Monocacy Lions Celebrate Seventieth Anniversary

By John Clayton

The Upcounty Monocacy Lions Club gathered at Dutch’s Daughter Restaurant in Frederick to observe the seventieth anniversary of the club’s charter. This makes the Monocacy Lions one of the oldest and most successful clubs in the greater Washington area. The Monocacy Lions are part of District 22C, which encompasses Delaware, Southern Maryland, Washington, D.C., and Montgomery County, and are the westernmost club in the district.

The club presented exhibits and a program which highlighted the events and customs that have been a part of the club’s long history. The program was introduced by Monocacy King Lion Dennis Davis, and conducted by Monocacy Lion Dan Yates. Current District 22C Governor Sandi Halterman congratulated the club on its history and accomplishments; the keynote speaker, Past International Delegate Joe Gaffigan, a well-known and popular dinner speaker in the Lions realm, spoke of the many contributions to the local community and to the Lions’ global effort to assist the blind that have accrued from so many years of service. Mr. Gaffigan also read and delivered a commemorative letter from the Lions International President Sid L. Scruggs III.

The sole surviving charter member of the Monocacy Lions is Harry C. Rhodes. Monocacy Lion William Price, his nephew, read a lively letter from Mr. Rhodes commemorating the occasion.

In celebration of the club’s history, Monocacy Lion Edwin Brown, the club’s longest serving member at over sixty-eight years, described the early years of the club. He included an anecdote from the 1940s when the club was meeting at the Barnesville Town Hall, and some ladies sympathetic to the Lions were attempting to cook dinner in the basement underneath the stage. Mr. Brown was club treasurer at the time, and he had apparently neglected to pay the gas bill. The stoves wouldn’t light up, to the consternation of all present. Mr. Brown was followed by Dee Willard, a member for fifty-five years, who talked about the club in the 1960s. Both Mr. Brown and Mr. Willard alluded to those old days when membership was strictly controlled, with a secret ballot for new members to replace departing members. The vote had to be unanimous, so a prospective member could easily be blackballed and denied admission to the club.

Other Monocacy Lions continued with the walk through the club’s decades. Jack Davis presented the 1960s, Dan Yates the 1970s, and Roy Selby the 1980s. Gary Burdette, also a former District Governor, discussed the club in the 1990s, and Kitty Ayers brought the presentation into the twenty-first century.

Several club awards were presented, most prominently, the Melvin Jones Award, the highest award a club can bestow on a member, which went to Edwin Brown, and a new award, the Monocacy Lions Humanitarian Award, which was presented to Jane Stearns of Western Upper Montgomery County Help, or WUMCO. This is the first award the Monocacy Lions have designated for community service by a non-Lion “whose activities best symbolize the ideals of Lionism.” Joe Gaffigan also presented a special Lions pin to Edwin Brown in recognition of his long service to the club. King Lion Dennis Davis presented a number of club awards, headlined by the Lion of the Year award to Bill Jamison, and the Lion of the Years award, celebrating service over the long haul, to John Repass.