

Club co-founders played role in my life

By Charles O. Adams, Engineers Club member since 1937

Introduction: Charlie Adams' life has always had ties with those associated with Dayton history and the Engineers Club. Charlie as an infant was, along with his twin sister, plucked out of the 1913 flood. That flood prompted Col. Edward Deeds, a co-founder of the Club, to draft and push the state legislation that allowed for the creation of conservancy districts for flood control. Col. Deeds hired Charles Kettering to come to NCR and electrify the cash register. That development led to the creation of the Barn Gang that Kettering worked with to develop ignition systems for cars, which led to the creation of Delco Corp., now Delphi. Deeds and Kettering also created the Wright Airplane Co., with Orville Wright. Here Charlie tells about some of his family ties to these men.

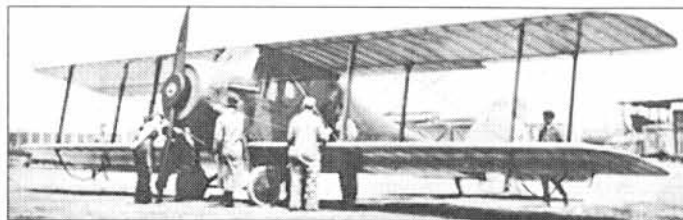
My associations with Edward A. Deeds were through my family. My dad's cousin, Lou Adams, and his wife, Mertle, were caretakers at the Deeds farm. This was across Stroop Road from Deeds' house, just west of Southern Boulevard.

Lou and Mert lived in the farmhouse in the middle of the farm, about where the Moraine Country Club sits today. They invited my two sisters and me to stay with them for two weeks each summer. We wandered about on the farm and swam in Deeds' swimming pool. It is still there, at the southwest corner of Stroop and Southern. Deeds let Arthur Morgan (brought here by Deeds to set up the Miami Conservancy District flood-control system) use the pool for experiments.

Dad arranged for Howard Rinehart, vice president of the Wright Airplane Co., to take my twin sister and me for a ride in the Wright OW-1 airplane. It was the first closed-cabin airplane in Dayton.

We were to take off from the west side yard of the Deeds house. Lois and I were put in the plane, and Howard started the engine. As he began to roll across the grass, Lois got scared, opened the door, jumped out and ran back to Dad. Howard told me to close the door and we took off, flying several times around Delco Dell — a group of summer cottages on the hill overlooking Deeds' farm — and then landed back on Deeds' side yard.

My family associations with Charles Kettering were due to my dad having been first cashier at Dayton Engineering Laboratories Co., or Delco, and then Kettering's private secretary at General Motors Research Laboratory.



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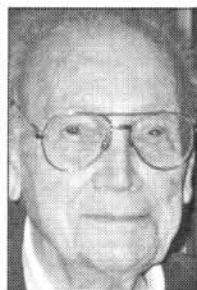
Crew prepares a Dayton Wright OW-1 for flight.

Kettering kept a baseball bat in his office. It looked like a Louisville Slugger. One morning he called me into his office. As I walked in, he pitched me the bat. I almost fell on my face. The bat was made of balsa wood, very light. He told me not to always believe what I saw without checking or doing some research on it.

The Deeds-Kettering partnership's work secret was that "men must hunt in pairs." They determined, together, to someday provide a place where engineers could meet "to cement friendships, to educate youth, to foster all types of engineering work in Dayton, and to hold aloft our devotion to the truth." This resulted in Deeds and Kettering building this Engineers Club.

I knew Orville Wright as a fellow member of the Engineers Club. My association with the Wrights came through my great-grandfather, the Rev. J.K. Nelson, a minister in the United Brethren in Christ Church.

Milton Wright, Wilbur and Orville Wright's father, was a bishop in the same denomination. Bishop Wright split from the church because he disagreed with a vote that removed from its constitution the ban on belonging to secret societies such as the Masons. My great-grandfather left with Bishop Wright, though my mother told me her grandfather rejoined the original denomination before he died.



Charlie Adams

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