

## CLUB HISTORY

By

Chris Klineburger

Safari Club International started in 1972, but was actually a name change from the Safari Club of Los Angeles which was established in June of 1971.

There were very few clubs at that time that entertained the international travelers that hunted "far away places with strange sounding names". The San Francisco based Mzuri (meaning "good" in the Swahili language) Safari Club, along with the Shikar Safari Club, both of which were membership controlled and limited to an elite group of individuals that did, in fact, have a background of hunting overseas, were by far the oldest of such clubs. Game Conservational International (Game Coin), established in 1965 in San Antonio, was the first to hold an International Convention (in 1966) open to hunters big and small and heavily attended by the International set, including professional hunters from overseas. It was a gigantic success and set the stage for the importance of sportsmen joining together to fight for hunters rights and for conservation of wildlife.

C.J. McElory (Mac), an officer of the Southern California Safari Club, had great visions of a strong international club and what it could do for hunters and wildlife. He ran into opposition within the conservative ranks of the Club, so he and a small group of supporters split off and started the Safari Club of Los Angeles. The following year they felt "Los Angeles" was too confining a name, changing it to SCI.

In 1972 the move was made to Tucson and thus the name change to Safari Club International. The first SCI Convention was held 24-27 January, 1973 at the Riviera Hotel in Las Vegas with an attendance of under 300 people.

Right away when moving to Tucson, SCI started "Chapters", the first being the Los Angeles Chapter in 1972, quickly followed the same year by the Chicago Chapter. In the meantime Chapters were springing up all over the USA and a few foreign countries. Mac kept after me year after year to get a Seattle Chapter started and finally in 1974 I agreed. We called for an informal meeting of a handful of international hunters at the premises of Jonas Bros of Seattle Taxidermy and Travel (since then the Jonas name was dropped and the Klineburger name used). They included Tony Sulak, Dr. Charles Day, Dennis Dean, Eric Jensen, Joe Malinowski, Robert Ray and Al Shontz along with Chris, Colleen and Gene Klineburger.

It was agreed by all to go forward with the idea and the name was to be the "Northwest" Chapter of SCI, with the idea of reaching into Alaska, British Columbia, Oregon and other states near Washington. The "Committee" wanted me to be President, but I declined for the reason I felt it would be a conflict of interest, being a professional in the hunting business. I did agree to serve on the Board and provided the use of our mailing list, office, mimeograph machine and secretarial services as the headquarters for the Chapter (all free) until they established their own facility (this

arrangement continued for a number of years). Mac supplied us with a list of the “at large” members of SCI in our geographic area, a grand total of 16! The first official meeting was planned to be held at our 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue facility. We made temporary assignments of officers and directors with Charles Day, President and Tony Sulak, Secretary/Treasurer. The notice was sent to our Northwest Mailing List and the 16 person list from Tucson. The meeting was well attended and we became the 19<sup>th</sup> Chapter of SCI. The yearly dues were about \$25.00, \$5.00 of which went to Tucson. The \$5.00 sent to Tucson went \$3.00 to SCI and \$2.00 to SCICF (SCI Conservation Fund).

Our Membership grew rather slowly, as we didn’t have a high percentage of heavy-duty hunters. But we did have quality, and soon we started our own tax-free Sportsmen for Conservation Fund, with the idea of putting most of our money into conservation projects in our own region.

In 1989, the Sportsmen Against Hunger Program started (originally by Thompson Temple, exotic game guide in Texas who, with an abundance of meat left from hunts decided it should go to the hungry). The Northwest Chapter immediately jumped into the Program under the able guidance and encouragement of Doug Robinson. Our Chapter set a model for the Program for the other Chapters.

The Northwest Chapter has done very well over the years, growing steadily with a current Membership of 133 hunters, most of which are actively involved in major hunting. Included are a number of professional outfitters, artists and taxidermists. Considering the Eastern Washington Members split off in 1980 to form the Inland Empire Chapter, Oregon a couple of years back, as well as B.C. and Alaska forming Chapters. There are now 120 Chapters worldwide with 22,000 Members in 16 countries including “Field Members”, a force to be recognized internationally in Wildlife Conservation and in the protecting of Hunters Rights.

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EDITORS NOTE: Chris Klineburger was a Charter Member of the initial Club, Safari Club of Los Angeles, prior to it becoming Safari Club International. His Company had the first and only commercial booth at that historical Convention in Las Vegas in 1973 and has been a great supporter thru the years. His Company also assisted in organizing the first Hunters Conventions, Game Coin in 1966 in San Antonio and Mzuri Safari Foundation in 1967 at Lake Tahoe, the latter having the first auction to raise funds for conservation.