



CANADA J C I SENATE

### **The origin of Junior Chamber / Jaycees**

The origin of Jaycees can be traced as far back as 1910 to the city of St. Louis, Missouri, in the United States of America.

A young man named Henry "Hy" Giessenbier and his friends formed the Herculaneum Dance Club with the main objective of preserving conservative dance styles.

Five years later in 1915, Colonel H.N. Morgan, a prominent St. Louis citizen, inspired the members of the dance club to become more involved in civic issues.

Giessenbier and 32 other young men formed the Young Men's Progressive Civic Association (YMPCA) on October 13, 1915. This organization grew to a membership of 750 in less than five months.

#### **The Birth of Jaycees**

The very next year, 1916, saw another change of name as the YMPCA became Junior Citizens, commonly called JC's, which later became Jaycees. During World War I the JC's formed Company "L" of the 138th infantry regiment. The commander was Dwight Davis who later became assistant secretary of war and donated the Davis Cup Tennis Trophy.

The year 1918 marked another change as the JC's was affiliated to the St. Louis Chamber of Commerce and officially became the St. Louis Junior Chamber of Commerce.

After World War I, Giessenbier contacted other cities in the United States, with similar young businessmen's groups and subsequently 29 clubs from around the nation formed The United States Junior Chamber of Commerce. Henry "Hy" Giessenbier was elected the first President of the national organization.

#### **Crossing the Atlantic**

The international chapter of the organization began in 1923 with the Winnipeg Board of Trade's becoming the first Junior Chamber outside the United States. By 1928 the idea of an international body crossed the Atlantic Ocean to England.

During the 1932 Olympic Games in Los Angeles, The United States Junior Chamber contacted 42 nations with the idea of forming an International Executive Council of Junior Chambers of Commerce. When 26 countries responded, the International Executive Council was formed.

This council had a very short life span and ceased to exist in 1935. However, the idea did not die.

Five years later a resolution was passed by The U.S. Junior Chamber, approving a program to further mutual interests among Central and South America. This led to the establishment of Junior Chambers in Mexico City, Guatemala City, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama in 1943.

The realization of Jaycees International was on its way. In 1944 the first international conference called Inter-America Conference was held in Mexico City. Raul Garcia Vidal from Mexico was elected the first president. The countries which formed Junior Chamber International in 1944 were: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama and the United States.

#### First World Congress

Two years later in 1946 the first world congress was held in Panama City in the month of February. This congress was attended by 44 delegates from 16 different countries. The international organization was formally constituted, a temporary constitution was approved, an emblem was adopted, and the word "Commerce" was omitted from the name.

Erasmus Chambonnet of Panama was elected the second JCI President at that congress, and Australia and Canada were officially affiliated.

The constitution of Junior Chamber International was officially adopted at the second world congress in Dallas, Texas, U.S.A. in 1947.

Jaycees International (the name Junior Chamber was formally changed to Jaycees International Inc. in 1972) has since grown from strength to strength. Many vigorous programs were undertaken during the early years, e.g., "Christmas Package Drive for Korea" which netted 400 tons of relief supplies worth U.S. \$1 million; "Operation Brotherhood in Vietnam", and "Operation Warmth" for Greek earthquake victims.

Many important decisions were made such as adopting the JCI Creed (1948), establishing a permanent Secretariat (1952), founding the Senate Program (1952), initiating the official publication JCI WORLD (1954 - now LEADER), adopting the Commission System and the 100 per cent JCI Individual Membership Program (1960).

Through the years Jaycees International has changed with the times. The Commission System was changed to the Areas of Activity concept in 1974. This then became the Areas of Opportunity Concept in 1979 and was refined to a combination of the Areas of Opportunity and Commission Systems in 1985. JCI WORLD was changed to LEADER in 1984 in order to reflect better the image of the organization. Women were welcomed into the membership and Ebba Zachariassen from Sweden was elected the first female international officer in 1976.

The organization continues to change as time passes. From a small beginning in St. Louis, the spirit and purposes of the Jaycees now reach almost every nation in the free world.

NOTE: For a more detailed account of the history of Jaycees International, read "Men of Vision" by William R. Brown, available from the JCI Secretariat. For further information on J.C.I. check out <http://www.juniorchamber.org> .