

The Friendship Force of Louisville, KY

“1991” The Beginning

In 1990, Merial Barker visited a Friendship Force club in Atlanta and thought Louisville should have a club, too. Virginia Barker traveled to FFI headquarters in Atlanta, met with Claudia Oldenberg, and obtained a packet for forming a club. She was also given the name of Toko Yomura, a past FF President from Tokyo, who was currently living in Louisville. Virginia contacted Toko and the two met for lunch.

Meanwhile, Barbara Reeves, a former member of the Birmingham, Alabama, Friendship Force, contacted the Atlanta headquarters requesting information on forming a club in Louisville. She was given the names of two other persons who were interested in the same goal -- Virginia Barker and Toko Yomura. The three met for the first time on January 19, 1991, to organize the club. This meeting included Toko, Barbara, Virginia, and Virginia's son, Mel. Officers elected were Barbara Reeves, President; Toko Yomura, Vice President; Virginia Barker, Secretary; and Mel Barker, Treasurer.

A second meeting was set for March 3 at Barbara Reeves' home. Other than the officers, no one else attended. A third meeting was scheduled for April 6 at the Barker's. Prior to that meeting, calls were made to many in the community to introduce the Friendship Force of Greater Louisville (FFGL). Attendees were Merial and Virginia Barker, their daughter Amy, Barbara Reeves and husband A.C., and Toko Yomura. Linda Hall and her daughter attended the April 6 meeting, and Linda became the Membership Chairperson that evening.

The Friendship Force License was issued on April 16, 1991. The club was now official! The first board meeting was held on June 6, 1991. Alternating the monthly board and general meetings was voted on and passed.

On June 20, 1991, FFI in Atlanta contacted FFGL. Could the club host 13 Ambassadors from Devon, England, September 16-23, 1991, as a second week to Owensboro? Of course the answer was yes! Barbara Reeves volunteered as the Exchange Director. With only three months to plan and 13 members, hosts were found for all, making this the very first inbound exchange.

The club also planned two additional exchanges for the following year -- an outbound to Wolfsburg, Germany, in May, with A.C. Reeves serving as Exchange Director, and an inbound from Osaka, Japan, in August, with Linda Hall as ED.