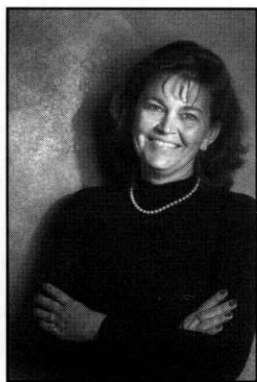


An interview with Amanda Wright Lane



Amanda Wright Lane

Amanda Wright Lane, great grandniece of Orville and Wilbur Wright, grew up in Miamisburg, where during her high school years she struck up a close friendship with Don Lane. At Miami University, their friendship took a romantic turn that led to marriage. She is heavily involved in Dayton as a member of various boards and as a volunteer worker and ambassador representing the Wright family and Dayton's aviation heritage. In a recent interview, Amanda talked about her life, work and the Engineers Club.

• Could you tell us about your Wright lineage?

My great grandfather was Lorin Wright, the next older brother of Wilbur. So he was second in the line of brothers which also included Reuchlin, the oldest. Lorin Wright had four children and one of those is my grandfather, Milton Wright. Lorin was the one who stayed in the Dayton area his whole life, so Orville and my great-grandfather stayed very close, visiting each other every day, especially after Wilbur died.

• What was it like growing up in the Wright family?

Each week we were at one great aunt's or another. On the third Sunday we would all meet at our house. The discussion at the table was always about our wonderful uncles, not so much about the flying machines but about the men themselves. I think my brother Steve and I grew up knowing about them as family first and as famous world engineers second. That was very secondary.

• How did you get involved in the Engineers Club?

I first knew about it through my father, Wick, and my stepmother Marion Wright. They went to a few events there. Shortly after my father's passing, my stepmother invited me to come to the Barn Bang. I knew about the Engineers Club, but I hadn't known about the social piece of it. I really enjoyed some of the programs, and I decided because of the family heritage I should be a member. The Barn Gang was what really got me interested and involved.

• Was that around 2003 centennial of powered flight?

Yes. When they dedicated the wonderful plaques out front, where the bench sculpture also had been placed, all that coming together help me to understand the ties of Uncle Orv with the Engineers Club. It was an important part of my heritage to become involved with it. The Engineers Club makes so much sense to me when I think of how Uncle Orv was so interested in so many things, particularly anything that had working parts. My father talked about that a lot. Uncle Orv took things in his house apart and re-engineered them to the point repairmen were miffed. Though he wasn't a joiner of organizations, the Engineers Club was a perfect fit for him—a haven and a think tank.

• **You're involved in a lot of volunteer work regarding the Wright heritage, driving all the way up from Cincinnati to Dayton quite a bit.**

My brother and I got involved with the heritage parts of our history during the 2003 centennial celebration of flight because our father died about three years before the celebration, and he had been so involved in making sure that our national park was finished by that time and helping some of the museums bring some of the Wright exhibits to fruition. So Steve and I pitched in to finish the work he had started. I thought beyond 2003 that some of the interest in the Wright story would die, but it really hasn't. Today I'm involved with organizations like the Engineers Club, the Aviation Heritage Foundation, Dayton History, Wright Dunbar Inc., the Wright B Flyer, and even Woodland Cemetery for a while.

When I wake up each day, my thought is: how am I going to bring more people to Dayton, Ohio and to our region to see these aviation assets? I believe people want to come, and I'm just not sure we've been completely user-friendly so that it's easy for them to understand all the things we have, how they're connected, how they can see them easily, and that this is one place in the world that the story can be told with such integrity and credibility. So, it's exciting.

• And traveling abroad, it looks like.

As a result of 2003, both Steve and I were invited to participate in other countries' celebrations of flight. When you step outside the Dayton area, you get an even truer understanding of how important that heritage is to people outside our 80-mile circle.

• You're heading to Le Mans, France this summer, where they're celebrating the centennial of Wilbur Wright's flights there.

Yes, I'm going twice, in June and July. In June they have the big 24-hour car race, to be started by three famous astronauts: Vladimir Totov of Russia, Jean-Loup Chrétien of France, and Mark Brown of the United States, and astronauts at the International Space Station will be on a big screen to honor Wilbur's first flight in France. In July, Le Mans recreates a historic car race, to which they will add historic or antique aircraft. So I'm working very hard with them and **John Bosch** and the Wright B group to get the Wright B Flyer over there. After Le Mans, we've been invited to be part of an exhibit at the Farnborough Air Show in England, which is run in alternate years with the Paris Air show.

• Busy.

Every day.

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