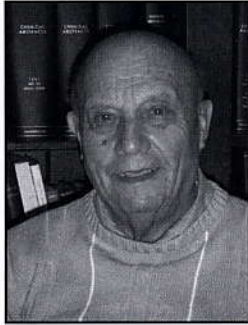


# Harvey Tuck, 58 Club years and counting

By Hap Cawood



Harvey Tuck

Harvey Tuck, bubbling with ideas and opinions and never at a loss for words, has been a member of the Engineers Club for 58 years. He attributes the big breakthroughs in his life to luck. But Harvey might have inherited from his maternal grandmother some of the spunk that creates "luck."

As the matriarch of her Lithuanian family after Harvey's grandfather died, she and her children, including Harvey's father, lived through the German occupation after World War I and found it tolerable. But when the Soviet Union absorbed Lithuania, Harvey says, his grandmother declared, "Communism is no good for business, and it's no good for religion. We're going to America," where two of Harvey's uncles had already immigrated and started businesses.

Boarding the ship, Harvey's grandmother explained to ship officials who noted the baked goods stuffed in their luggage: "As Orthodox Jews, we only eat our own food." Once on board, she told her son and five daughters, "Eat what's on the ship. God will forgive you." Upon disembarking at Ellis Island, the grandmother told the same thing to immigration officials, that they ate only their own food. When they got to Boston in 1921, they cut open the bread and took out the gold coins that were the remains of their earthly goods and the means to start afresh.

"In 1927, the U.S. government declared May 30 as Memorial Day, so I figured that would be a good day to be born, with all the festivities going on, so on May 30, 1928 I popped out," Harvey claims. As a teenager during World War II, Harvey was asked by his father to help out after school in the family store because many employees had been drafted. There, Harvey fixed radios and some appliances.

After graduating from high school he applied to one school, MIT, which rejected him. But for whatever reason—Harvey sums it up as luck—MIT's Dean of Admissions called him in for an interview, asked what he was doing, and Harvey said he was fixing radios, something he hadn't mentioned on the application. That clinched the deal and Harvey was admitted. While studying mechanical engineering he was offered a scholarship in an honors bachelor-masters program because of his ability to visualize thermodynamics concepts.

Two weeks after graduation, the Korean War broke out, and Harvey ended up as an Air Force officer assigned to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base to help develop a nuclear-powered aircraft prototype. In less than two years, Harvey and a fellow engineer recognized that a nuclear power

system and its shielding would be too heavy for a B-36 and proposed that the nuclear airplane project work be cut back severely in specific ways. "Many years later, after records were declassified, I learned that they had taken our advice, which gave me a good feeling," Harvey recounts. "I was always impressed with the way things were handled at Wright-Pat."

His next stroke of luck: meeting his future-wife Sonna in a parking lot. "That doesn't sound good," he admits. Actually, Harvey and a friend and their dates went to the parking lot after a dance, and Sonna was trying to get into the passenger side of her friend's car in a tight space. Harvey got out to help her. Then Harvey asked his date who the girl was, got Sonna's phone number, asked her out, and within a few months they got engaged. "Her family was not too happy about it. Sonna was only 19, but she decided I was the right guy."

Married, Harvey turned down an Air Force offer in order to stay in Dayton, Sonna's hometown. He sent to Frigidaire a one-sentence letter: "If you are in need of a young man, 24, with a bachelors and masters from MIT in mechanical engineering, and ten years experience in the appliance business, call me."

That got Harvey into Frigidaire—and the Engineers Club. The manager asked Harvey to work on a prototype refrigerated boxcar car that they hadn't been able to keep cold enough to preserve frozen food, which was coming on strong in the early 1950s. "So I came here to the Engineers Club, which had in its libraries one of the best sources of information on refrigeration and air conditioning in the country," Harvey explains. "Keep in mind that Frigidaire started in 1921, and you didn't have the Internet or anything like that."

He solved the problem with a new insulation concept. In ensuing years, Harvey used computers to help Frigidaire design air-conditioning units in cost-saving ways, among other breakthroughs. That took Harvey into a career with IBM when Frigidaire in 1960 got out of the commercial refrigeration and air-conditioning business.

Harvey, Sonna and their two daughters traveled all over the United States, Canada, and the Caribbean. "When the girls graduated from college, Sonna and I started traveling the rest of the world. I've been extremely fortunate that two good girls married two good guys, and I have four grandsons."

A lot has changed since the man who hired Harvey at Frigidaire asked him to join the Engineers Club in 1953. "Because I was under 25," Harvey remembers, "my dues were \$1.50 a month. They went up each year until they reached \$6 a month when I was 30 years old." It's called history, and Harvey got to make his share of it.