



Jack Sullivan: Builder and keeper of community legacy

By Hap Cawood

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Founded in 1914 to serve the engineering and professional community.

The Engineers Club does not assume responsibility for statements and opinions in the articles, papers and discussions appearing herein.

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In 1943, when John "Jack" Sullivan Jr. drove up from Cincinnati to Dayton to build his career as an architect, he joined the Engineers Club. His office was in the Third National Bank (now Key Bank) building. On his first visit to the Club, he says, he came for lunch. He still comes regularly to the Tuesday Luncheon Program sponsored by the Barn Gang.

During his half-century of Club membership, Jack has played a major role in changing the face of Dayton and providing civic leadership with a balanced passion — of preservation and progress, art and engineering, style and function.

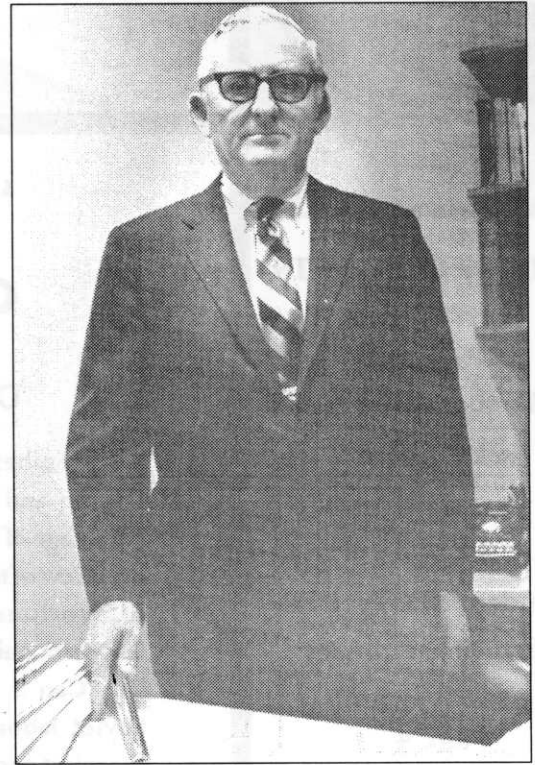
He is a major benefactor of the Engineers Club. His 10-year endowment gift is funneled to the club through The Dayton Foundation, of which Jack was director for nine years. He has been a benefactor at the same level to the Dayton Art Institute, which he served as president of the Board of Trustees for 14 years.

How did this begin? In 1920, when Jack was an 8-year-old student at Franklin Preparatory School for Boys in Cincinnati, his family began building a Tudor-style house.

"The architect brought the plans to our home in the evening," Jack recalls. "When I saw those architectural drawings, I knew what I wanted to do."

He adds, "I also knew I didn't want to be in the shoe business." His paternal grandfather, Patrick, who at the age of 13 emigrated from Ireland during the U.S. Civil War, apprenticed to a cobbler, opened his own shop making shoes by hand, then started the P. Sullivan Shoe Co., one of the first shoe-manufacturing companies in the United States, specializing in pretty footwear for women. Jack's father and uncle inherited that enterprise.

Knowing what he liked, Jack made his life more a trajectory than a ramble. As a boy, he took art classes at Cincinnati Art Academy; studied at college-prep Walnut Hills High School; then shifted to University School, a



Jack Sullivan, in 1971.

boarding school in Cleveland, where he enjoyed "lots of friends."

Upon completing prep school, he headed to Cornell University, which, he says, "had one of the best architectural schools in the country and \$400 a year tuition." After graduating from Cornell in 1936, he headed to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology for his master of architecture degree in 1938. That was a little tougher because "the tuition was \$600 a year," Jack says, "but I got a scholarship to help."

In his search for a marriage partner he got a little help, too — or at least a clue.

"My acquaintances talked about a palm reader in Hamilton, a Mrs. Noble. So one day a friend and I made an appointment and drove up to see her. She said I would marry a girl with a first name that began with an F. So I paid attention to girls whose names began with F." Jack married Frances Ricketts, now

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deceased, and they had two daughters, Frances and Stephanie.

The Sullivans' move to Dayton came when Jack got word that an engineer, Ray Yount, wanted an architect for his firm. In 1950 the firm became Yount and Sullivan, and in 1957 it became Sullivan, Leclider & Jay.

"During the war there was only remodeling work," Jack recalls. "After the war, it was the Golden Age of Architecture."

One of their big projects was the Charles F. Kettering Memorial Hospital. "When I got the contract, I got a call from an architect who expected to get the job because he had been a classmate of Eugene Kettering at Cornell and he headed a big Dayton architectural firm. He was angry. He told me, 'You stay on your side of the street and I'll stay on mine.' I asked him, 'What's the name of the street?' He didn't reply."

Whatever side of the street it was imagined to be, Jack had space enough. His firm was the architect for the Dayton airport terminal, which until then had only "a few shacks on the side of the field"; Grandview Hospital; Cox Heart Institute; the Sinclair Community College campus in 1970; four buildings at Wright State; 10 Dayton schools; several dozen industrial and commercial projects; even the building next door to the Engineers Club, now owned by Wright State University. Plus more.

Twenty years ago, Jack retired but continued his interests, which included living in Paris, visiting his ancestral homeland of Ireland four times, traveling to or across five continents where did on-scene watercolors — bright, colorful paintings that have been exhibited at Cox Arboretum and Kettering Tower. His watercolor *Omaha Beach Today* won an award from the Dayton Society of Painters and Sculptors.

He calls his art "very satisfying," but macular degeneration has pulled his hand back from the brush and canvas. Yet little is stayed from his memory, visual and precise after 92 years.

It takes work to both build and keep the legacy of a community, and Jack Sullivan has done more than his share — not only as a supporter of the Engineers Club but also as a longtime member of the Oakwood Historical Society; as chairman of the Patterson Homestead Advisory Board for 37 years; and as the former president of the Montgomery County Historical Society, which named its Old Courthouse library in honor of Frances and Jack Sullivan.

Submissions welcome

To submit articles or art for publication in the *Engineers Club News*, contact Editor **KayWert Minardi** at (937) 299-2454 or kay.minardi@earthlink.net.

Hanging out with the Wright crowd



Photo by Dick Palmer

Amanda Wright Lane, left, and Marion Wright flank Tom Crouch, senior curator of the National Air and Space Museum, Sept. 9 at the Engineers Club of Dayton. Crouch, a Dayton native, gave a presentation on the significance of Huffman Prairie. Crouch's slide presentation included many stirring photos of flights by Wilbur and Orville Wright at Huffman Prairie, but he also pointed out that there is more to Huffman Prairie than just aviation history. The prairie has played a role in Miami Valley history from the very earliest days and is even today the site of notable biological discoveries. Crouch was presented with a replica of Orville Wright's honorary Pilot's Certificate No. 1 (held by Marion Wright) in appreciation for his work.

Membership privileges travel with you

When making your travel plans, don't forget to take advantage of city clubs in cities across the United States. The Engineers Club of Dayton has reciprocal agreements with 93 clubs, entitling our club members to dining privileges. For a list of the clubs that will welcome you, call Brenda at 228-2148, or download the Reciprocal Clubs list from our Web site, engineersclub.org.

Looking for a speaker?

If your group or organization would like to schedule a speaker to talk about the history of the Engineers Club of Dayton, contact **Lloyd Bryant** at 299-8738.