

PEOPLE OF ACTION

Charlie James

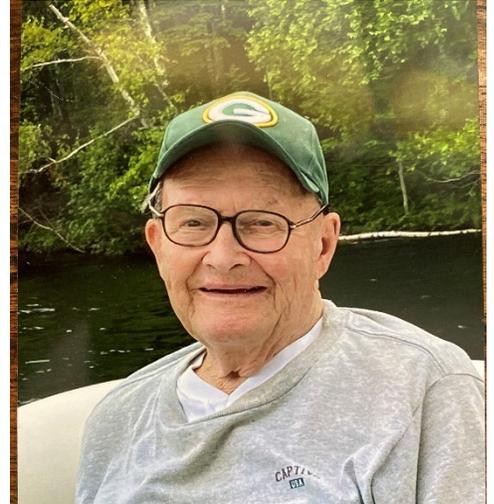
Chairman Emeritus, Fitzgerald Clayton James & Kasten, Inc.
(Member since January 7, 1958)

Charlie James has been a Rotary Club of Milwaukee member for 63 of the club's 108-year history. Being an active member for six decades is impressive, yet not surprising for a man who has spent his life deeply devoted to things that matter most to him.

For Charlie, who turns 90 on September 20, 2021, that includes family, career, community and animals.

Especially near and dear to his heart is the Boys & Girls Club of Greater Milwaukee, which he has served for 60 years. Along with dedicating his time and financial support to the club, he has served as trustee, president, director of Camp Whitcomb-Mason and President's Society co-chair.

"My mother was involved in the Boys & Girls Club, so I followed in her footsteps. I have loved working with the Boys & Girls Club and doing things for less-fortunate young people in the community," said Charlie, a 2019 Boys & Girls Club Hall of Fame inductee.



Charlie and his wife, Carol

Charlie, who was born and raised in Fox Point, Wisconsin, has also been recognized by the Wisconsin Humane Society for his decades of service, leadership and philanthropy.

"I love animals, especially dogs, and my wife also had a great love for animals, so it was a natural fit for to be involved in the Humane Society," Charlie said.

Charlie, a graduate of the University of Wisconsin–Madison, landed his first job as an underwriter for Northwestern National Insurance Company in Milwaukee, carrying on a family legacy in the insurance business. Charlie's son, Todd, is the sixth-generation and his grandson, Charles D. James, is the seventh-generation James to work in the insurance business in Milwaukee.

"I really enjoyed my career as an insurance professional and was proud to follow in my great-great-grandfather's footsteps," Charlie said. "I loved taking care of people and providing insurance to protect them from floods, fires and any other disasters that might occur."

In 1966, Charlie ventured out on his own, establishing the Charles V James Agency and in 1987, he purchased Fitzgerald Clayton James and Kasten (FCJK). In 2006, Todd succeeded Charlie as CEO of FCJK, which has been affiliated with Robertson Ryan & Associates since 2011.

One of Charlie's noteworthy professional achievements was bringing an insurance concept from London to the Midwest. Mortgage impairment protection eliminates the need for lenders to check mortgagors' insurance annually. Charlie contracted with Lloyd's to provide the protection for most banks and S&Ls in Wisconsin. As the concept grew, other players entered the market, but the model Charlie introduced in 1966 formed the basis for mortgage impairment coverage throughout the Midwest.

"I think I was the only insurance person in the Midwest who latched onto that idea, which was very unusual at the time," Charlie said.

Charlie and his wife, Carol, were married for 69 years before she passed away in September 2020. They raised three children, Wendy, Sukie and Todd. Charlie has 10 grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren. In his free time, Charlie has enjoyed fly fishing and working on his golf swing.

Reflecting on his long association with Rotary, Charlie loves the fact that Rotarians are good friends and that Rotary's principles offer valuable guidelines for life—professionally and personally.

"It's a wonderful organization and it's great for people to live according to the four-way test: is it the truth, is it fair to all concerned, will it build good will and better friendships and will it be beneficial to all concerned. I think that's a good way to live your life."



Charlie's family

Editor's Note: Rotary People of Action is a bi-monthly series written by a group of Rotarians. This feature was written by Mary Bolich