

Recollection of Decades Past

Long-time club member, Charles Adams,
recalls latter decades of club history



Charles Adams flew in the Wright "B" Flyer earlier this year at age 91. It has always been Charles' dream to fly the Wright "B" Flyer.

Ironically, the 1913 Great Dayton Flood which was the precursor to the Engineers Club's founding (the arrival of many engineers to work on flood restoration inspired Deeds' idea for an Engineers Club) almost took the life of one of the club's oldest and longest members.

At the time of the flood, Charles O. Adams and his twin sister Lois were 11 months old. The flood filled the Adams' family home on Rung Street, now Neal Avenue. The babies' father got his wife, father, babies and himself into a passing rescue boat, but the raging waters slammed the boat into a tree. The babies were swept away. When, miraculously, they were rescued, they were still alive, but their lungs were half-filled with water, and they battled pneumonia for weeks. Fortunately, their parents and grandfather also survived.

Lois died in 1961, at age 48, from a heart condition that resulted from the pneumonia. Charles, now 91-years-old and a Dayton resident, eventually became an electrical engineer for Delco and raised a family of his own. He frequently speaks about the Dayton flood and the Miami Conservancy District (directed for 36 years by Engineers Club co-founder Colonel Deeds).

And, like his father (Charles Adams) was before him, Charles is a member of the Engineers Club. He joined in

1937 and served for many years on the library committee. "My father was a member, and so I took it for granted that I would be too," Charles says. Now, Charles remains a member because he enjoys the Barn Gang and associating with other members.

And although he can't remember the 1913 flood, he does have many memories of the club, which he shared:

"In the 1930s through the 1950s, during lunch break, I'd walk from Delco Products, on E. First Street, to the club for a quick bite of lunch in the dining room with others from Delco, then play billiards for 20 minutes before rushing back to Delco.

Charles F. Kettering sponsored monthly evening technical programs. He had nationally known speakers, as well as local engineers from his 'Barn Gang', Delco Products, and other local plants. He housed out-of-town speakers in bedrooms on the third floor of the club for that purpose.

Younger members also enjoyed the social aspects of the club, such as New Years' Eve parties.

Through the 1960s, there was a little more emphasis on technical meetings. Many members spent a lot of time in the library. But by the 1970s, the 'book explosion' caused us to stop buying technical books. We decided to have members rely on computers and the Public Library.

One of my fondest memories from the 1980s, when I served on the Engineers Club Foundation Board of Trustees, is that we gave a grant to the J. E. Prass School in Kettering to start a 'science room.'

The 1990s saw the start of the 'Barn Gang.' The name is a throw back to Deeds' and Kettering's Barn Gang, where the ideas that led to the ignition system, self-starter, and many other inventions for automobiles were first discussed.

The biggest change over the years at the Engineers Club? In my opinion, it's a shift in membership from engineers to a broader coverage of all professions."

