

HISTORY OF THE Y's MEN OF MERIDEN PRESENTED
AT THE SECOND ANNUAL MEETING, JUNE 7, 1994

The idea of the organization which was to become the Y's Men of Meriden was first conceived in the fertile mind of Bruce Miller, Executive Director of the Meriden YMCA. Bruce had served in the West Hartford Y where a club of retirees who called themselves The Old Guard was operated so successfully that a second club, The Regents, was formed, which in turn grew so large that a third club, The Squires, was established. Bruce suggested that a small delegation consisting of himself, Bill Wheaton, and a third person who shall be nameless, go to West Hartford to learn about how The Old Guard ran their group. The nameless third delegate turned purple and took off like a large bird when he saw that the Old Guard wore ties and jackets. Bruce and Bill returned to Meriden with a copy of the Old Guards' constitution and By-Laws and got on the telephone to enlist a steering committee to get things underway. This sterling group was picked as a cross-section of the retirees of the City, both geographically and on the basis of their talents. The panel included:

Les Krech, Jim Teagle, Mark Hamilton, Ad Sternberg, Bill Wheaton, Bill Tracy, Bill Godburn, and Jim Yanelli

Through the spring and summer of 1992 the dedicated Steering Committee worked out the many details of organization and constructed a mailing list to which invitations were sent. The historic first meeting took place on Tuesday, September 29, 1992 at 10:30 A. M. at the Y's 500 South Broad Street location. On hand to be welcomed by the Steering Committee were the following stalwart characters:

Paul Crone, Bill Langan, Frank Dallesander, Walter Doerner, Charles Bertagna, John Hillman, Minott Goodale, Gerry Rollins, Bob Redican, Bob Morrisey, Fred Glike, Pat Piscitelli, John Peckham, Bill Kilroy, Marv Beloff, Harold Ruchette, Lloyd Devaul, Allen Botacchi, Jim McCann, Bob Wilson, Charlie Conniff, Frank Iodice.

Some of these first attenders dropped out, but others joined the ranks and the present count approaches 70 hardy souls. The depth and diversity of our membership have contributed greatly to the quality of the programs offered each Tuesday. By the end of

this present season more than 70 highly interesting meetings have been held, many with outstanding speakers. Examples are: Bruce Ward describing his canoe trip up the Maine Coast, Dick Boynton singing a somewhat bawdy song and showing us slides of G-stringed Brazilian beauties, School Superintendant Gordon Bruno enlightening us on education in Meriden, Randy Kamerbeek, executive director of the Meriden Redevelopment Agency, outlining plans and progress of the downtown, Bob Ledoux discussing art as an investment, Police Chief Robert Kosienski on his career and the responsibilities of the police, Jim Ullman on railroading or Tom Luby, State Representative and candidate for the U. S. Senate filling us in on the political scene.

On January 19, 1993, the Constitution and By-Laws of the Y's Men of Meriden were approved by the membership, and a new chapter in the Club's history was initiated. A nominating committee was appointed consisting of Les Krech, Ad Sternberg, Mark Hamilton, Marv Beloff and Bill Godburn. On March 2nd the Club unaimously elected the slate proposed by the committee as follows: Bill Wheaton, Chairman; Dan Kahn, Vice Chairman; Ad Sternberg, Treasurer; Bill Godburn, Secretary. Also elected were Directors at Large, Les Krech, Marv Beloff and George Hallbach. Jim Yanelli was appointed to serve as liason with the YMCA Board of Directors. At the meeting of March 9th Bill Wheaton appointed Allen King Assistant Treasurer and Frank Iodice Assistant Secretary. He also appointed committee chairmen as follows: Program, Dan Kahn; Membership, Bob Dorsey; Hospitality, Bill Kilroy; General Activities, Jim Teagle; Publicity, Paul Ryder; Special Events, Bob Wilson; Volunteer Services, Minot Goodale; Historian, John Peckham.

Under the benevolent dictatorship of our energetic Chairman Bill Wheaton, the weekly programs assumed an orderly format. After the pledge of allegiance, announcements of general interest were made and then the story teller of the week was called upon to entertain and amuse the unruly membership. The stories ranged from Hairy dog to brilliant humor and were generally much appreciated. Following the story interlude the designated introducer presented the speaker of the day. The stable of introducers whom Program Chairman Dan Kahn had

inveigled into serving included Bob Estabrook, Tom Potter, John Hillman Allen Botacchi, Paul Crone, Frank Dallesander, Mark Hamilton, John Phelan, Art Weiss, Ad Sternberg and Marvin Beloff.

In addition to the weekly meetings, Bill Wheaton initiated a variety of other activities in which members could participate. Under the able administration of General Activities Chairman Jim Teagle a spectacular bulletin board was created which showed the forthcoming events at a glance. Among the popular activities were the post-meeting bridge sessions scheduled every other Tuesday where members honed their skill with the pasteboards. Participants included Dan Kahn, George Thomson, Marvin Beloff, Jim Teagle, George Martell, Gerry Rollins, Paul Lamoureux, Ad Sternberg, Vin Rossitto, Art Taylor, George Davies, Ely Wagshul, Bill Wheaton, Bob Ketelhut, Jim McCann, Paul Ryder and Bob Oman. For those more athletically inclined several hikes were programed to such scenic places as Mount Higby, Pachaug Mountain, Pistapaug Mountain, Merimere Reservoir in Hubbard Park, the old railroad line in Mixville, and West Peak. Some of the superbly conditioned athletes who participated on the gruelling trails were Bob Wilson, Dan Kahn, Mark Hamilton, Bill Wheaton, John Peckham, John Carrol, Paul Lamoureux, ~~George~~ George Thomson, Paul Zysk, Marv Beloff, Les Krech, Bob Hart, Walt Carey and Al Botacchi. A fiercely competitive series of golf encounters was instituted some of the participants of which were Jim Teagle, Bill Wheaton, Bob Ketelhut, George Thomson, Paul Ryder, Ad Sternberg, Paul Zysk, Joe Menna, Walt Jacobson, Les Krech and Jim McCann. Cribbage was also indulged in, the players being mostly the same as the bridge and golfsportsmen, so they are not repeated here.

Among other contributors who have helped to make this a very fine Y's Men's year have been Bob Wilson, organizer of special events like the Connecticut Valley Railroad trip or the cook-outs, and Paul Ryder, the able editor of the monthly News Letter.

Recently Bruce Miller, who was first responsible for initiating the Y's Men of Meriden, was asked how he thought our Club compares to other retirement clubs he had observed. He pondered for a moment and then said, "These guys enjoy each other more and they participate enthusiastically in the programs." With this momentum your historian predicts a brilliant future for the Y's Men.

John Peckham, Historian