

The Florida YMCA Retiree's Connection

Sandpaper

April 2024 Volume 86 Issue 2

ymca
ALUMNI
connect ▼ travel ▼ serve

The mission of the YMCA Alumni is to enable members to promote a nurturing worldwide Christian fellowship that provides educational, social and charitable opportunities.

C. B. Willis Chapter Officers

Co-Presidents

Arlinda Quinones

beachchannel79@yahoo.com

Mike Santos

cadillacmike68@yahoo.com

Treasurer

Don Macher

donmacher@gmail.com

Secretary

Dorothy Markell

dmarkell174@gmail.com

Past President

Bob Martin

laumartin5@yahoo.com

The Florida Sandpaper is the newsletter of the C. B. Willis Chapter of YMCA Alumni and is published six times a year.

Sandpaper Editor

Phil Wortman

wortmanii@aol.com

Annual Planning Meeting Set for April 23rd in Lakeland

Date: Tuesday, April 23, 2024

Time: 1:00-4:30 PM

**Place: St. Stephen's Episcopal Church,
1820 CR 540A,
Lakeland, FL 33813**

Ah yes, a planning meeting ... that doesn't sound like a lot of fun – but it is! It is one of the best meetings we have. It's where we share ideas and talk about things we would like to do ... it is really connecting the organization to the membership. It is the interchange of ideas that makes it so enjoyable

It is open to everyone, and we'd love to have you and a whole bunch of others join in with us to help plan our organization's future activities.

There are so many neat places in Florida to see, out-of-the-way places you've heard of but just haven't gone to. Let's schedule a chapter event there.

The "Florida Sandpaper" is our primary mode of regular communication with our membership, and we also try to share it with those who haven't yet joined – our mission is to enable you and other Y alumni living in Florida to be connected in a state wide fellowship. We would appreciate any comments that would make it better and more meaningful to you. We hope you've enjoyed it.

If you can't be there in person, how about sharing some of your thoughts and wishes by emailing them to Arlinda and Mike at yalumni.willis.pres@gmail.com. Let us know what your interests are.

**If you are planning to attend
please RSVP via email to
Phil Wortman at wortmanii@aol.com**

2024

Membership and Financial Data

C. B. Willis Chapter

- 46 - 2024 Reg. Members
- 53 - 2023 Reg. Members
- 33 Renewals
- \$29.25 Avg/Mem/Donation
- 13 Non-Renewals
- 72% Renewal Rate
- \$2,183 Operating Acc.
- \$967 Bus. Savings Acc.
- \$8,000 Bus. Savings CDs

National YMCA Alumni

- 898 - 2024 Reg. Members
- 972 - 2023 Reg. Members
- 818 Renewals
- 84% Renewal Rate

Summary:

The number of YMCA Alumni Registered Members for 2024 for both the National YMCA Alumni and C. B. Willis Chapter have not reached the 2023 Level. However, additional membership growth from acquiring new memberships over the next 8 months is projected to reach or exceed prior year numbers.

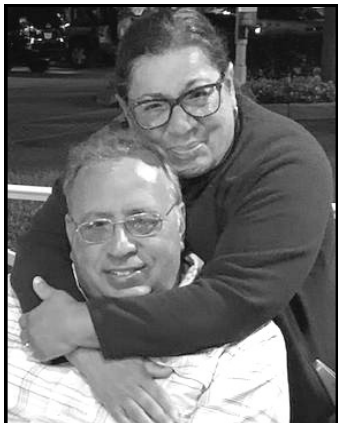
The Willis Chapter is very strong financially and is utilizing its resources to share the "Sandpaper" with the Y retirees living in our service area and enable them to become connected with their past Y friends and colleagues.

C. B. Willis Chapter: Connect-Travel-Serve

Messages and Reports

Co-President's Message:

Arlinda Quinones/Mike Santos



Hi fellow Willis Chapter members. Since last, we connected for a "Just for Lunch" held at Applebee's in Sarasota thanks to Dorothy Markell and Pat Frazier hosting the event. We'd love to see you at the upcoming chapter planning meeting that will be held in Lakeland on April 23.

What's happening! The 2024 World Service Campaign has kicked off. Suzanne McCormick, President and CEO of Y-

USA contributed to the discourse by discussing how the Y in the U.S. may advance the 4 Pillars of Vision 2030.

This was presented at the YMCA National General Secretaries Meeting in Kosovo earlier this month. Everyone is being encouraged to participate.

Don Macher has agreed to lead the chapter as Treasurer, and we will get him up to speed. In May we are attending a two day new president's leadership workshop in St Louis, where we will meet other chapter presidents and regional VPs. We hope to learn how to better serve the Willis chapter over the next two years.

An Easter message:

As we look and experience life events, this happens to be a month that is both celebrated and reflected upon in our family traditions by honoring our religious beliefs.

We have experienced Easter as a time to gather with family and friends not simply because of Easter egg hunt which delight all children' present rather the symbolism of believe in something greater than us and a sense of redemption that follows. We imagine the feelings are so very different culturally among us yet magical none the less. Our inner youth become excited at the prospect in cheering children on in their quest to champion the day as they collect colorful prizes. Yet, as we grow older our reflections become less about materialistic admiration/adulation rather more meaningful with the people we are surrounded by like our neighbors and helping them get through life struggles reminded that it's less about us and more about our acts of kindness.

Whatever your celebratory occasion may be in this time, let us always do the right thing for one another. Dr. King said in his 1964 commencement address at Springfield College, "The time is always right to do right," let us do right by our neighbors.

Editor's Note: The YMCA World Service Campaign advances YMCA Vision 2030, a shared global strategy to build a better world through four key areas: community well-being, meaningful work, a sustainable planet and a just world. At the at the 20th World Council in Aarhus, Denmark, the global YMCA Movement made history by adopting YMCA Vision 2030. As the first-ever YMCA collective global strategy, Vision 2030 provides the path toward internal YMCA transformation, community empowerment and global advocacy.

What is that membership benefit called BenefitHub?

BenefitHub is the global market leader in delivering the kinds of everyday discounts and benefits that **YMCA retirees really want**. And because they've been doing this for over two decades – for many of the world's largest and most demanding consumer groups – it's something they're pretty good at.

BenefitHub was founded in 1999 with the simple idea of giving people in small organizations and businesses the same perks enjoyed by large organizations and businesses of the Fortune 500. To accomplish this, they signed up 100,000 members from hundreds of small organizations and businesses and then began negotiating discounts on their behalf. Over time, they added voluntary benefits and rewards, cash back, a browser extension, gift cards and more.

By the time they reached one million members, BenefitHub was bigger than every employer except Walmart, who soon became their client. They also had more deals and deeper discounts than any Fortune 500 company.

As a **YMCA Alumni member** you get access to the world's largest selection of global, national brands and local deals across 15 countries with BenefitHub's Discount Marketplace.

They have over 300,000 vendors, covering national discounts, local deals, hotel & travel deals, insurers, and other benefit providers and many more.

You can enhance your benefits with the market's widest range of voluntary benefits including auto, home, pet insurance, ID protection, legal plans and more.

Today, BenefitHub has 10,000 clients in 15 countries, and 23% of the Fortune 500 have recognized that even they are better off by outsourcing all their non-core benefits to BenefitHub.

Check out the BenefitHub web site and look at all the money saving items. Your **YMCA Alumni membership** gives you full BenefitHub membership privileges. You might be surprised how this special YMCA Alumni membership benefit can save you bunches of money. Click on, sign up, and sign in to enjoy all the discounts you'll see.

Columns

Amen

Amen. That little word has entered into more languages than any other single word in a human speech. How it came to be is a fascinating story.

It is said that in Alexandria, Egypt, around 250 B.C.E., King Ptolmey desired a translation of the Hebrew Bible. He sent 70 or 72 scholars, chosen from the Jewish community, to work on the translation. They reached the word "Amen," first cousin of *Emet* (truth). "Amen" meant "so be it" or "May this prayer come true."

There was no single Greek word expressing this thought, so they turned it into a Greek word – "Amen." When the Bible was translated into Latin, "Amen" became a Latin word. And so it went.

Author Unknown

Prayer

Lord, what a change within us when one hour spent in thy presence will prevail to make!

What heavy burdens from our bosoms take, what parched grounds refresh as with a shower!

We kneel, and all around us seems to lower; we rise, and all, the distance and the near, stands forth in sunny outline brave and clear; We kneel, how weak! We rise, how full of power!

Why, therefore, should we do ourselves this wrong, or others, that we are not always strong, that we are ever overborne with care, that we should ever weak or heartless be, anxious or troubled, when with us is prayer, and joy and strength and courage are with thee!

EDITOR'S NOTE:

It is very important to maintain this column expressing the core Christian values of our organization's Mission Statement, and of the YMCA's founding purpose.

If you would like to assist in providing a message for this column, please contact me ... let's keep the "C" in YMCA Alumni. I really need your help!

Who Is Doing What?

Dorothy Markell—Correspondent

Peggye and Harold Mezile are going to be busy this year with two big trips planned. They will



cruise to Alaska with some friends (always a fun trip!) and also a trip to South Africa with a group of 32 others. Harold is still co-chair of fund raising for the Y alumni National Service project. They are now raising funds for appliances and

furniture for the four homes built on the Sioux (Council of Seven Fires) reservation. They are both very active in their church with Peggye chairing the Worship Team and Harold on the team searching for a Minister of Music.

The **Lievings** have been very busy since getting home from Christmas in Texas....busy going to Doctors, unfortunately! Hope is on the horizon, however, and after several heart procedures, **Carole** is doing well. **Larry** says they plan to stay home for a while, especially since they have continuous company coming!

Bill and Marcy Ryan write ... Well we did IT!!!! We're in an assisted living facility. Very nice and new. BUT EXPENSIVE. Our new address is 1322 N Main St. North Port FL 34286. Thankfully we took out long term care policies when we retired. That is our big news. Sold the RV and have very little other news. Love to all and come see us if you can. Marcy is in good shape, but I have ?, not what I used to be, but still kicking. Marcy will turn 90 in June, however she still acts YOUNG and of course she is so BEAUTIFILL to me.

Joan Jacoby ... it was good to hear from her! Good, too, to hear that she is (mostly) doing well. She enjoys volunteering at Penney Farms Retirement community (north of Gainesville and south of Jacksonville). She rides her trike often and enjoys the social hour with friends. All four of her children came to visit and they rented a big house in Palm Coast. Lots of sunrises and fun. They are involved with several volunteer activities including YMCA World Service Campaign.

A friend from a couple of years ago has resurfaced. **Tonia DeGroote** has sold her home in Vero and moved into a three bedroom apartment. She bemoans having to get rid of so much "stuff" but she loves the new place which is 7745 Indian Oaks Drive, Apt H211, Vero Beach. FL 32966.

That's about it for this issue ...till next time ...

Wellness: 25% More

Phil Wortman—Roberts-Gulick Award

This data is old. It goes back to when T. K. Cureton and Arthur H Steinhaus were the fitness/wellness gurus of the



YMCA. Kenneth Cooper hadn't come upon the scene. The "Y's Way to Fitness" wasn't even a thought, much less a nationwide program thrust.

While the information may be dated, the fundamental truths are still relevant. Let me get technical as a point of information.

Strength is the pulling force that a muscle exerts during a contraction. Muscle strength is proportional to its effective cross section, and according to Steinhaus it is approximately 140 pounds per square inch for males and 105 for females.

Biologically mature males have the propensity to be 25% stronger than a mature female. Female strength increases to puberty—then begins to level off, whereas males don't reach their peak until they are in their 20s.

Strength plays an important role in speed, agility, power movements, quickness, etc. All athletic performance factors.

Normally we do not function at a physiologic maximum, rather we operate at a psychological limit. That limit can be extended in excitement, depression, intensity of the moment, etc. It can detach a muscle at the point of bone attachment, or even break bones.

Training can modify the psychological limit and produce physiological changes to sustain the limit increases. This is the foundation of training for athletic events—to increase the physiologic strength capacity to enable an increase in the psychological limit.

But, regardless of the training, a female still has a significant strength potential deficit when compared to a male. That's just a fact.

International Service Corps

Bob Martin—National ISC Chairman

Greetings from your YMCA International Service Corps. We wanted to keep you updated on what was going on with the International Service Corps. Our first update is on our experiences in Albania. Coming up soon we have an exciting opportunity in Tijuana, Mexico. There will be news next month telling you how members of your Chapter can be involved

International Service Corps Report

Thanks to the YMCA Alumni's International Service Corps we are making a difference around the world. At the YMCA of Tirana, in Albania they have a strong Director in Eglatina Lula. Jonathan Vance, a YMCA Alumni volunteer, has recently visited the YMCA in Albania. This was one of our most recent overseas experiences. We asked how the International Service Corps could best help the Y in Albania.

Jonathan, a member of the YMCA Alumni's Weatherford Chapter, went to work and has arranged for Eglatina's son, Seldi Bajo to attend Camp Sea Gull during the July 14 - August 9 session. He is officially registered and was granted a camp scholarship which covers all his fees.

They are working on a plan to have Egla spend time at Camp Sea Farer (the sister camp of Camp Sea Gull). She would also see other Y branches in operation that are part of the YMCA of the Triangle. They also have a very popular Family Camp in August that would be beneficial to the learning process for Egla and Seldi to attend. The dates of the Family Camp are August 11 - 16.

This entire USA experience is exactly the kind of training that would boost Egla's ability to serve the children and families in Albania.

Jonathan was able to travel to Albania supported by the funds raises by the International Service Corps. We now have an opportunity to make a bigger impact by joining others and helping bring Eglatina to the USA, She will return to Albania rejuvenated and better equipped to

NSP Tiny Homes

The tiny homes are built to high standards using structural insulated panels (SIPS) for the walls to assure comfortable living for the harsh climate of the Great Plains. These factory-engineered panels help simplify construction while providing significant energy savings for heating and cooling.

Each home features passive house windows and ventilation, air tightness, thermal insulation and reduced thermal bridging. An outdoor deck complements the family living space.

Floor plans were developed by Siris Coombs Architecture and approved by the YMCA Board, with updates incorporated as construction progresses.

Four homes are clustered in a small village around a central courtyard. The site plan, in the shape of a medicine wheel, speaks to the traditional tipi camp layout, The homes will be ADA accessible and will provide opportunities for intergenerational living, which is common in Lakota culture.

NSP Building Schedule Registration is underway for 2024 waves; wave #4 in September is full!

Registration is underway for the 2024 dates to help build four tiny homes and two "twigs" (small program centers) on the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe Reservation in Dupree, S.D.. One of the "waves" is already full, but volunteers are needed for these weeks:

- Wave 1 May 7-14
- Wave 2 May 14-21
- Wave 3 September 10-17
- Wave 4 full
- Wave 5 September 2-October 1

Now in its third year, this YMCA Alumni National Service Project is a partnership with the YMCA of the Seven Council Fires to help meet their mission to provide transitional housing for residents of the tribe's reservation.

No construction experience is required to spend a memorable week and make a transformative impact. All service experiences include a mix of work, free time, sight-seeing, and opportunities to interact with residents and learn about their culture. Click on wawokiye.org to learn more. Click on the Project tab for an overview of the program, the daily schedule, fees for lodging options, meals, cultural activities, tours and airport shuttles from Rapid City, SD. Volunteers are asked to cover these fees and their travel.



Membership

The below is a listing of C. B. Willis Chapter YMCA Alumni Association Registered Members as of March 2024. The listing includes registered members who have not renewed for the 2024-2025 fiscal year. Those individuals will need to complete their registered membership renewal to remain on the active list.

Last Name First Name

Bailey	Barbara	Quinones	Arlinda
Connor	Barbara	Santos	Michael
Freeman	Millard	Rodriguez	Martha
Freeman	Frankie	Rodriguez	Eduardo
Gomori	Dorothy	Williams	James
Jacoby	Joan	Williams	Sudie
Myers	John	Wortman	Phil
Myers	Mary	Wortman	Judith
Williams	Robert	Adams	Richard E
Williams	Buni	Barrett	Beth
Borton	John	Berger	Roderick
Borton	Patricia	Butz	Judy
Cooper	Fred	Dooley	H. Eugene
Cooper	Linda	Dreixler	Karin
Dickie	Gene	Ellis	Ed
Dickie	Mae	Ferguson	Janet
Dunn	Janet	Frazier	Patricia
Dunn	Rick	Fredricksen	Donna
Ferguson	Cindy	Jacobs	Betsy
Bowdoin	Donna	Johnson	Maryalicia
Gaites	Alice	Kelly	Nancy C.
Hurles	Diane	Miranian	Susan
Hurles	Tim	Murphy	Dorothy
Ickes	Daniel	Salvatore	Priscilla
Ickes	Wanda	Smith	Janis
Kiziu	Peter	Sterling	Janis
Kiziu	Nancy	Tyler	Natalie
Leichtfuss	Robert		
Leichtfuss	Joan		
Lieving	Larry		
Lieving	Carole		
Macher	Donald		
Jabonite	Reile		
Markell	Dorothy		
Mercier	John		
Martin	Robert		
Martin	Donna		
Mezile	Harold		
Mezile	Peggye		
Mierzykowski	Ken		
Mierzykowski	Ann		
Murphy	Jim		
Pollock	Richard W.		
Pollock	Mary Jo		

This listing is maintained by the National YMCA Alumni Assn. **Any additions, deletions or other corrections** may be addressed to: Dave Patterson, National YMCA Alumni Membership Director at dpatterson9622@yahoo.com.

See the name of an old friend and colleague you'd like to get in touch with?

Contact information for C. B. Willis Chapter members may be obtained by emailing: Phil Wortman, C. B. Willis Chapter Membership wortmanii@aol.com



If you haven't renewed, please do it right away! In order for us to continue to strive to build a network connecting Y retirees across Florida and throughout the nation we need your support. Even if you aren't a participant in chapter or national activities, your support is instrumental in achieving the mission of promoting world wide Christian fellowship of those who chose the Y as their career. Just click on the web site to renew.

ymcaalumni.org

Editorials and Events

Catholic Membership in the YMCA – a Personal Story*

Phil Wortman: It was the summer of 1961 and I was the brand new Assistant Physical Director at the New Orleans YMCA. I had been very involved with the Savannah Y as a teen, and worked part time at the Athens Y while in college. At both Y's (and most others in the deep South) a Bible passage and/or prayer usually began each youth activity. That was not the practice at the New Orleans Y. As the "new guy," I didn't ask any questions and followed the established activity procedure.

As I taught the summer gym and swim activities I began to develop a leaders' club. Towards the end of the summer I decided it was time to formalize the leaders' club and elect officers. Fifteen teens attended the first meeting and a president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer and chaplain were elected.

Several days later a second meeting was held, but only three leaders showed up. What had happened? "Where are the other leaders?," I asked. One of the boys explained, "Mr. Phil, you had us elect a chaplain and they are Catholic. Their parents won't let them come to the Y if there is a chaplain." Stunned, but realizing the situation I said, "You know, five officers are too many to have for our small club, let's just have a president, secretary and treasurer ... would that be okay?" "Yes," was the reply and all the leaders returned for the next meeting. Now I understood why there wasn't a prayer before gym and swim activities.

That was the first of many things done to accommodate the Catholic Church requirements to enable youth to fully participate in the Y programs. When our competitive youth teams would travel and it was a Holy Day of Obligation we would plan ahead to be able to stop along the way for the Catholics to attend Mass. If the competition was on a Sunday, we would get dispensation for the Catholics who were unable to attend Mass. On Sunday during Blue Ridge Leaders' School we would use a school bus and take the Catholics into Black Mountain to attend Mass. Also, Catholics were exempt from attending vespers at BRLS, however most attended though some sat inside Lee Hall instead of out on the porch steps.

If there was a problem regarding youth participation we would ask the parent to talk with the priest at St. Patrick's Catholic Church which was right up the street from the Y. He was always very supportive and would insure the parent that being involved at the Y was okay.

In 1963 I became the New Orleans YMCA Physical Director. In 1968 the cooperative understanding was reached between the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the National Council of YMCAs permitting Catholics to become fully involved in the YMCA. As a Y staff member I was very aware of what was occurring ... the discussions were affecting my programs in a positive way. Our youth programs grew considerably during the time that the agreement was being negotiated.

Things slowly began to change. Traveling with a youth team became less complicated ... no parent's meetings were required to deal with the membership issue. While it was still important to try to accommodate the needs of the Catholic participants, most of the issues simply disappeared.

It was a historical moment in time for the Y and Catholic Church ... I'm glad I was there to live and share in it.

**Editor's Note: Please refer to the "History" column on the cover page for the story of the Catholic Church's approval of YMCA membership.*

Your Personal Y Story

Paul Harvey used to have a short radio vignette called "The Rest of the Story" that looked at events from a personal inside perspective.

How about you? You've had things happen during your Y career that made a difference in your life or the lives of others ... that were turning points, maybe insignificant points of interest, or maybe they became life and career changing incidents. We lived history!

But what was the "the rest of the story" behind the scene of those events? That would be so interesting to know! It's those vignettes that help us connect as old and new Y retirees. Telling those "rest of the story" chronicles helps us know each other in a personal way and helps in understanding the personal side of our careers and why we chose the Y as our career.

Whether you've been retired for many years, or have just retired over the past several years, I'm sure you have some great stories to tell. Please share one of them with us. Let us get to know you better.

Please limit your story to about 400-450 words and email it to me, Phil Wortman at wortmanii@aol.com. We really want to hear from you!

Remembering

Dorothy Markell

I remember the year 2003 when Willis Chapter hosted the first reunion cruise. We were so afraid not many would join us. OMG - We had over 500 on that trip and it was the best. We were on the dance floor when the band (unknowingly) played YMCA and the place exploded in joy and singing (very loud).

But I also remember all the good friends lost since then. Mostly we've lost our Y "Men" who got us into Willis to begin with. Men who are now memories. We are a chapter of widows who also remember: **Bob Shepherd** leaving **Carol**; **Walt Jacoby**, leaving **Joan**; **Carl Gaites** leaving **Alice**; **Frank Mark**, leaving **Jan**; **Doug McLeod** leaving **Carol**, **Bob Ferguson** leaving **Janet**; **Joe De-Groote** leaving **Tonia**; and **Bill Markell**. Those are some of the most recent.

As a Willis member for 32 years I remember others. I am grateful to them and so many others who are gone, for the fun meetings, the shared hugs, the feeling of family - a family because we all shared common ideals and memories.

I love you all.



REUNION AT SEA

YMCA Alumni Reunion

January 26—February 2,
2025

A 7-night cruise into the Western Caribbean

The time is now to be sure you
are registered for **YMCA
Alumni's, Reunion at Sea**,
embarking from and returning to
the stunning new
Royal Caribbean Cruise Terminal
in Galveston, Texas.

Our ship is the fantastic Royal
Caribbean Harmony of the Seas.

Reunite with friends and col-
leagues with speakers, parties
and fun shipboard.

Visit three exciting ports of call in
the gorgeous waters of the
Western Caribbean.

Register now to get great prices
and, rest assured, that if you must
cancel, you can do so until
October 14, 2024.

**Your hosts: West Region
YMCA Alumni Chapters
and the
YMCA Alumni Travel Club.**

ISC Mexico Opportunity

Bob Martin, National Chair ISC

Here is an opportunity for you to have a first hand look at the
border crisis facing our nation.

A visit to Tijuana is being planned now. The visit will be Octo-
ber 21-26, 2024. The duration was chosen by the YMCA of Mex-
ico and the YMCA of San Diego.

This is the ideal amount of time for a group visit and for them
to adequately share their story. This could be a life changing ex-
perience as you help teenagers separated from their families and
sent back into Mexico where the Y shelters them until they get
proper documentation to rejoin their families in the USA.

We will be joined by **Todd Tibetts** the CEO of the San Diego
YMCA and **Oscar Valescow** the President of the YMCA of Mex-
ico.

We have space for 8 to 10 volunteers to go on this adventure.

Let me know if you have any questions or if you are inter-
ested. You can email me for more information at **amar-
tin5@yahoo.com**

Day by Day on the Harmony of the Seas

Day 1: Embark from **Galveston, Texas**, Royal Caribbean's
brand new cruise terminal.

Days 2-3: At sea with all the ship activities and amenities and
YMCA Alumni special events.

Day 4: Port day in **Roatan, Honduras**. This beautiful island is
home to one of the best diving and snorkeling locations in the world
and has a rich cultural heritage that you can explore.

Day 5: Port day in **Costa Maya, Mexico**. Make new friends at
the Dolphin encounter located right in the port area. Mahahual
Beach has a local feel and offers plenty of food and beverage op-
tions as well as local shopping. And much more to do in the Costa
Maya region.

Day 6: Port day in **Cozumel, Mexico**. The heart of the island is
downtown San Miguel, or "Centro" -- and it's a very safe and easy
town to explore on foot, with a large, central plaza park, sur-
rounded by endless restaurants, cafes, bakeries, boutiques, art
galleries, markets, and great shopping.

Day 7: At sea, with YMCA Alumni events and many shipboard
activities.

Day 8: Disembark in Galveston for your memory-filled trip
home. Safe travels to all!



IMPORTANT NOTICE: If you are **not receiving chapter email alerts** and information about ZOOM meetings, we do not have your current or correct email address. Please email it to Phil Wortman at wortmanii@aol.com so you won't be left out.

Your YMCA Alumni Association

History



Roman Catholics Membership in the YMCA

New Orleans YMCA History—J. Calvin Williams, General Secretary

Editor's Note: When you are older and write about history, you may have actually been there and part of the historical happening. So it was with allowing Roman Catholic communicants to become members of the YMCA. The time was the 1960's and I was the New Orleans YMCA Physical Director during this time period.

The Catholic/YMCA membership problem stemmed from the 1920 statement from the Catholic Church Holy Office singling out YMCA involvement as being detrimental to the Catholic faith. During that time period the YMCA membership issue primarily surfaced in areas of a highly concentrated Catholic population such as New Orleans.

There hadn't been an official statement by the New Orleans Archdiocese regarding the 1920 Holy Office statement and some of the parish priests were more lenient than others in granting permission for YMCA involvement. We were fortunate that a large numbers of Catholics did join the Y and when there were difficulties, especially with youth participation, we were able to satisfactorily work around them.

Early in 1960 Pope John XXIII convened the Vatican Council which led to more liberal Church policies and Catholic bodies began to involve themselves in non-official communication with YMCA leaders.

In the Spring of 1966, the New Orleans YMCA General Secretary, Calvin Williams, received a phone call from Philip Hannan, Archbishop of the Archdiocese of New Orleans asking if Williams would meet with him to discuss YMCA programs and participation. On May 16, 1966, Williams and several YMCA board members visited the Archbishop in his office.

At Hannan's request he was provided copies of the charters, by-laws and other official documents of both the New Orleans YMCA and National Council of YMCAs. On June 25, 1966, Hannan invited Williams to his home, and together they worked out a statement of policy encompassing the New Orleans YMCA and the Archdiocese of New Orleans.

It so happened that in 1967, Williams was invited to make a presentation to the National Council of YMCAs describing the relationship between the New Orleans YMCA and the Archdiocese; and, Hannan was selected by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops to chair an ad-hoc committee to study the relationships between the Catholic Church and the YMCA-YWCA, working to resolve any issues that may confront an amicable resolution of any differences between the YMCA and Catholic Church.

It was in April 1968 that an exchange of letters between James Bunting, General Secretary of the National Council of YMCAs, and Archbishop Hannan stating the acceptance of the mutually cooperative understanding by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the National Council of YMCAs fully approving Catholic communicant's membership in the YMCA.