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Ervin J. Nutter: 1914 - 2000

Engineer, Industrialist, Philanthropist, Community Leader

"He moved mountains..."

Those were the words spoken by Zoe Dell Nutter about her husband, Ervin J. Nutter, on the evening of his induction as a Fellow of the Engineers Club on April 23, 1993. She was describing Mr. Nutter's penchant for tackling and accomplishing great goals and surmounting obstacles on his road to success. More pointedly, Mrs. Nutter was relating a story which had Mr. Nutter removing a hill outside their window, so his wife would have a better view of the sunrise. He literally, and figuratively, moved mountains.

Ervin J. Nutter, Fellow of the Engineers Club, Founder of the Elano Corporation, a member of the WSU and Ohio University Presidents' clubs, a University of Kentucky fellow who served as national president of its alumni association, member of the UK Hall of Distinguished Alumni, and a distinguished industrialist and philanthropist, passed away at his Beaver Creek ranch on January 5, 2000. He had been treated since 1976 for heart problems, which worsened over the summer of 1999, and had recently suffered a series of strokes. Ervin J. Nutter, a 1943 graduate of the University of Kentucky, was 85 years old.



Beginning in a small Beaver Creek barn, Mr. Nutter built the Elano Corporation from a small machining operation into one of the Dayton area's largest privately-held businesses. However, Mr. Nutter is equally, if not more, recognized as a benefactor and philanthropist. He was an enthusiastic supporter of the University of Kentucky; the Nutter Training Center, a sports medicine facility, and the Nutter Fieldhouse both bear his name. He and his wife, Zoe, also donated \$1 million to establish professorships in mechanical engineering at UK. Locally, Mr. Nutter also supported Wright State University academic and athletic programs.

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The Ervin J. Nutter Center, WSU's multi-purpose athletic and entertainment facility, was built in part from donations by Mr. Nutter. In July, the Nutters donated \$1 million to help build a learning and research center at the National Aviation Hall of Fame in Dayton.

Ervin J. Nutter leaves a legacy of greatness, success, generosity, and community commitment. The Engineers Club has been fortunate to have him as a Member, and he will be remembered as a man of great stature in the Miami Valley community. We have been honored to have him in our presence. The light of greatness shines a little less bright today as Mr. Nutter "passes into that good night," but those of us left behind will carry the torch in his absence. Ervin Nutter has shown us how to feed that flame with generosity of spirit, innovative success, and civic responsibility. May we all aspire to move mountains in his memory.


Historical Achievements

VALLEY OF THE GIANTS

Ervin J. Nutter

Editor's Note: This Valley of the Giants article originally appeared in the July, 1993, Engineer.

It is reprinted here in its entirety.

When Ervin Nutter joined the Engineers Club in 1970, few members realized the important contributions that he and his Elano Corporation were providing to our Miami Valley, and to our Nation.

Much of the information presented herein was first made known to Club Members recently, on Founder's Night, April 24th, when the name of Ervin J. Nutter was added to the Club's roll of FELLOWS.

Erv was born June 26, 1914, in Hamilton, Ohio. His father had been raised in Wyoming and trained as a cowboy, but later, had moved to Ohio to accept a position with MacGregor Golf Equipment Company, eventually becoming its Chief Engineer. Erv's mother was one of the first women to receive a teaching degree from the University of Kentucky.

Before Graduating from Hamilton High School, Erv was building crystal radio sets, radio antennas, and bird baths. He entered University of Kentucky in 1933, earning his way as an electrician for two years, then dropped out of college to work as Assistant Chief Engineer for Hooven-Owens-Rentschler Company in Hamilton. He later returned to the University of Kentucky and received a BSME degree in 1943.

He then accepted a civilian engineering position at Wright Field, where he worked at designing and building laboratory equipment and developing and producing special products. One of his projects was developing and producing special insecticide spraying equipment for use in jungle combat areas. This led to his appointment as Branch Chief and his involvement with the testing of jet engines.

Following the end of World War II, Erv and a long-time Wright Field friend started a small engineering development business which they called "Agricultural Aviation Company," which was soon producing agricultural spray nozzles, television antennas, and kitchen sink swing spouts. It was the technical developments in swing spout production that led to jet engine tubing contracts with General Electric Co., and the formation of Elano Corporation in 1951. For ten years, Elano struggled; but finally, annual sales began to rise rapidly, requiring expansion of facilities and purchase of Acme Screw Products Co. in 1966. Elano East was founded in 1966 near Boston, Mass. Enzo Realty was established to own and maintain all land and buildings of the Elano family of companies.

The 1200-acre KBJ Ranch is currently engaged in advanced cattle breeding techniques and crop development,

as well as experimental work for Ohio State University.

Erv sold Elano in 1985 and retired from much of his business activities. He became a world traveller and big game hunter. As a staunch conservationist, he hunted only game that was surplus to the areas he visited (he was nearly crushed by a charging elephant while helping a park ranger apply monitoring devices to members of the herd). His big game jaunts took him into the jungles of Africa, India, South America, Asia and the Arctic.

Having met his wife, Zoe Dell, during his early years at Wright Field, it is no small wonder that both of them hold multi-engine pilot's licenses. Zoe Dell was one of the few women pilots at the time, at Wright Field. They now own three airplanes. They have three sons, Kenneth, Joseph, and Robert.

The spectacular story of Ervin J. Nutter would fill volumes; therefore, we will conclude this writing by listing a few of his many accomplishments, organizational activities, honors and awards, as follows:

Founder of Elano Corporation, Elano East, Enlo, Inc., Nutter Enterprises, Enzo Realty, and KBJ Ranch. Purchased and greatly expanded Acme Screw Products Company.

Served on the boards of UK Fellows Club, Air Force Museum, WSU Trustees, Society Bank NA Advisory, National Aviation Hall of Fame, Defense Orientation Conference Assn., Shikar Safari International, Shikar Safari Foundation, Game Conservation International, and the International Center for the Preservation of Wild Animals.

In addition to the Engineers Club of Dayton, he has been, and in most cases, still is a member of: Professional Engineering Societies of Ohio and Kentucky; FAA Aircraft Commercial Pilots; President's Clubs of UK, WSU, UD, and OSU; Alumni Association of UK; UK Development Council; OSU Gamma Sigma Delta Fraternity; UK Tau Beta Pi and Triangle Fraternities; Chambers of Commerce of US, Ohio, Beavercreek, and Xenia; Ducks Unlimited; African Wildlife Society; Masonic Lodge; Rotary International; Shrine Club; YMCA; Explorer Club of New York; US Navy League; Bonnettes Hunting and Fishing Club of Florida; Old Port Yacht Club of Florida; Ohio Commodore; UK Faculty Club; and Walnut Grove Country Club,

It is the technical persistence and vision of those few like Ervin J. Nutter that continue to make our Valley of the Giants known and appreciated throughout the civilized world. The Engineers Club of Dayton is proud to honor him as a FELLOW member!

FOUNDER'S NIGHT

April 24, 1993

Editor's Note: Ervin J. Nutter was made a Fellow of the Engineers Club on April 24, 1993. That evening one of the people reminiscing about Mr. Nutter was his wife, Zoe Dell. We obtained a transcript of the remarks she made that evening. The following article is the complete transcript, with some minor punctuation changes.

The story of Erv and Elano is too long and too complex for me to deal with - however, some highlights of that will be covered later in the program.

My interest is in what Erv, the engineer, and what he did at Elano was the influence it had on our home. The house is built rather high on a hill overlooking the beautiful pasture land of the ranch. The house is constructed of stone, steel, glass, and all arches, curves, and angles. Designed to capture 360 degree view with proper exposure. James Allen Reed, one of Dayton's well-known architects and who was with Erv in the Wright Field days did the house on a design dreamed up by Erv. I mentioned to Jim Reed one day while we were doing some re-decorating that all of the angles and arches certainly were a challenge to our project and the decorators. Jim replied that this house was definitely an *engineer's dream* and an *architect's nightmare*, as well as that of decorators. Even though the house is rather unusual, it is fun, too. There are many things in it that Erv also designed that can be considered spectacular conveniences - that is, if you know how to operate all of the knobs and gadgets.

To give you some idea and among many things he has done, his sunken bath tub is one of my favorites. While we were re-doing the house, it was at the same time the engine for the B-70 bomber was being mocked up at Elano - there were a few drop off pieces from tubular assemblies - that were too beautiful to throw away, so we had them gold plated (\$32.00 an oz. in those days) and you can see they are perfect mounts for the faucets.

Now, in my opinion, the best thing Erv has done for the house is the bedroom drapes and separate liners.

The windows are __ feet wide and __ feet high. He thought that conventional drapes that pull from the side were too cumbersome and impractical to be opened to capture the morning sun - and the view. He took some fine aircraft cable, worked out a quiet motor, a timer, and Lord knows what else to raise them up - to look like Radio City Music Hall or MGM Grand at Las Vegas. There were problems, of course. When the drapery people were contacted to put the drapes together and install them, they refused. No one would take the job - so Erv went to the hardware store, bought a dozen or so painters drop cloths and proceeded to make a pattern to try out the mechanics. It all seemed to work so he finally found a lady to sew the final drapery material together. He then put the aircraft cables in the seams and, with Ray Stump, a mechanical miracle worker in his own right, put it together, including an instrument panel in the headboard of our bed. That with the touch of a button we could raise the curtain. It worked perfectly, except that we discovered that all we could see from the bed was hill about 200 feet from the window. I complained bitterly that I didn't care to wake up every morning raising my drapes to see the base of Mt. Everest, Greene County. So the very next day Erv moved in a bulldozer and moved the hill, a few trees, replaced the grass and voila!!!! It is everything we had hoped for...

So I am pleased and proud of the drapes and of Erv an all his talents and accomplishments - and I certainly know how lucky I am to have someone who is willing even to move mountains for me. Thanks, Erv!!

We'll second that. Thanks, Erv! - Editor