding, sometimes historic radio programs – the voices of Winston Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt, famous radio comedians and singing stars from 30, 40 and 50 years ago, music from the “Big Band” era. How did a geologist like La Herold develop such a hobby? He was in radio himself once – an announcer on a Seattle station while a student at the University of Washington, and again later, while a practicing geologist in Midland, Texas.



*(Top) A group of members gather happily with other volunteers at the end of Darien Spring Cleanup Day.
(Above) Rudy Safarik spears debris at the Darien Railroad Station.*

SMA Members Participate

One of SMA's primary purposes is "to participate in affairs beneficial to the community." From its earliest days the organization has served as a springboard for introducing members to such activities.

Just a few months after it was formed, SMA joined the "Y" and Stamford Hospital in conducting an area-wide cardiac screening program. Called "The Stress Test," the program was designed by the J. C. Carter Company of Darien to identify individuals who might face a high risk, unknown to them, of developing heart trouble. The program included electro-cardiograms and blood pressure and blood tests at a cost to participants of \$50 each. Normally the cost would have been \$250.

A team of SMA volunteers under Dallas Pulliam spent many hours processing applications and scheduling and assisting over 500 area residents during three days of screen-

ing tests. Besides gaining important knowledge about their heart health, participants saved, it was estimated, more than \$100,000 in fees.

By 1981, 67 SMA volunteers were contributing an average of more than 600 hours of service each month to the following:

Person-to-Person, woods cleanup, Call-A-Car, math teaching in Stamford, tax counseling for the elderly, Stamford Hospital, Red Cross blood transportation, judging high school debates, Meals on Wheels, Norwalk Hospital, the Community Council, Boy Scouts, Connecticut Braille Placement, the gift shop at St. Joseph's Hospital, the Darien Historical Society, Darien Answers, Friends of Fairfield Hills, the Sewer Commission, the New Covenant Soup Kitchen and bilingual support at West Hill School and more. . .

Ross Kitchen and Crandall "Sandy" Sanborn were two who answered an appeal for volunteers from Stamford Hospital. Ross, a civil engineer, helped organize engineering drawings of plant and equipment for a major hospital expansion, and also worked on other projects where he could use his engineering background. In 1986 he was honored for contributing more than 1500 hours of service.

"Sandy" Sanborn worked in "transportation," moving patients around the hospital in wheelchairs. "Sandy" was recognized last year for contributing more than 1000 hours of service.

Ken Getman and Ray Gross have also spent much time in volunteer service at the Stamford Hospital.

Last year, Al Hueston was honored for 1240 hours of volunteer service at St. Joseph's Hospital. Al has done volunteer work at St. Joseph's for 11 or 12 years.

Today dozens of SMA volunteers continue to help most of the organizations listed above as well as many others. Seven members, for example, volunteered earlier this year to present entertainment programs for patients at Courtland Gardens Convalescent Home. Two helped VITA provide tax assistance for the elderly. Don Thompson has been a volunteer for the Hospice of Stamford, which serves terminal patients.

The list of volunteer services performed is long indeed. Here are a few more. . .

In April 1986, 34 members, under the direction of Lloyd Wilson, participated in a parking survey designed to help relieve Darien's downtown parking problems.

Last year Les Waddington, Al Street and Bob Fatherley were members of the Darien committee which

Their work completed, this trio lugs trash to the dump site.





helped celebrate Connecticut's 350th birthday.

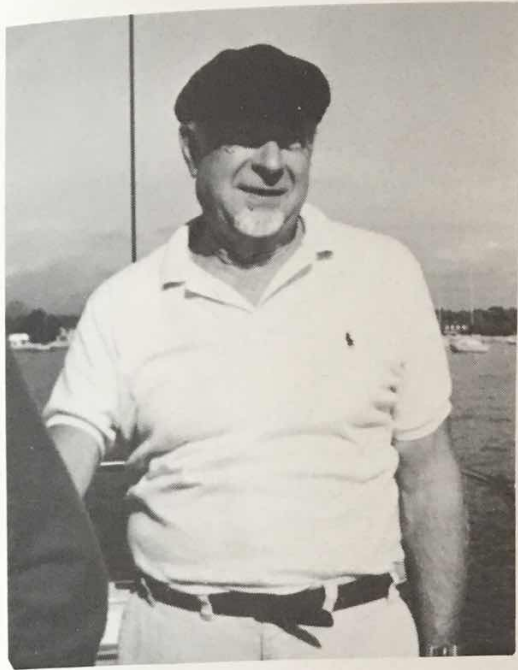
Back in 1984, 13 members manned the reception desk at the opening of Darien's new Town Hall.

SMA has been a strong supporter of Darien's Book Aid Plan. Each week several members help examine, pack and mail the many thousands of books donated each year to 161 countries around the world and every state in the union.

The Town's "Annual Clean-Up," spearheaded by the Darien Realtors' Association, is another of the many regular campaigns in which SMA participates. "We've gained quite a reputation as trash men," says Bill Kendrick, who has headed the SMA contingent, usually numbering between 20 and 30, since 1979.

As so often happens in volunteer work, those participating not only provide needed assistance but also

Three of SMA's busiest men have been named a "Darien Citizen of the Year" — (top right) Les Waddington, in 1986; (center) Luther Thompson, in 1980; and (bottom) Pete Horton, in 1985 (pictured here just after he returned from a Florida vacation).



(Left) The late Lloyd Wilson was named SMA's "Volunteer of the Year" shortly before his death in April 1987.

derive considerable satisfaction from being part of something worthwhile and from the fellowship that accompanies such duty.

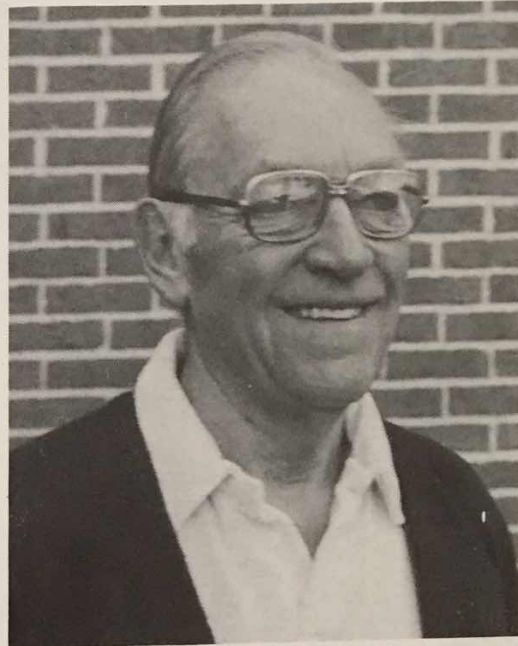
Citizens of the Year

SMA is proud that three of its members – Luther Thompson, Pete Horton and Les Waddington – have been honored by the Darien Chamber of Commerce as a "Darien Citizen of the Year."

Luther and Les are both well-known not only for their varied activities in music, but for performing a variety of other civic chores as well. Luther formed the Darien Community Band in early 1946 and has conducted it ever since. Besides playing in the band, Les has acted as its commentator for 35 years. Both Luther and Les have served as directors of the "Y," on boards of the Noroton Presbyterian Church and as president of the Darien Kiwanis Club.

Pete was honored for his half century in the ministry, particularly his role in expansion of the Noroton Presbyterian Church, and his work with the town's needy and elderly. Pete has also served as Kiwanis Club president.

Ross Kitchen (center) and "Sandy" Sanborn (bottom) have both been honored for lengthy volunteer service at Stamford Hospital.



How to Save on Heating Oil

One of the most useful programs sponsored by SMA and the "Y" has been a heating oil study conducted by James F. Bell along with Curt Thomas and the late Paul Reichertz.

Beginning in 1979, Bell and his associates calculated the "heating comparison factor" for each home participating in the study by dividing the gallons of oil used per degree day



Jim Bell's heating oil studies have cut fuel bills for many SMA members.

by the thousands of square feet of living area heated in any particular season. Changes in this factor over the years were correlated with conservation actions taken by participants.

Bell says it was his curiosity about the potential benefits of added insulation in his own home that led him towards finding a way to measure and compare fuel use effectiveness. He started with fuel

delivery data from a few neighbors and SMA volunteers, and by October 10, 1981 was using the measuring technique he developed to cover inputs from more than 65 homes, two-thirds of which were owned by SMA members.

Over three heating seasons, the survey showed a wide spread in heating efficiency among homes, but the spread narrowed each year as conservation measures were put into effect by those who found their homes burning excessive amounts of fuel compared with other homes in the survey. Overall there was an 18.7% drop in oil used by the homes surveyed, representing savings of approximately \$12,000 for those who participated.

Now directed by Curt Thomas, the study continues in 1987 for SMA members wishing to take part.

Making the Lights Sparkle

Some 15 men join Waddington each year in the Chamber of Commerce Christmas lighting program. The Chamber decorates about 46 trees in downtown Darien, the Noroton Shopping Center and the Town Hall area. Six to eight strings of lights are used on each tree, which means about 32,000 bulbs glow during the Christmas season.

Les points out that the glow capability is greatly reduced by the ravages of winter and the wear and tear of handling in placing lights and removing them from the trees. To reduce the loss, SMA members during the past five years have volunteered to reclaim the lights, with the goal of returning at least 60 percent of the previous year's strings to a condition suitable for use again. The job requires much tedious hand labor but the result has been a marked enhancement of each year's spectacular lighting display.



Al Street (left) and John Hill (right) flank Senator Lowell Weicker in Washington.

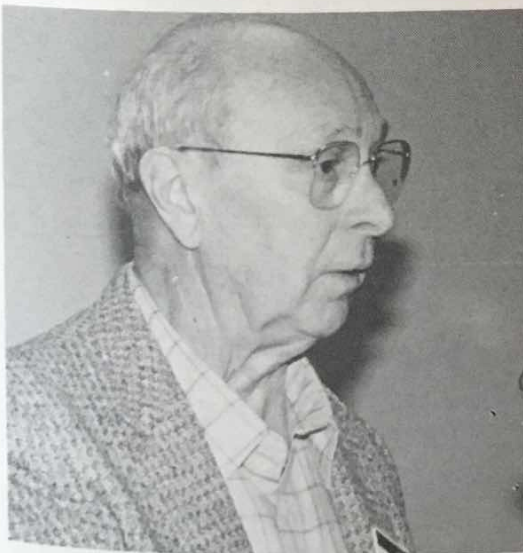
SMA Members Go To Washington

Several SMA members have been honored by being selected as participants in the Connecticut Senior Intern Program sponsored by Senator Lowell Weicker. Al Street and John Hill were the first, in 1979. Others who have taken part include Phil

Coulter and Alex Gifford in 1980, and John Haslett in 1985.

The program was designed, Weicker says, "to bring seniors to the Capitol to observe the legislative process and to alert legislators and policy makers to the concerns of the senior citizen community."

John Haslett (left) and Alex Gifford also participated in the Weicker program.





With their straw hats, black bow ties and gaily colored arm bands, the Songsters are a distinctive looking as well as highly capable group.



Bob Kiss, the Senior Songsters' accompanist, has been playing the piano since he was four years old.

Senior Songsters

In January 1980, a few SMA members, enthusiastic about an exciting performance by the "Blue Notes," asked Luther Thompson to organize an SMA singing group. Luther liked the idea. Nine men appeared for the first rehearsal on February 1, 1980; 14 the next week.

In the beginning, the songsters spent most of their time on barbershop-type harmonies. Bill DeGroot had once been a member of a barbershop group that sang professionally in New York and gave Luther many original arrangements. Luther himself played piano accompaniment. "I wasn't a real piano player," he says, although the results indicated otherwise.

Some who joined said they liked to sing but couldn't read music; some were soloists in church choirs. They practiced, accepted a few dates, mainly in nursing homes, and grew in numbers and performing ability.

Today, while they still harmonize on a few barbershop numbers, their repertoire is highly varied. They have between 20 and 25 members (Luther wishes there were 40 or 50), and form a versatile, first-rate organization which gives about 12 concerts each year.

Luther says, "And we have a real

piano player now – a tremendous player – in Bob Kiss." Bob took his first piano lesson two months before his fifth birthday, won a four-year piano scholarship at 11, and still teaches both piano and organ.

The Songsters rehearse each Friday morning at the "Y" before the SMA meeting.

Fun and Fellowship

While SMA devotes much time to community service, members know it is also a great organization for fun and fellowship. Many members get together regularly outside weekly meetings to bowl, play tennis and golf, pitch horseshoes and play bridge. An investment club and various other activities also meet from time to time.

All these groups have developed naturally to meet demand, just as the Songsters did. Someone stands up at a meeting and asks how many would be interested in forming a bowling or bridge group. If enough hands are raised, that's it. The group is formed

and a time and place are picked for meeting.

The bowling league, largest of these activities, has been operating since shortly after SMA started. Bob Howe and Bill Kendrick suggested forming it, and with the help of Rennie Staak, the league began operating on November 22, 1977. There were 12 bowlers at the first session on two of the Rip Van Winkle lanes in Norwalk.

The activity grew rapidly. As many as 40 have participated. Currently an average of about 24 bowl Tuesday mornings on eight lanes.

John Clark and Don Wentworth held high single game scoring honors

(From left) Howie Gilbert, John Cousins, Jack North and Bill Dolan are part of the bridge group which plays Monday afternoons at the "Y."



at 245 until they were recently topped by Kendall Jackson with 254. Clark still holds the record for a three-game series, with games of 182, 192 and 245, for a total of 619. Gene Mitchell heads the group.

Since the bowling lanes are not open during the summer, Bob Howe suggested horseshoe pitching as a substitute. Pitching courts were set up near the water behind the "Y," and some ten players appeared for the first session on July 7, 1978. In the years since, between eight and 14 men have enjoyed the game each week during summer months.

The bridge club, started in October 1981 at the suggestion of Al Street, is headed by John Cousins. Bridge players meet Monday afternoons at the "Y" through most of the year, and usually have four tables.

George Burr heads the tennis and golf programs, both of which have been part of SMA's recreational schedule for several years. Between eight and 12 members played tennis three days a week at Weed Beach during the 1987 season. In the golf group, eight men played Tuesdays and four on Thursdays at Oak Hills in Norwalk.

The investment group, formed in October 1981 along with the bridge club, meets from time to time during fall and winter immediately after SMA meetings. Headed by Gerald Larocque, it has discussed a wide range of topics affecting current investments. At year's end, the club has honored the member who made the most profitable theoretical investment.

While the Middlesex Genealogical Society is not connected directly with SMA, a group of SMA members headed by Bob Fatherley form the nucleus of this thriving organization.



Al Zobel has been bowling Tuesday mornings with SMA members since the league started.

SMA on the Road

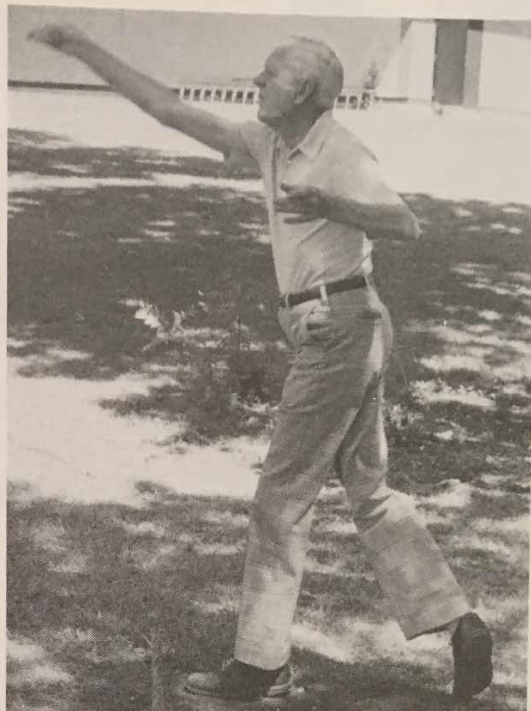
Uncommonly interesting trips for members and their wives, close to 40 in all, have also attracted large numbers through the years.

In 1978, SMA visited GTE's operations in Stamford, General Motors' plant in Tarrytown, N.Y. and the IBM facilities in Poughkeepsie. In mid-summer, 121 members and their wives took a trip across Long Island Sound in the "Island Queen" and had lunch at the Mariners' Inn at Northport Bay.

In subsequent years, outings included more boat trips, a ride on a steam train from Essex to Haddam in Connecticut, and visits to the Naval Submarine base at Groton, the aircraft carrier "Intrepid," and the Museum of Natural History in New York. Buses have carried SMA groups to the Bronx Zoo and Botanical Gardens, the Culinary Institute at Hyde Park, Belmont



The investment club was started by Gerald Larocque some six years ago.



Bill Rowan shows good form pitching horseshoes on courts behind the "Y."

Racetrack, top New York theatrical productions, and many other interesting destinations.

Al Street handled all general trips for SMA from 1979 to 1984 and seven trips to West Point football games between 1980 and 1986. He became an expert at the complex business of arranging for transportation, luncheons at good restaurants and tickets for large numbers of people — 1277 in all took trips he arranged.

Al was also a master at getting the group to its destination on time. On a trip to the Bronx Botanical Gardens, an SMA bus got stuck in heavy traffic at a busy New York intersection into which cars were trying to move from several directions. Al jumped into the mess and played traffic cop, authoritatively beckoning cars to come first from one direction, then another. Some of his friends on the bus cheered and others, worried about his safety, yelled "Get back on the bus." Al stayed on the job until

George Burr heads active tennis and golf programs for SMA members.





La Herold and Mrs. Curt (Margaret) Thomas were in the group from SMA which visited Dinosaur Park, Rocky Hill.

he had opened a lane for the bus. "We got to the restaurant in time to find a parking place and on time for our luncheon reservations," Al remembers proudly.

Anthony R. "Tony" Savina, with considerable help from his wife, Julia, has arranged and conducted SMA's trips with a tour-guide flair for the past two years. To continue the tradition for enjoyable excursions, John Brostrup, who succeeded Tony in June 1987, has asked all members to join his special events committee and make suggestions, just as so many members have done to aid the program committee.

Two Popular Parties

The two largest club-sponsored events are a Christmas party, held for the past few years at the Woodway Country Club, and a summer picnic at Weed Beach. Wives are invited to both.

In recent years some 250 people have attended the Christmas party,

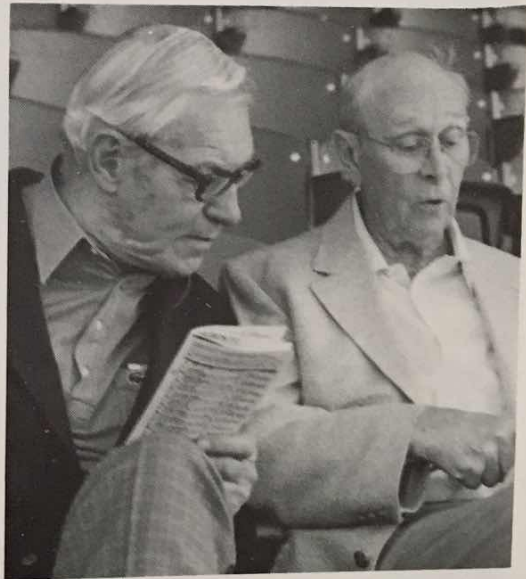
(From left) Tony Savina, Bernard McGoldrick, Dorothy Howe and Charles Meacham are about to board a bus for Belmont Racetrack.





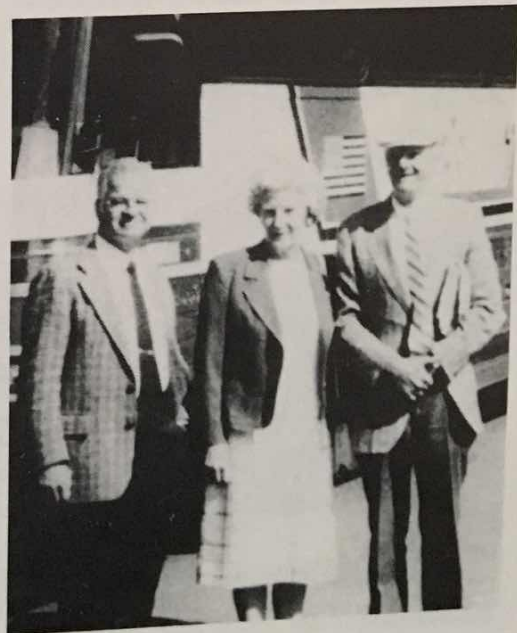
(Above) In the early years of the association, a boat trip across Long Island Sound was a regular feature of SMA's summer schedule.

(Right) Walt Jerige and John Haslett choose a secluded spot at Belmont Racetrack to zero in on a winner.



(Below right) Frank Penn and Marge and Stan van den Heuvel are ready to start the trip.

John Cousins and Pete Horton lead the way on SMA's tour of the New England Air Museum at Bradley Field.





When people dance on the sand and the salt grass, it's a tribute to the caliber of the Les Waddington music, and the occasion — the Weed Beach picnic.

(From left) Al Zobel, Bob McNell and Dick Senftleben relax and enjoy beach life.



which is always a joyous occasion attracting a capacity crowd. Les Waddington and his band usually play for dancing and Luther Thompson arranges additional entertainment, often a group from the Darien schools playing and singing Christmas carols.

The Weed Beach picnic in late June, first held in 1978, always draws a large crowd — 160 in 1987; 185 (the record) in 1984.

The Waddington band has been a feature at this also. At the 1987 picnic, Les and his talented group set up on the sand and treated the crowd to wonderfully lively old tunes for about two hours — without looking at a single sheet of music. Who says old-timers lose their memories! Some people danced on the beach.

Les' group included SMA members Allen Lutz and Pete Wells.



The conversation flows at Woodway Country Club, where SMA's annual Christmas party is always a sellout.

A Summing Up

Back in the association's early days, Ken Harlacher said chronological age was not the important thing in a group like SMA. . . mental outlook is. "These are all young guys," he added.

Anyone who has heard the questions asked speakers after their presentations to SMA will agree. The questions are incisive, knowledgeable, challenging, the kind by and large that only men with alert minds and broad experience can frame on the spur of the moment.

Ken Harlacher also stressed that SMA was designed "to provide purposeful leisure-time activities, "and that it was not just a place for men to go "to sip coffee." Right. . . but the fellowship is important, too. In a letter sent to Bill DeGroot when he was secretary, one member summed it up this way: "We've got a great organization. . . and it's largely because of the

informality, the laughs, and freedom of expression, as well as the good programs."

Phil Coulter has called his role in starting SMA "one of the best things I ever did." He adds; "I think the association does a lot of good, starting with the people involved in it, then radiating out from them to others."

In a separate interview, past president Pete Horton commented on a similar theme: "Many men didn't know much about Darien, the town where they lived, before joining. SMA has helped bring them out as individuals and as members of the community. Now they are making contributions to the town they would not have made without SMA membership."

"Mac" Taylor, another of the founding fathers, recently had this to say



Few activities better illustrate the wide range of community activities in which SMA members are involved than the Christmas tree lighting project. The trio above – from left) Pat Ierardi, Harry Mason and Curt Thomas – are ready to start work on reclaiming lights for next year's Darien Christmas trees.

about the association: "People in many other communities have still not discovered the need for an organization like SMA and what it can offer men in all walks of life. Some who joined in Darien had traveled the U.S. and the world on business and had friends in many countries. Some had had an impact on national and even international affairs. But now in retirement they have become dependent on their home area for many essential needs.

"Fortunately they are great people.

They have entered into the spirit of SMA, welcoming the opportunity to work with others in helping their community while enjoying the fellowship offered."

Non-profit, non-political, non-sectarian, the Senior Men's Association is dedicated quite simply to good fellowship and community service. Ex-commuters, combined with a large mix of retirees from the area, have made its first ten years singularly successful.

Acknowledgments

"Our First Ten Years" was written and produced by Norm Wakeman with general direction, editing and much background material provided by Bob Howe, Chairman of the Tenth Anniversary Committee. Curt Thomas and his computer furnished greatly appreciated production help.

We are grateful to Phil Coulter, Bill DeGroot, Pete Horton, "Rog" Rogers, Al Street, "Mac" Taylor and Luther Thompson for sharing with us their special knowledge of SMA's early years.

Special thanks go to Les Waddington for taking numerous photos and converting dozens of color pictures to black-and-white; to Ray Bartlett and Hunter Van Sicklin, who also supplied many photos; and to Wally Stoecker, Tony Savina, Jack Halloran, John Haslett, Fred Farwell, Bob Lapp, Jack Jackman and others who contributed still more photos. The Darien News-Review kindly loaned us several of their photos of SMA people.

We extend our thanks also to the many other SMA members who helped along the way.

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SMA'S TEN-YEAR VETERANS

Members in 1977 and Still on Our Roster

(As of October 1, 1987)

Ray H. Bartlett

James F. Bell

Charles P. Caruso

Ralph C. Channell

John A. Clark, Jr.

Frank S. Cooper, Jr.

William B. Crane, Jr.

George E. Cummings

William J. DeGroot

Hawthorne Deming

Robert E. Fatherley

Granville M. Fillmore

Alan P. Fort

Alex G. Gifford

Howard C. Gilbert

William Hansot

George S. Hastings

John D. Hill

Lawrence M. Horton

Robert E. Howe

Charles J. Johnson

John M. Keese III

William H. Kendrick

R. Ross Kitchen

Philip C. Langdon

Gerald L. Larocque

Charles F. Lemons

Sherman L. Lewis

George McElrath

Robert A. McNell

Carl K. Moses

Harold B. Mottern

Arthur S. Nyquist

Jim J. Orr

W. H. Patrick

J. Andrew Painter

James J. Rinella

Harold H. Rogers

Rudolph A. Safarik

Crandall A. Sanborn

Richard Seipt

A. Richard Senftleben

James F. Snowden

Lester R. Steffens

Alfred M. Street

Malcolm P. Taylor

Luther F. Thompson

Robert L. Turner

Lester E. Waddington

Alvin G. Zobel



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