

Did Serendipity Really Start the Cape Fear Men's Club?

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CFMC'S FIRST 15 YEARS

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It all started with a cigar and a drink of scotch when Steve Wagner visited The Cigar Exchange in downtown Wilmington! Steve had gone to the Newcomer's Club meeting with his wife in mid-September, 2005. How was he to know that it was a women's only club and he would be the only man with a couple of hundred women?

So, Steve was a little miffed and said so to Steve Weiss, who was working at the cigar store. The cigar and scotch helped cool him down. Probably the scotch more so than the cigar.



Steve Wagner (third from right) and some of the "guys"

A few days later, the Newcomer's Club had a gathering and the "guys" had further conversations. They decided the "guys" would get together to socialize. The first meeting took place on September 28, 2005.

Thirteen "newcomer's husbands" met at Steve Wagner's home. Allen Hanson, Bill Murray, Bruce Myers, Bob Marcino, Jerry Bickwid, Malcolm Thaden, Nick Valerio, Phil Metz, Rich Edwards, Seth Thomas, Shelly Blumberg, Steve Weiss, and Steve Wagner were in attendance.

Bill Murray was active in Cape Fear River Watch and the early meetings were held at their office. One member of the group would bring potato chips, pretzels, soda, and maybe a beer or two for the meetings.

Initially, what became the Cape Fear Men's Club (CFMC) was a satellite of the Newcomer's Club. A clip board was passed around the Newcomer's Club and the women asked/encouraged their husbands to sign up. Did they really want their husbands underfoot all of the time?

Eventually, the CFMC broke away and as word about the CFMC grew, membership grew also. No one, but no one, expected the club to grow to the size and magnitude of the CFMC today.



The founders of what was to become The Cape Fear Men's Club were Jeremy Bickwid, Shelly Blumberg, Bob Marcino, Phil Metz, Bill Murray, Robert Raleigh, Malcolm Thaden, Steve Wagner, and Steve Weiss.

Steve Wagner started a by-law committee and Malcolm Thaden, Robert Raleigh, and Steve Weiss were the By-Laws committee. The club was to be strictly a social club, based upon activity groups and if three members proposed a legal activity, a new activity would start.

In 2014, Tom Atkins spearheaded the effort to incorporate the club as a 501 © (7), a not-for-profit social club operated for the enjoyment or recreation of their members.



Steve Wagner liked to deep sea fish, so that was one of the first “activities”. Steve Weiss enjoyed cards, so poker was also another first.



Bill Murray liked to kayak, so he started the kayaking group. Both Steve Wagner and Bob Marcino were good cooks, so the Macho dining group was an early activity.



For a number of years, the Macho guys cooked the special dinners for the club at various halls and Hugh MacRae Park. Some of the early dinners were Italian at the Sorosis Club and clam bakes at Hugh MacRae Park.



After approximately six months, the club had approximately 40 members. After a year, the club had approximately 50-60 members. The club would meet at Antonio’s restaurant in Leland for a while, then Wilson’s, and Olympia.



As the club grew, it outgrew all of the various venues. In 2010, Bill Murray secured the American Legion with caterers providing meals. About this time, the membership was capped at 100. The cap was later raised to 200 and subsequently to 300. Along the way, more and more activities were added.

By 2019, if you separate the lunch and breakfast groups, there were twenty-five activity groups. If you are unable to find an activity you enjoy, start a new one!

With the exception of the events committee, all of these activity groups are generally small group activities with anywhere from a handful of members attending to 20-30 attending. Some lunches have 60-70 members attend and some evening functions are much larger. The Events committee plans club wide activities, from dinners, cruises, dances, etc.

Along the way, a couple of organizations have had a special place for the Cape Fear Men's Club. One of those is Cape Fear River Watch due to their help in allowing the fledgling club to meet at their office.

The second is The American Legion for hosting the club at our bi-monthly meetings. The last one is Wreaths Across America which provides wreaths on the graves of fallen soldiers (approximately 5,200 wreaths were laid at Wilmington National Cemetery in December).

The Cape Fear Men's Club has had good leadership along the way. It takes a large number of volunteers to run the activities and to run the club. If you are a member, please volunteer. A list of the club presidents (first to last) follows:

1. **STEVE WAGNER**
2. **BOB MARCINO**
3. **BILL MURRAY**
4. **ART BROWNELL**
5. **MIKE ROBERTS**
6. **JOHN TUFANO**
7. **TOM ATKINS**
8. **GEORGE (SCOTTY) SCOTT**

