

**HISTORY**

**OF**

**ROCK  
CREEK**

**COUNCIL**

**#2797**

**1938 - 1997**

## HISTORY OF ROCK CREEK COUNCIL #2797

BY  
ROGER J. BENETEAU PGK

[Edited and Updated by Joseph P. Fincutter PGK PFN FDD]  
1988

Rock Creek Council was born on the 12th of June, 1938 in the town of Bethesda, Montgomery County, Maryland. Its birth was preceded by a serious period of gestation, sound prenatal care on the part of its founders in assembling its component parts, and a firm resolve that it would be nurtured faithfully through life to become a starry jewel in the grand firmament of Columbianism .

Our birth day was celebrated by a gala major degree for sixty-five Charter Members at Old St. Mary's Parish Hall, Gaithersburg, and was followed by a sumptuous banquet.

With our baptism concluded, life began for us as we elected our first council officers. Our first meetings were held in the loft of an old barn on the premises of Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Bethesda. We plotted our course, acquired robes and regalia, and contemplated our council publication, which at first was only a typewritten newsletter issued periodically. Our first printed publication, the "KNIGHT CHATTER" was issued on the 12th of September, 1940, and has continued, with few exceptions, throughout the years as a 'monthly' publication.

Our early fund-raising programs consisted of selling Christmas trees, conducting raffles, operating carnivals, promoting a circus, and other things. In a few years we had established a sound financial status, our membership began to increase, growing pains set in, and our sights were set on acquiring a home for our council. We thought we were there in early 1941 when a charter member arranged for a gift parcel of land next to Our Lady of Lourdes Church. Our dreams of a clubhouse site were not to be as the pastor of the church, our Chaplain, needed land to expand his school; and, we yielded to his request and donated the property to the church.

Soon after, we lost our meeting place as the old barn was torn down to make way for church and school buildings. For a number of years we met at different places, such as: first, at Forest Glen Council (now Father Rosensteel Council), and in order, Kenwood Club, the Women's Club of Bethesda, and the Bethesda-Chevy Chase American Legion Home. During this period our membership, activities and our finances increased, and, we never lost sight of our desire for a council home.

Again we thought that the purchase of property on Old Georgetown Road next to the Women's' Club of Bethesda would be our dream come true. We had plans prepared by an architect for a new clubhouse but soon we scrapped the idea because good fortune brought us a more suitable sight, our present location. It consisted of 2.5 acres of

property with a stone and brick house located thereon. On May 22nd, 1952 we signed a contract for the purchase of this site for \$42,000, payable in monthly installments of \$200. We then organized our holding company, Rock Creek Kay-Cee Club, Incorporated. Our members turned out en masse to remodel the house, and in January 1954 we had the property zoned for club purposes and were granted a tax exemption.

We were now 'housed' in our own home and with members' donations of various pieces of furniture, gift of a newly decorated room by a Past Grand Knight, donations of money, our home met our every need. With continued improvement of internal facilities, landscaping and the surfacing of huge parking area, we were soon dubbed the "Country Club Council." By 1958 we had completely paid off the mortgage, aided by the sale of the Old Georgetown Road property. The 'new era' was celebrated with the burning of the mortgage with fitting ceremonies and fun.

We soon found out that because of ever-increasing membership and activities, our 'home' had been outgrown. Expansion was needed. And by the summer of 1961, work was concluded on the expansion, costing us \$88,750, exclusive of the cost of additional furniture and other necessary equipment to complete the expansion. A success such as this called for a gala dedication banquet on the 16th of August, 1961. We had come a long way in a quarter of a century and now could enjoy the fruits of our labors.

Our home was the envy of other community organizations, since we had two spacious halls, a delightful lounge area, office space for council officers, a Past Grand Knights Lounge, a pool and billiard area, and a spacious lawn for picnics. Rock Creek Council sits proudly on a hill overlooking its surroundings and its physical facilities are in constant demand by others for banquets, dances, meetings, wedding receptions, etc.

Our membership embraces every walk of life: Prelates and priests, judges, lawyers, doctors, dentists, artists, architects, engineers, plumbers, electricians, carpenters, bankers, sailors, soldiers, marines, air force personnel, men of the Coast Guard, business men, executives, retirees from all walks of life, etc. The many trophies, plaques, citations, etc., which adorn our walls are testimony of the excellence of our work and our devotion to the basic principles of Columbianism. A goodly number of our members have moved up through the ranks of Columbianism to serve in the McNamara Chapter of Grand Knights and in the Maryland State Council. Two of our members, Past Grand Knights, Charles W. Bucy and F. Eugene Hogan, served as State Deputy . to say nothing of the many years of devoted service prior to being elected to that high post. Others have served as District Deputies, District Wardens, State Directors and/or Chairmen, etc. In the interest of brevity and to exemplify the 'team effort' of Rock Creek Council member no names have been included.

Rock Creek Council merits the plaudits of our State, County and Community. Three testimonials to this fact are that we pioneered the Annual Memorial Day Field Mass at Gate of Heaven Cemetery in 1958 and have been active since that time in its continuance; the further fact that we fostered annual awards to our County police who have distinguished themselves in the line of duty; and thirdly, we started a Charity Ball which outgrew our hall and was taken over by Cardinal O'Boyle to support the Joseph P. Kennedy Institute for the Handicapped.

Our Council's participation in the Maryland State Council's Incentive Program (Car RAffle) has been exceptional --we have sold the greatest number of tickets each year for the past fifteen years. We have also been among the leaders in the Tootsie Roll Program which benefits the Mentally Retarded in Montgomery County. Over the past few years, all seven Councils in Montgomery County have joined together, pooled their Tootsie Roll money (an idea of a PGK from Rock Creek Council) and disseminated it throughout Montgomery County to well-deserved Programs.

We all can remember with great joy and satisfaction all of those wonderful activities of the past: Memorial Masses, Annual Communion Breakfasts; Valentine Parties; Octoberfests; Clergy Nights; Sports Nights; Crab Feasts; Halloween Parties; Christmas Parties; Picnics on Memorial DAY, the 4th of July and Labor Days; New Year's Eve Dances; Installations; Anniversary/Past Grand Knights Parties; we could go on and on and not include all of them.

We can never forget our ladies auxiliary, the "CHRISTOBELLES!" That wonderful group of ladies not only had fun for themselves in assembly gathered but were also a 'right-hand' to each and every Grand Knight throughout his year. Remember the parties they used to throw? Great fun for everyone! And don't forget, it was they who outfitted our lounge many ears ago; who put the big stove and refrigerator in the kitchen; who bought the movie projector and screen. They were always at the ready to help with a meal for Clergy Night, for an Installation, for a breakfast after a Mass, etc. We thank God for all the help they have been over the years.

It is easy to understand that all the activities listed above along with a great number of 'rentals' finally took their toll on our home. In 1984 a large scale reconstruction program was launched to refurbish the entire first floor of the home. At a cost of over \$90,000 the entire first floor was rebuilt and redecorated to be commensurate with any 'rental rooms' in the Bethesda/Chevy Chase area. The room in which we normally meet was renamed in honor of Brother Joe Guido, our Financial Secretary for over 20 years.

With the death in early 1988 while in office of our PGK Roger J. Beneteau, all of our officers moved up one chair so that all chairs would be filled with the election of a new Warden. They promised to carry out Roger's programs and activities to a successful conclusion

in the balance of the year. It was done! Again with charitable motivation and in the interest of the success of the Council, all Council Officers agreed to continue in office for the 1988-89 Fraternal Year. There was one exception, however, when our Chancellor left the Council to become Grand Knight of Mater Dei Council, formed in his parish, St. Raphael's. Another Brother Knight stepped forward to fill the vacancy, another example of team spirit.

On the 11th of July, 1988, we had a gala celebration to celebrate our Golden Anniversary -- 50 YEARS -- in our Council Home. It started with a Mass at Our Lady of Lourdes Church, concelebrated by our Chaplain and associate Chaplains. Following the Mass, we returned to the Council for a Cocktail Hour prior to superb dinner prepared and served by the caterer. There was a short program emceed by the sons, both PGKs, of our first Grand Knight, Joseph A. Cantrel. It was short, informative, entertaining and enjoyed by all in attendance. We 'danced the night away' after the dinner and program. It was well-attended and all went home tired but happy to have been a part of our 50th Gala Anniversary Party.

Our past is prologue! We've done it before and we can do it again! We look to the future -- the next 50 years -- with the full knowledge that there is sufficient talent and expertise among the membership to tackle and solve all problems which may confront us. With the help of Mary, Queen of the Knights, and of Almighty God we will succeed!

#### BREAK IN STYLE

The first 50 years was compiled, in 'story form' by PGK Roger Beneteau who unfortunately died before he finished it. The next 10 years will be prepared by each individual Past Grand Knight and edited to some degree by PGK Jos. Fincutter.

1987-89 Donald P. Stein, GK

A Day of Recollection was started for the Physically Handicapped, organized by Community Activities Director Horace Rabbitt, himself a victim of Cerebral Palsy.

At the request of Chaplain Msgr. O'Donnell a committee was established to investigate the possibility of recognizing the Catholic Teacher of the Year. Plans were made to hold the first such award ceremony during the next year under GK Falzon.

We held several social functions for young adults, organized by Bar Manager, Mike Horan.

We sold a still-standing Maryland State record 17,000 Incentive (Car) Raffle tickets, because of a suggestion made by PGK Joe Murphy,

whereby a brother Knight's union helped sell tickets, with the proceeds going toward that brother's liver transplant; one brother sold 1000 tickets.

We won several Surge with Service Awards at the State Convention, including 1st in Family Activities, 2nd in Council Activities, 3rd in Church Activities, and 2nd in General Excellence.

Recorder Norb Whittrock was Knight of the Year and PGK John Weldon was awarded a special "Grand Knight's Award" for his hard work on behalf of the council.

1989-1990 Joseph Falzon, GK

A Council takes a great deal of pride in the successful carrying out of "another" Council year. A Council can take great pride in contributing to the betterment of Church, Family, and our fellow men especially those less fortunate and the unborn. Rarely can a Council point to a significant achievement or event which results in the attainment of the ideals of the Order and which is timeless. During my term as Grand Knight I was fortunate to preside over one such event. But the year itself began the culmination of a long worked renaissance of the Council by a succession of Grand Knights and Council members. Following are the significant events and achievements during my year as Grand Knight:

Council began the practice of funding a second religious for one year, a postulant in Korea who belonged to the order of the Sisters of Charity. At the same time the Council increased the amount of annual support it gave to a seminarian.

Council contributed more to charitable organizations (over \$40,000) than in any prior Council year as a result of fundraising activities such as the car raffle and Council activities, and support of members. The Council sold the most car raffle tickets ever that year, slightly more than 12,000.

Council raised more than \$3,500 in its Annual Tootsie Roll drive to help God's special children. This year also saw the District distribute over \$34,000 to organizations that help the handicapped. This was the largest distribution thus far.

The first Day of Recollection was held at the National Institutes of Health. Some 20 knights attended and Chaplain Monsignor William F. O'Donnell presided and PGK Joe Fincutter gave a slide presentation of his recent visit to the Holy Land.

Council rejuvenated several dormant activities such as Sports Night and Social programs under the Leadership of Program Director Dale Gordon. This was a milestone as the Grand Knight had been serving as the Program Director for the last six years

the Grand Knight had been serving as Program Director and rarely filled the activities chairs or offered a social program.

The final event and most significant is the holding of the first Teachers Appreciation Day in honor of all the teachers who toil in the eight parish schools within the jurisdiction of Rock Creek Council. The impetus for this event came from Council Chaplain William F. O'Donnell who at the time was pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes Church. The Council had several fundraisers, the most notable was a Yard Sale though the Council underwrote the event.

While as Past Grand Knight I could go on and on recounting what to me made for a memorable year, but I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the help of the many brother Knights and their wives who made the year happen. I consider myself fortunate to be the beneficiary of the outstanding work of my brothers.

1990-1991 John Siemien, GK

During this council year, Rock Creek had significant activities in each of the Surge With Service Programs. After the Installation of Officers that began with a Mass celebrated by our Chaplain, Msgr. William F. O'Donnell, at Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Bethesda; a reception and dinner were held at the Council home followed by a short program.

The Church Activities included a monthly Eucharistic Group Mass at each of the eight parishes in our area. We also had our Annual Memorial Mass for our deceased brothers, followed by a breakfast for widows and family members. After the monthly mass at St. Jane's for the mentally challenged a light snack and an opportunity to socialize was provided at the council home. A dinner for the pastors was held at a local restaurant in addition to our annual Clergy Night dinner to which over 200 priests were invited. We were very fortunate to have His Excellency Alvaradoi Corrada, S. J., Auxiliary Bishop of Washington as guest and speaker. It was a pleasant evening and many of the priests remained to enjoy the hospitality and camaraderie of the Brothers of Rock Creek. The practice of reciting the rosary at wakes for deceased brothers was also continued and two seminarians and a Postulant were also given monetary support from the Council.

Rock Creek held its second Annual Teachers Appreciation Awards Program as a major Community activity. We also continued our participation in the Tootsie Roll Program and collected and distributed non-perishable food to the homeless shelters in our area. Individual members continue to work in their parishes and participated in the Annual March for Life and the third annual day of recollection.

Our Council Activities displayed our commitment to the State Scholarship and Charity Programs by again selling the most tickets of any council in the state. We also conducted other activities such as:

Crab Feast, Oktoberfest, Golf Tournament, Thanksgiving Party, Night in Roma, Christmas social and party, Memorial and Labor Day Picnics, Polka Night, and dances on New Year's Eve and St. Patrick's Day. At the end of the year we had our annual Workers Party.

For Family Activities, we included the families of current members and former members in all our Council Activity functions and we enrolled deceased members in the Purgatorial Society.

The Youth Activities program saw the reinstatement of our Sports Night to which we invited many professional, high school, college and local athletes to speak and meet with the children of members. At this program we also distributed awards to local athletes and their coaches.

1991-1992 John J. Collins, GK

The Grand Knight tried to get newer young members involved in Council Activities by assigning Co-Chairmen to all of the Surge with Service Programs. He assigned an older member, assisted by a much younger member, basically to train the younger member in work as a chairman and also show the younger member how much satisfaction is gained by working for Knights' programs. We had a wonderful Ladies Auxiliary, The Christobelles, in earlier days and the Grand Knight did want to get a new ladies auxiliary started. He was successful in his efforts and a new group was formed, though small at the start it was a beginning that increased its membership with time.

He also instituted a Communion Breakfast at the Council after attending mass in your own parish. This was an interesting approach to a Communion Breakfast but it was received well by a large number of members.

To augment his membership drives, he was given approval by local pastors to put recruiting type material in their pamphlet racks. It was being taken because replacement pamphlets were needed at almost regular intervals.

Operation of our Lounge was in dire need of revision. The Grand Knight reorganized the operation with written position descriptions of each member who was given Lounge assignments. It improved the operation in a very significant manner.

He instituted weekend afternoon dances to allow seniors who don't go out at night to enjoy social activities. It was a very successful approach to social activities for seniors.

The council had purchased an XT Computer several years before but nothing had been done to provide a permanent place for it and obtain the proper software to assist the Financial Secretary and/or the Treasurer in their record keeping, mailing labels and other membership

data for use by Activity Chairmen. The GK rearranged the Financial Secretary/Treasurer's office to make room for the computer in a suitable hutch. He also obtained the services of a new member who was versatile with computers and software and the computer was ready for use in short order.

Although the Council participated in the usual Surge with Service Programs, it is entirely possible that the Annual Teachers' Appreciation Awards Night was the most successful venture. It was a BIG night.

At the Convention in Ocean City in May the Council received:

Surge With Service Plaque  
2nd in Church Activities  
2nd in Youth Activities

1992-1993 Richard C. Kolf, GK

The Council began its year in earnest with the news that its softball team finished fifth in a 38-team field at the Knights of Columbus Softball Tournament in Waterloo, Iowa, over the Labor Day Weekend. Four brother Knights and three of their ladies were there to cheer them on. This was the best showing of a Maryland team ever!

The fall Charity Drives, Car Raffle and Tootsie Roll, were very successful. In the Car Raffle, as usual, the Council sold more tickets than any other council. The Tootsie Roll effort was not that spectacular, but certainly worthy, bringing in over \$4,000.

An unusual effort by the Community Activities Committee was to help Grosvenor Health Care Center with its Fun(d) Day activities and raffle ticket sales. The Rev. Mr. George Koback told me that there was a 43% in funds raised for the Center, which he attributed largely to Council Help.

Undoubtedly the most significant effort of the Council Year was the educational effort related to the "Question 6" referendum. Maryland had recently passed a law which was considered extremely objectionable from the Pro-Life point of view, for example removing liability from the abortionist for his 'good-faith' decision to perform an abortion, removing parental consent requirements, etc. The State Council asked for help in educating the public prior to the referendum on this question at the November election. The Council, under the Leadership of Pro-Life Couple, Ed and Lisa Tennant, provided nearly 2000 hours of labor distributing materials during the few months prior to election day. We lost the battle, but the Council could hold its head high for the effort and spirit shown.

Much needed Lounge renovation began this year, with the Council providing funds for new furniture. The renovation continued well beyond the end of the year.

The Fourth Annual Teacher of the Year Program was held this year. This is one of the activities which generates justifiable pride in the Council. The dances, Octoberfest, New Year's Eve, St. Patrick's Day and Knight in Roma were great successes.

The Council set aside funds for a children's playground on Council property. This has been an asset during Council picnics. A Council Clean Up Day ended the year by getting the grounds in good shape for the summer and fall activities.

1993-1994 Michael F. Iacampo, GK

"100 More in '94" was my theme all during the year. Although the goal was not reached we were credited with 79 new members which indicates that the theme was a creditable incentive for recruitment.

All of the Surge With Service Programs were active throughout the year. As a result the success of these programs is indicated by the awards we received at the Annual State Convention in Ocean City, as follows:

- Dr. John H. Griffin Trophy for the most readmissions.
- 2nd Place - State Youth
- 2nd Place - Supreme Council Service Award - Youth Activities
- 2nd Place - Supreme Council Service Award - Council Activities
- Surge with Service Program Award for council participation

It was a great thrill to receive each of these awards as it showed that we had good programs throughout the year, that the work of council members was recognized, and our success was rewarded.

Rock Creek Council received the Star Council Award for its work in '94.

1994-1995 Jack Capies, GK

Although we did follow and participate in the Surge with Service Programs with our usual retinue of activities, the most memorable event of the year was the DEDICATION OF THE MEMORIAL TO THE UNBORN at GATE OF HEAVEN CEMETERY. On May 27, 1995, at 2 PM His Eminence James Cardinal Hickey dedicated the memorial to the unborn. His Eminence led a procession of over 20 Fourth Degree Knights, lecturers, clergy, brother Knights and their ladies, and many other devout Christians.

The Memorial was organized by Jack Capies, GK of Rock Creek Council #2797 and was paid for by the Knights of Columbus Councils of Montgomery.

Cardinal Hickey, in dedicating the monument, reflected on his long membership in the Knights of Columbus and thanked the Knights for the monument and Jack Capies for his efforts in coordinating the project. Cardinal Hickey reflected on the placement of the monument to an area reserved for children. He expressed hope that the monument would be a place of healing for all mothers and fathers who lost a child by still birth, abortion (planned or not), and childhood diseases.

State Deputy John Glynn thanked the more than 150 people for attending the dedication. He also thanked all the Councils of Montgomery County for making the monument possible Jack Capies, Grand Knight of Rock Creek Council, The Gate of Heaven Cemetery, and the Archdiocese of Washington. He gave the background on how the monument project was started two years earlier and that this one is the first one in the area.

Rock Creek's Chaplain, Msgr. William F. O'Donnell, gave the homily. He talked about healing and how the Memorial Day weekend was the most appropriate time of the year to dedicate this monument. Generally, the weekend is set aside to honor our fallen family members and friends killed in wars. The cause the Knights of Columbus has taken on, to stop abortion, is a war. We should continue to remember the unborn children in our prayers.

Cardinal Hickey blessed the memorial with these words:

*"O God, by whose mercy the faithful departed find rest, bless this memorial to all unborn children who have died, many of whom have not received the charity of a Christian burial. Send your angel to watch over this holy place. May this memorial be a reminder to all who grieve the loss of a child that they may one day be united with their children in the joy and peace of your kingdom. Amen."*

The monument of blue-gray granite features a baby etched into the stone, with the inscription: **God's children - the Unborn.**

1995-1996 George L. Ford, Jr, GK

The GK started the year at his Installation with the dedication of the council and his work as GK to "Our Lady, Queen of the Knights." The Installation was well organized starting with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass at Our Lady of Victory Church in Washington, D.C., followed by a reception and dinner at the council home. The GK was extremely happy because of the large turn-out of invited guests.

The KAY-CEE Club, our home corporation, had deliberated for some time on the subject of selling debentures for the purpose of paying off the mortgage on our building and property. Papers and other necessary details were set up and sales began during this term.

The entrance to the Lounge from the parking lot was made of concrete blocks and the left wall had been gradually deteriorating to the point where safety became a big factor. So it was decided to plan a new entrance. Plans were drawn; bids received; and the best bid came from our GK who is an excellent stone mason in his own right. The entrance now is a thing of beauty and one of the council members has shown his 'green thumb' by planting flowers and shrubs in the available area.

The GK also stated that meetings would be shorter, with more time for socializing in the Lounge afterwards by those members in attendance. His goal of shorter meetings was attained in about 75% of the meetings. And there were some very very interesting meetings.

The GK conducted all of our usual Surge With Service - dances, parties; Council, Youth, Church, Family and Community activities. All were well attended and successful as evidenced by the awards received at the Annual Convention in Ocean City:

Surge with Service Plaque  
1st in the Incentive Program (Car RAffle) [again!]  
3rd in the Tootsie Roll Drive  
3rd in General Excellence

1996-1997 Vince Bunag, GK

Under Church Activities we had a Day of Recollection on 22 March, the day before Palm Sunday, the theme of which was "Celebrating the year of the Redeemer; Following Christ Today". The Retreat Master was His Excellency Alvaro J. Corrado del Rio, S.J., Regional Bishop of the Archdiocese of Washington, serving Montgomery and Prince George counties. Those in attendance were attentive to the Bishops words during the day. The day concluded with confessions and the Holy Sacrifice of Mass by the Bishop and Msgr. O'Donnell together with two visiting Permanent Deacons from the Archdiocese. All in attendance did want to see it continued in the future.

The Community Activities Chairman asked every member who attends meetings to bring non-perishable foods for delivery to the homeless. A Rosary Program was initiated in October in which the Statue of Our Lady was delivered to a member's home and the rosary was said every night in that home for the week and then the statue was moved to another member's home - a continuous rosary among the council's members.

Social Activities included our Annual New Year's Eve Dance which is always successful and also a St. Patrick's Day dance. The food, typical Irish recipe, and the dance music made it a fully enjoyable evening. However, our GK of Philippine origin surprised everyone by appearing in a red wig and singing Irish songs with all the brogue one could imagine. It was hilarious and very enjoyable.

The Lecturer arranged for a good speaker for each of the second monthly meetings. The meeting was conducted in normal fashion and after the meeting ended, the Ladies were invited to join us in the Guido Room to listen to the invited guest speaker. There were very interesting talks on a number of titles that always maintained the interest of all in attendance.

The "Night in Roma" was changed a bit by scheduling it in the afternoon to benefit the seniors and making it a dance with live music. It was called a "Family Night in Roma". The food was excellent in every respect.

Our Annual Sports Night was a very successful affair again. Local athletes were awarded prizes as were their coaches. As usual there were a great number of door prizes as everyone received a ticket on arrival in the hall.

The GK made a trip to Lourdes carrying 'requests' from members to be placed at the Grotto in Lourdes. He prayed for all of us and for the council. He viewed a motion picture of "The Story of Bernadette" while there and was able to procure a copy. When he returned he showed the movie to members and their ladies after a meeting and he offered to show this at the various parishes in our area. His offer was accepted by 6 of the 8 parishes in our area.

1997-1998 E. Roberto Ibanez, GK

[This will be added at the end of his council year.]