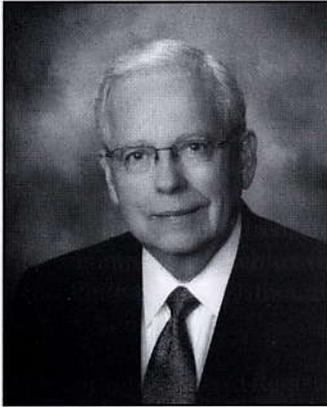


An interview with Harry Seifert

By Hap Cawood



Harry Seifert

You seemed to have really gotten around during your 40 years at Standard Register, before retiring as Senior Vice President for Manufacturing & International Operations.

Yes, during most of my career I spent about half my time traveling somewhere. It was a high energy, high activity kind of career and, besides my national and international consulting duties, I was responsible for a lot of expansion work. We would select the sites, design and build the buildings, and buy all the equipment so that when we were finished we turned over a complete factory ready for operations. I probably did about 75 of those throughout the country.

Did you know early on that you would like engineering-type problem solving work?

I've always liked math. I wasn't a great student in school, but I did okay. In high school I thought I wanted to be a television engineer. It was pretty new then, and it looked like it would be interesting. After finishing high school, I didn't have enough money to go to college and there was a military draft. The only way you could get a job was to be a college graduate or a veteran. I thought it would be easier to become a veteran, so in 1956 I signed up. In the Army Security Agency, an intelligence organization, I was sent to school for a year and spent two years in Japan.

My dad died when I was very young. I had an older cousin who was very influential in my life. After I was discharged from the Army in 1959, he led me to college; he was an industrial engineer. When I came to Dayton I decided it would be good to further my business side of education, so I went to UD and got an MBA.

You've also been active in a lot of civic work, from CityWide Development Corp. to a whole list of organizations - the Dayton RFID Convergence Center, Wright-Dunbar, Inc., the Miami Valley Hospital Foundation, The National Aviation Heritage Alliance, Dayton Tech Town, Inc, the Iddings Foundation, the Engineering and Science Hall of Fame and others. Were you doing that while you were

with Standard Register?

Early in my career I was involved with the Jaycees, a good personal development organization for me. I really enjoyed that, and was headed to be president of the state of Pennsylvania Jaycees when my promotion to Dayton got in the middle of that. Though I was involved some in the Jaycees here, I got very busy at work and had two children, and except for some later service to organizations such as the Dayton Art Institute and Dayton Philharmonic, I thought my focus had to be on family and my job.

When I was a year or so from retiring, Standard Register was asked to supply an executive for CityWide, and I volunteered. CityWide develops Dayton's economic strategy, which is to shift the base from manufacturing to technology. As a result, we have the Dayton Center for Advanced Materials Technology (DC AMT), Tech Town and the RFID (radio frequency identification) incubator, and other activities as well. It's one of the most rewarding things I do.

How did you get to the Engineers Club?

My boss encouraged me to join in 1967 when I first came to Dayton and was looking for resources - in particular, the Club library - and for networking opportunities and a chance to build my resumé. Today I enjoy the Club in an entirely different way. It is almost the center of our social life. My friends are here. In the beginning, it was strictly professional.

You've been on the Engineers Club Board of Governors twice, most recently as president, and three times on the Club's foundation board where you are currently vice president. Obviously you've seen the Club change with the times.

We are sitting here at lunch, not too crowded. In 1967 this dining room would have been so packed that we might not have gotten in. But today it's a lot easier to network than it was then, because the groups and businesses then tended to dine in clusters; they were harder to penetrate. Now, in a given week I can come in and have lunch with two or three different people simply because they're here. I think it's warmer and friendlier now, even though it is a smaller club.

Every organization strives for relevancy, and I think we do a pretty good job of understanding our members and what they want and value. The boards have had different issues and different generations, but through all of that the one thing that has been constant has been the love that most of the people who are really involved here have for the Club, with a commitment to help maintain its beauty, heritage and culture. Thank goodness for those who, like John Bosch and Leatha Stewart and others, really care about the Club and are always there when help is needed.