

Lion Reginald (Reg) Clayton Harris
Early Pioneer of California Lions Clubs
Club Organizer, and District Secretary

In 1905, Paul Harris, a Chicago attorney organized Rotary Clubs, a new service club concept. Paul Harris' brother, Reg Harris, a college professor, joined him to help develop new Rotary clubs throughout the Midwest. Reg Harris was very successful. Because of his success during the first dozen years of Rotary, Paul called Reg into his office and shared that he, Paul, was being criticized by his Rotary Board of Directors for building a Harris Dynasty. Fearing criticism, Paul suggested to Reg, "Why don't you go over and talk to Melvin Jones (also in Chicago) who has just organized Lions clubs?" Legend says that Paul called Melvin Jones and highly recommended his brother. Reg followed Paul's direction and interviewed with Melvin Jones. Reg was hired on the spot to start developing new Lions clubs.

Reg Harris was very successful at starting new Lions clubs in the Midwest for over a dozen years. In the early 1930's, Melvin Jones, then Secretary General of Lions, asked Reg Harris to move to California and expand Lions clubs in this new bustling area of the country. Reg immediately moved his family from Chicago to Laguna Beach and started developing new Lions clubs. He had no office – just his hat and a satchel. He began traveling throughout California/Nevada and developed many new Lions clubs and grew membership. Reg had two tasks: one to represent Lions International in establishing new clubs in California/Nevada; the other to represent District 4 (California/Nevada) to Lions International. It was a monumental job, but because he was so dedicated, he did both jobs well.

Reg Harris helped build District 4 into one of the most prominent Districts of Lions International at the time. He is considered a founder of our present Lions Multiple District (MD4), and was a true leader. As he continued to develop more clubs and grow membership, he decided to spend 6 months of the year in Northern California and 6 months in Southern California, plus Nevada. Again, he had no office – no staff – he did it all alone.

After approximately 15 years traveling all over California/Nevada with no office, in 1944 Reg obtained approval to establish a District office in Santa Barbara, with the backing of Melvin Jones at Lions International. He hired a secretary and began to build a permanent office for Lions of District 4. He was proud of his accomplishments and honestly believed it was important to establish a permanent office for the District. Again, during this time, Reg Harris established hundreds of Lions clubs throughout California/Nevada.

Reg was a man of vision, and continued to manage the Santa Barbara office until his retirement in 1954. In 1955, the Lions of California/Nevada approved the purchase and construction of a permanent office in Santa Barbara, the current location of our MD4 state Lion office. Reg Harris remained an active Lion until his death in 1958.

In 2017, California Lions Foundation decided to name a prestigious fellowship in his name because of Reg's dedication to California Lionism.