

Woodmen Valley Sertoma-The Early Years

The Founding

At a festive banquet on 3 May 1975, Frank Ulrich, Governor of the South Colorado Sertoma District, presented the official Charter, dated 25 April, to the founding members of the Woodmen Valley Sertoma Club. Bob White, the club's first President and "Founding Father," accepted the Charter on behalf of the forty new members who had been recruited for the startup chapter. A large group of Sertomans from the Monument Hill and Pikes Peak Sertoma Clubs attended, they having organized the new club and recruited its charter members.

The Monument Hill Sertomans had focused their club building efforts in the developing part of town between Garden Of The Gods Blvd and the Air Force Academy, bounded on the east by Academy Blvd. This included the earliest neighborhoods in Rockrimmon, sparsely populated Woodmen Valley and the recently built tracts either side of East Woodmen Road. In the mid-1970s, many residents in this area were either active-duty military or recently retired from service. Hence, it is not surprising that a goodly number, though not all, of Woodmen Valley's first members came from military backgrounds.

Listed below are the Charter Members of Woodmen Valley Sertoma Club.

Charter Membership	
William E. Arnold	Earl J. Maisonneuve
John W. Bennett ✓	Thomas J. McNamara
Jack O. Benson	Lawrence C. Means
Sherman P. Black	Donald B. Millar
Richard W. Boyle	John C. North
Leonard M. Breen	Julius E. Nugent
Oliver G. Cellini	Edward B. Opperman
Herbert J. Childress	Richard R. Palmer
George Christopher	Lynn L. Plaggemeier
Ronald E. Costin	Jack R. Plank
Harold E. Drake ✓	Joseph F. Sevier
William B. Dudley	John Sherman
Richard Elliott	Theodore F. Simon
Robert J. Garrigan	John G. Siran
William H. George	Roger Stevenson
Robert L. Harriger	Dale S. Sweat
Frederick L. Ingham	Al B. Villines
Morrell S. Johnson	Dale H. Whigham
Elbert E. Lederman	Robert W. White
William J. Mahon	C. George Whitley

Service To Community

Under Bob White's strong leadership in the first year and that of his successors, Woodmen Valley rapidly established a record of service to the community consistent with the highest ideals of Sertoma. As documented in club newsletters and an article in the Northern Light Newspaper in October 1984, "The main thrust of the Club is to contribute time and effort, NOT money." Some of these early service programs and projects were:

- “A Colorado Experience.” As its first service project in the summer of 1975, the club organized a two-week summer program for young teens to visit local Colorado attractions, camp out, attend a County Fair, horseback ride, sail, shoot at a rifle range and visit the Air Force Academy.
- “Paint And Hammer Gang.” Reaching out to various education and social agencies in the early years, club volunteers completed scores of construction, repair, cleanup, painting and other hands-on projects:
 - Built several shelters at District 20 school bus stops in the Black Forest.
 - Planted trees in the median of recently expanded Academy Blvd.
 - Fabricated and installed screens at La Casa Contena, a home for children.
 - Repaired and painted homes and installed safety railings and ramps for many senior clients of Silver Key.
 - Constructed and restored facilities at several Martin Luther Homes, including finish work on their new Respite Center.
 - Cleaned up and refurbished cabins and built extensive wheelchair ramps at the Muscular Dystrophy Camp.
 - Installed technical equipment and repaired facilities at the Colorado School For the Deaf and Blind.
 - Designed and built porch roofing, decks and ramps at the ranch of Acts 19-11, an organization providing therapeutic and rehabilitation services using horses. This extensive project was done over two summers in 1987 and 1988.
- Beginning in 1983, and for 13 years thereafter, our members worked the pledge telephones at the annual Easter Seals telethon. This not only helped Easter Seals raise money for its charities but promoted our club on live television.
- In 1987, several members ran a weekly closed circuit television bingo for patients in Penrose Hospital.

Sponsorship Program

Woodmen Valley’s first priority in the early years was hands-on service, but it was not long before they also developed a Sponsorship Program for making philanthropic grants to worthy nonprofit programs and charities. Consistent with sponsorship goals and priorities of national Sertoma, the club dispersed funds in three broad categories: 1)

Speech and Hearing, 2) Youth, and 3) Service To Mankind. Here is partial list of grant recipients during this period:

- The Sertoma Foundation, an operating arm of the national organization, to support a number of hearing and speech initiatives, including educational programs and clinics.
- The Colorado School For Deaf and Blind to purchase and install hearing and speech laboratory equipment
- The Rehabilitation Technology Program, Eleanor Capron Rehabilitation Center at the Penrose Hospital, a facility for those with hearing and speech defects. Grants from 1984 through 1989 totaled \$25,000 for sophisticated assistive and rehabilitation gear. During this period, our club established the Capron Center as an Affiliate of the Sertoma Foundation, enabling the Center to benefit from matching grants and to procure hearing and speech-related equipment and educational materials at significant discount. This special relationship with Capron, including several of its staff joining our club, would continue well into the early 2000s.
- Rehabilitation Services Division of Goodwill Industries.
- Silver Key Senior Services for equipment and services, including their Christmas Unlimited Program. The club has financially supported Silver Key for forty years, donating tens of thousands of dollars over that period. This close relationship began during the club's formation when Mickey Kraushaeur, the Founder and Executive Director of Silver Key, was the first guest speaker at our final organizing meeting, a week before the Charter Banquet.
- The Pikes Peak Council of Camp Fire Girls.
- The Pikes Peak Council Of Boy Scouts Of America.
- Muscular Dystrophy Association to build several wheelchair ramps.

Fund Raising

To fund its service projects and philanthropic giving, the club raised money through a number of initiatives in the early years. Whenever practical, these moneymakers were designed to put the entire membership to work:

- Christmas Tree Sales. From 1975 and to 1985, Woodmen Valley sold Christmas trees in north Colorado Springs, sometimes at two lots. In the early years, this project was the club's most lucrative source of funds, averaging a profit of \$3000 each holiday season. With tree cutting permits from the Forest Service, our hearty crews drove deep into the Rockies to select and harvest trees. This often required

multiple trips with pickup trucks and trailers during less than ideal winter weather. After delivering the trees to the sales lot at the southeast corner of Academy Blvd and Woodmen Road, club members would rotate shifts twenty-four hours a day for up to two weeks. A small travel trailer served as office, warming area and bedroom for the crew. During those years when the club operated two lots, the second was at the northwest corner of Rockrimmon Blvd and Delmonico Drive.

- **Flea Market.** For a number of years in the late 1970s and early 80s, the club sold used and refurbished items at the local weekend Flea Market. Members solicited items from friends, neighbors and other donors, often having to repair them for sale. Although this operation did not rival Christmas Tree sales for profitability, club scrapbook photos show that the Sertoma booth moved a lot of merchandise while exposing the club and its mission to the public.
- **Dog Show Concession.** During several summers in the 1980s, our members operated a food concession at a popular annual dog show in north Colorado Springs.
- **Bingo.** Starting in May 1982 and for several years thereafter, our club provided crews for weekly bingo games run by the Multiple Sclerosis Association. Although the club did not manage the operation, it earned money for man hours worked. Several of our volunteers gained expertise that would enable Woodmen Valley to run its own profitable bingo operation in future years.

Traditions Of Fun and Fellowship

During the early years, our leaders started a number of social events to get the members and their families together for fun and fellowship. Some of these events have become traditions over our 40-year history and are now perennial entries on the club calendar.

- **Christmas Party.** During the holiday season, the club sponsors a dinner Christmas Party and gift exchange with a dubious Santa directing festivities.
- **Founders' Day Dinner.** In late April, we mark the club's birthday, honor the memory of its charter members, remember Sertomans who have passed on and celebrate the good works accomplished over the years. In addition to a guest speaker, we invite the Pikes Peak District Governor to install our newly elected Officers and Board Directors.
- **Summer Picnic.** In late summer, we have always hosted an old-fashioned outdoor cookout where a good time is had by all.
- **Air Force Football Tailgates.**
- **Night At The Dog Track.**