

OLD GUARD CLUB

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THE OLD GUARD of Nutley, a group of retired men from every walk of life, meets each Friday morning at 10 o'clock in the Community House of Franklin Reformed Church on Church Street.

The local Chapter was organized 12 years ago, with 25 active members, and was incorporated in June, 1956. During the years since it has shown a steady growth, due to the growing need for an outlet for the interests and activities of those men who have retired from active business life. There now are 115 active members, and new ones are being received at frequent intervals; their ages range from 62 to 90 years.

It has been the goal of the directors and the entertainment committees through the years to see that the weekly meetings were a period of two hours in which the members could get together in an informal way, in a spirit of friendliness, and with a bit of entertainment, really enjoy themselves and forget for the time any troubles and problems they might have, realizing that each one had something in common with every other man there.

No discussions take place to disturb the peace and harmony of these meetings, for diplomacy and friendliness are the ruling factors at all times. Each man on his return home from any of the gatherings can say that the time was enjoyable and well spent.

One of the highlights of the meetings is the group singing, accompanied by a volunteer orchestra of seven members, all fine musicians. The men experience a real thrill as they "bear down" on the popular songs of yesteryear.

During the reports on activities, the scores of various card and other games are given, and there is a lot of good natured banter, especially if the scorekeeper's own score happens to be highest.

The report of the visiting committee always is listened to with interest. This committee does a fine job of calling on all members who are ill or incapacitated, and bringing them a word of cheer and encouragement. Get-well cards, signed by all the members, are sent to them and also cards on their birthdays.

A group of members goes twice a week to the homes of those who are unable to attend the meetings. The visitors play cards with the shut-ins. This they enjoy and appreciate.

The entertainment portion of the meetings, too, is looked forward to with pleasure. Often there are color films of other countries and peoples, or perhaps of our own U.S.A., or interesting talks about their earlier experiences, or their hobbies, by men like themselves. At other times there may be an

illustrated lecture by a key man in a well-known industry. For variation, there may be a fine musical program by outside talent.

A magazine exchange for the benefit and use of the members was introduced recently. A large selection of magazines, also books, is displayed at each meeting. The reading material may be taken home to read, then returned and exchanged for others; several may be taken at one time. This feature seems to be a popular one.

A long-felt need has been met by the purchase of a public address system for use in the meeting room. In a group of this kind, there always are those whose hearing is impaired because of advanced age. The system enables them to get greater enjoyment from, and to participate to a much greater extent in the meetings, and to enjoy more fully the entertainment programs.

Many activities throughout the year are planned by the entertainment committee. During the Summer there are trips to industrial plants. In each place the management usually arranges personally conducted tours through the plant, with each process of manufacture being thoroughly explained. There are also picnic outings by bus to Lake Hopatcong, Avon and Highland Lakes, where the Old Guard annually enjoys the hospitality of members or good friends.

Then there is the annual interchapter outing at Westfield, where as many as 400 men gather for a field day and picnic. Here the men compete in such games and sports as shuffleboard, quoits, softball and cards. After lunch, and before the sports are resumed, there usually is a song-fest.

During the Summer months shuffleboard is played in Yanticaw Park on Monday and Wednesday of each week; two courts are reserved for the Old Guard by the Park Commission, and these are usually well patronized.

Recently the Parks Department offered the Old Guard the use of the facilities of the Recreation Department in the municipal garage. The club promptly accepted the offer, and the men gather there each Monday and Wednesday afternoon, but they are also welcome to go any other afternoon except Saturday.

The Department of Parks has laid out three shuffleboard courts. Tables for playing cards, checkers and other games have been made available. Basketball may also be played. The men are free to use any of the reducing equipment that is there, should they feel the need of it.

The members agree that this is an ideal layout, and they greatly appreciate its being made available to them. Each week more and more men are turning out to take advantage of and enjoy these facilities.

There are three special events held each year, which are looked forward to with pleasure by the members of the Old Guard.

First, there is "Ladies Day," which is held in April. Special entertainment is provided and a buffet luncheon is enjoyed.

Then, in October, there is the anniversary dinner. This provides the members an opportunity to become better acquainted with men from other chapters who are guests.

Finally, in December, the annual Christmas party is held. There always is a large attendance. There is an exchange of gifts, and a program of special music is provided.

The Old Guard does not solicit members, but visitors are always welcome; if they would be eligible for membership and are interested, they are furnished with complete information concerning the organization.

For a number of years, two of the members have assisted the Red Cross by delivering blood to the various hospitals in the surrounding area each week. This is an important service, of which the general public is not aware.

Recently the director has inaugurated the issuance of a monthly news bulletin, to keep all members informed of important events and happenings in the Old Guard organization.