

Chapter 1 The Founders

In 1958, when the Fulks Run Ruritan Club was established, the Ruritan National organization had been growing for three decades. Founded in 1928 in Holland, Virginia, and originally all male, Ruritan National aimed to fill the need for an organization where community leaders could work together to improve their neighborhoods. The word “Ruritan” is a combination of the Latin words for open country, “*ruri*,” and small town “*tan*.” The slogan of Ruritan is “Fellowship, Goodwill and Community Service.”

Unlike most other community service organizations, Ruritan rarely has national programs. Instead, each club assesses the needs of its own community and chooses its own methods to address those needs. This flexible, community-based approach has meshed well with the independent spirit of American rural life. Today, Ruritan National has become a major service organization in the rural Eastern U.S., with some 31,000 members in more than 1,100 clubs in 24 states.

Broadway and Bergton, the closest towns east and west of Fulks Run, had started clubs in 1936 and 1950, respectively. Fulks Run natives Garnett Turner and Andrew Thomas saw how Ruritans banded together into an influential force. Fulks Run was (and still is) unincorporated, and its scattered rural residents had no organized voice.

After talking with dozens of people, Garnett and Andrew attracted thirty-eight members, thirty-five of whom attended the first meeting on March 27, 1958. Held in the basement of the Mt. Carmel E.U.B. Church on Third Hill and Turner Run Roads, the meeting followed “a delicious ham supper” prepared and served by the church’s Good Samaritan Sunday School Class.

Suppers served by local church groups was one of several continuing traditions inaugurated at the earliest meetings of the Fulks Run Ruritans. By May, a Lawn Party in July was being organized as a fundraiser. The July meeting was Family Night, held as a picnic supper in the croquet field behind Garnett Turner’s store at the corner of Routes 259 and 612. Plans were made in August to volunteer at the Bergton Fair. October was Ladies Night, but this was a tradition that would later disappear as times changed and the Fulks Run Ruritans changed with them.

MEMORIES

By Garnett R. Turner, Charter Member; President 1959, 1976

Around 1954, I was invited to join the Broadway-Timberville Ruritan Club. That was a good club that did lots of good projects in their community. In early 1958, Claude Whitmer, my good friend and postmaster at Broadway, suggested that we organize a club at Fulks Run.

At that time I was postmaster of Fulks Run and had been operating my grocery store for nearly ten years, and I came into contact with a lot of the citizens of Fulks Run. Andrew Thomas was

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teaching in the Genoa School and would come into the store quite often, and we'd talk about different things. Andrew was considered a good teacher, he was well-liked and well-respected in the community, and he agreed with my sales talk that we needed a Ruritan Club. Quite a number of people were receptive to the idea. Andrew and I made a list of the local people who would likely attend the first dinner meeting to be held at Mt. Carmel E.U.B. Church. It was a success and we elected Andrew Thomas as President and myself as Vice President. At that first meeting Andrew made a speech. He was a good talker, he could make extemporaneous speeches without any problem. Arnold Wilkins from the Bergton Club also encouraged us. We had 30 plus members. We continued to meet in the basement of Mt. Carmel Church until the Fulks Run Elementary School was built in 1961.

By not having a local organization to speak for us, the county sort of neglected us in community improvements. We'd been neglected so long here in the Gap that when we got the club going we needed a lot of things. It's the old saying, the wheel that squeaks the loudest get the most grease. We did some squeaking. For several years, we asked the county for some large projects. One was to improve the Hollow Road of about two miles. This was done and the road surface was paved. The club was also instrumental in getting the Fulks Run School and two large bridges across the North Fork of the Shenandoah River, one at Dry River and one back of Fulks Run Grocery. The Highway Department also improved the highways crossing these bridges. The county government was composed of some Ruritan members with a "sympathetic ear" when we appeared before the various boards.

It has been a pleasure to be a member of such a great organization.



Four charter members – Garnett Turner, Trovillo “Bill” Miller, Gerald “Jim” Custer, and Robert Mitchell – continue into the 50th year of the club.

FROM THE MINUTES

March 27, 1958 8:00 P.M.

The Fulks Run Ruritan Club, the 20th in the Rockingham District received their charter from Fred K. Betts III of Harrisonburg, national vice president. The Club President Andrew J. Thomas received the charter at the dinner meeting held in the hall of the E.U.B. Church at Mt. Carmel.

Other officers are Garnett Turner, vice president, Maynard Hoover, secretary, Dwight Lantz, Treasurer, Marvin Bare, Trovillo Miller and B.O. Cooper, directors.

Greetings were extended by members of the Broadway-Timberville Ruritan Club, J.S. Sellars president of the Club, Ernest Early, Mayor of Broadway, F.L. Zirkle, also member of the board of supervisors from Plains District. Lt.-Gov. I. W. Diehl of

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FROM THE MINUTES

Broadway was toastmaster. Vice president Betts, in presenting the charter to President Thomas for the 35 members, brought greetings from the national organization. Mr. Betts said that Ruritan Clubs have accomplished much in Rockingham, and in every area where they are active. He predicted a successful record of achievement by the Fulks Run group.

Newton Liskey of the West Rockingham Ruritan Club, Governor of Rockingham district, installed the officers of this club. The Cadet Quartet of Shenandoah Valley Academy of New Market, Va. directed by John Reed, presented well received numbers of songs.

A delicious ham supper was served by Good Samaritan Sunday School Class of Mt. Carmel Church. The meeting was adjourned.

Signed Maynard E. Hoover, Secretary.

Complete minutes of the first meeting of the Fulks Run Ruritan Club.

Andrew J. Thomas, President	Marvin W. Bare, Director – 3 years
Garnett R. Turner, Vice-President	Trovillo S. Miller, Director – 2 Years
Maynard E. Hoover, Secretary	B. O. Cooper, Director – 1 Year
Dwight Lantz, Treasurer	Rev. Max W. Fisher, Chaplain
Russell L. Turner, Reporter	Rev. Golden Gaither, Song Leader
Joseph D. Runion, Sergeant At Arms	
Raymond Sager, Chairman, Welfare Committee. Delmar Ritchie, Ralph Conley, Committee Members	
William Bare, Jr., Chairman, Recreation Committee. Floyd D. Fulk, Mervin S. Albright, Committee Members	
Gerald Custer, Chairman, Conservation & Agriculture Committee. Harry Trumbo, Earnest Branner, Committee Members	
Stanford Runion, Chairman, Public Highways Committee. J. W. Ritchie, Lloyd Turner, Kermit Custer, Committee Members	
Robert M. Bare, Chairman, Education Committee. Charles F. Crider, Garland Keplinger, Committee Members	
Carroll T. Yankey, Chairman, Program Committee. Lynwood Miller, Eugene Estep, Committee Members	
Galen Fulk, Chairman, Fellowship Committee. Robert J. Mitchell, Harland C. Mongold, Roy E. Turner, Committee Members	
Miles E. Fulk, Chairman, Finance Committee. Harrison Fulk, Maynard C. Fulk, Delbert Slater, Committee Members	

Officers and members, March 27, 1958.

MEMORIES

By Trovillo "Bill" Miller, Charter Member; President 1965, 1987

They announced that first meeting somewhere, that they were going to charter a club in Fulks Run, and I attended that meeting. Arnold Wilkins and Dwight Lantz from the Bergton club came to help organize. I've always enjoyed seeing how they can help the community, people in need. Community service was one of the main concerns of the club, and we have done a good job of that, with our finances. We enjoyed socializing, too. The Ruritans would sponsor a fishing trip sometimes, down to the Bay, and they used to sponsor us at golf tournaments, at Harrisonburg, Massanutten, Lake View, Luray. I have really enjoyed it. I was president the year they bought the land for the new park, 1987. I remember signing the note. I have the pen I used to sign that note, I got it out the other evening and it still writes.

Although Bill Miller had to drop out of regular membership due to illness in his family, he maintains contact through Associate membership.



MEMORIES

By Robert Mitchell, Charter Member; President 1966, 1988

I believe it was Garnett that told me about the meeting, we've always been friends, actually if you go back a little ways we're related. When Ruritans first started, it was mainly farmers, or self-employed people. There was B.O. Cooper, Richard's dad; Mr. Andrew Thomas, he was instrumental; Lloyd Turner, Garnett's dad. I think about the old folks sometimes. Now we're the old folks. You feel good because you're helping out people here in the community, helping do something that amounts to something, you can see the results of it.

PROGRAMS

In the early years, many of the programs featured singers and singing. Another common theme was farm and wildlife topics. Rangers from the nearby George Washington National Forest and state game wardens were periodic guests. Talks, slides or films about travel in the U.S. and abroad, by club members or others in the community, were

also popular. Hosting Goodwill Ambassadors, through a program sponsored by Ruritan National, gave club members additional opportunities to learn about foreign countries.

Occasional programs highlighted financial matters such as tax preparation (especially for farmers), Social Security, and investments. Local business leaders were invited to describe new services, and local officials and leaders were asked to discuss community concerns such as health or employment. And sometimes the programs were just pure fun.

FROM THE MINUTES

- June 3, 1958 There was a stunt played called an airplane ride.
- Oct. 7, 1958 The 4 Tones Quartet gave a thirty minute program of songs that was much enjoyed by all.
- Jan. 6, 1959 Guest speaker of the evening was Fred Black of Broadway, who gave a very interesting and helpful talk on farmers' federal income tax reports.
- April 7, 1959 The guest speaker of the evening was Mrs. Doris Whitmer, Rockingham County public nurse. She spoke about polio.
- May 12, 1959 Mr. L. P. Fitzwater Jr. of the Broadway Rescue Squad gave a very interesting and instructive talk on first aid and demonstrated some of the equipment that they use.
- June 2, 1959 A strip contest was held among three members, in which Harrison Fulk won a lot of candy.
- Nov. 3, 1959 Mr. Lewis G. Polk of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County Health Department was introduced, and he gave us a very instructive talk on safety, in the home, on the farm and on the road.
- Jan. 3, 1961 The speakers were Garland L. Nicely and Stuart Darden of The Social Security Field Office, Staunton, Va. They explained the present Social Security set up and answered many questions of the club members concerning Social Security benefits.
- Feb. 7, 1961 Garnett Turner introduced Forest Ranger Lewis Beyea who presented an interesting film of Wildlife in the National Forest.
- March 7, 1961 Garnett Turner reported that the North Fork of the Shenandoah River had recently been stocked with 7000 trout. A musical program by Joe Miller and his Melody Ann's of B.H.S. was enjoyed by all.
- May 2, 1961 An interesting movie on The Maharajas of India was enjoyed by the group.
- June 6, 1961 Mr. Perodie of the Soil Conservation Service gave an interesting talk and used slides to emphasize his points. The topic of his talk was "The Bible and Soil Conservation."

FROM THE MINUTES

Sept. 5, 1961 Maynard Hoover reported Livestock loose on the Highway. He was appointed to investigate what could be done about it. Entertainment chairman Garnett Turner introduced County agent Ken Peterson. He showed some slides and made a talk on Rockingham agriculture & industry.

Oct. 3, 1961 Chairman of the entertainment committee Garnett Turner presented Game Warden Ronald Wilfong, who showed a film, gave a short talk and answered questions of the club member concerning the game laws.

Nov. 7, 1961 A film on Hawaii the 50th state was enjoyed by all.

Dec. 5, 1961 L.J. Beyea of the Forest Service gave a talk on water conservation. A question and answer period followed.

Feb. 6, 1962 Garnett Turner presented Johnnie Johnson of Branch Cabell & Co., who gave an interesting talk on investments.

March 13, 1962 Garnett Turner presented Mr. Edwin Smith of Luray, who gave an interesting and entertaining performance of magic tricks.

Oct. 2, 1962 The program committee showed an interesting and timely film on quail hunting titled "Doubles and Singles."

March 5, 1963 Program committee chairman Garnett Turner presented the Churchmen Quartet, who gave a program of Gospel songs.

Aug. 6, 1963 Garnett Turner introduced Woodrow W. Turner, formerly an agricultural advisor in Pakistan. Mr. Turner gave an interesting talk describing the people and their religion, customs, and economy. He also showed slides illustrating life in Pakistan.

Oct. 1, 1963 Ken Peterson, Rockingham County agricultural agent, spoke on ways to utilize feed for livestock over the winter.

March 3, 1964 For entertainment the 7th grade class of the Fulks Run school gave us a comedy play.

Feb. 2, 1965 Garnett Turner, Program Chairman, introduced Albert Anderson, National Forest Supervisor. Mr. Anderson reported on Job Corps Camp proposed for this area. After his report club voted 27 to 2 in favor of appointing a committee to study more about the camps and check on community feelings toward the camp. Committee will report their findings to the club next meeting. Harrison Fulk, Garnett Turner, Charles Crider & William Bare were appointed.

March 2, 1965 Reports were given on community feelings toward Job Corps Camp. Bill Bare reported that most people he contacted were opposed, Charles Crider reported most contacted were in favor of Camp, Harrison Fulk reported more approved than opposed and Garnett Turner reported about 50/50. Harlan Mongold and Shirley Morris gave a negative report. Motion was made and seconded that club stand neutral on camp. The Melody Ann's from Broadway High School under the direction of Joseph W. Miller gave a program from the musical, South Pacific.

MEMORIES

By Gerald "Jim" Custer, Charter Member; President 1961, 1972

The first meeting was right up here at this church on the hill, Mt. Carmel E.U.B. It was an informal get together. Fred Betts was vice president of Ruritan National at that time, and he was from Harrisonburg. He conducted the meeting, which was set up to get organized. It was a social thing, it always started with a dinner and that brought people together, you know. I guess they figured that would be a calling card to get people in, they'd be interested in dinner. Just to say, well come over and we'll meet and talk over some things, people aren't going to go for that. They want a little something extra going on. It was a get-together thing, and we worked together, and just had a good time together. Did some good too, we did good things that helped people, that was one of the main things.



At the club's meeting on February 5, 2008, Jim Custer was recognized for 50 years of perfect attendance, Garnett Turner for 49, and Bob Mitchell for 46.

MEALS

Except for the Oct. 7, 1958 meeting, when the meal was served by the Ladies Auxiliary of the Broadway Fire Department, throughout 1958 the Ruritan Club suppers were served alternately by the Good Samaritan Sunday School Class and the Sunshine Class at Mt. Carmel E.U.B. Church. Other local church groups and the Ladies Auxiliary of the V.F.W. then began to contribute their services. An early tradition later lost was having those members who had missed meetings during the year prepare and serve the December meal.

FROM THE MINUTES

July 1, 1958 The July meeting of the Fulks Run Ruritan club was observed as Family Night; and was held in the form of a picnic on the croquet grounds at Garnett Turner's. The picnic supper and good fellowship was enjoyed by the Ruritans and their families.

April 7, 1959 Supper was served by the ladies of the Mt. Grove Brethren Church

December 1, 1959 Supper was by the losing attendance side of the club.

Feb. 7, 1961 A delicious meal was served by the Womens Mission Society.

Feb. 2, 1965 The meal was served by the Sunshine Class of Mt. Carmel Church. The club voted to give ladies extra 25 cents for oyster supper served this evening.

Oct. 5, 1971 Raise cost of meals from \$1.25 to \$1.50 starting January 1, 1972.

Dec. 4, 1973 A delicious ham and oyster supper was served by members of the club.

Club meetings continued to be held at Mt. Carmel Church for three and a half years until the October, 1961 meeting, which was held in the brand new Fulks Run Elementary School – a major triumph for the club.