

Ed Arn

A Presentation for Wooster Rotary Club

August 29, 2005

It is my privilege to share some information with you today about our distinguished, long-time member, Ed Arn. Ed has been a hero of mine for many years, even before I knew half of his wonderful story. I am grateful to Ed's wife, Pat, and his son, Kit, for helping me to fill in the portrait of this remarkable man.

Ed was born in East Cleveland on January 11, 1909, and is 96 years young. As Kit points out, Ed is one of the few people around today who can claim that they grew up on a farm in Shaker Heights. Ed is also one of the few people around today who can say that they saw Babe Ruth play baseball. Ed is notorious for many things, but one of them is that he is a die-hard sports fan. In fact, Ed and his brother were interviewed on TV at the Indians' last game in Municipal Stadium. Why was that newsworthy? Because they were also there when the Indians first began playing at Municipal Stadium.

After having served as president of both his junior and senior classes at Shaw High School, it was our good fortune that Ed chose the College of Wooster to further his education. A member of the Class of 1931, Ed was an English major, was active in theater and several literary societies, was a reporter and columnist for the campus newspaper, *The Voice*, was the editor of the yearbook, and was senior class president, to name a few of his activities. In addition to all of this, Ed worked his way through college.

Fresh out of college in the depths of the depression, Ed found himself pounding the pavement for months in search of a job in which he could put that degree to work, finally landing a job earning \$16 a week as a salesman in a new department called the "Epicure Shop" at the May Company in Cleveland. Ed admits that he didn't even know what an epicure was when he was hired, but it didn't take him long to begin honing his sales and management skills, and he soon moved on, first to the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company, and later to American Seating.

At the age of 33, with World War II raging, Ed felt compelled to enlist in the Army. He became a sharpshooter, and qualified as a Volunteer Officer Candidate during his 13 weeks of basic training, and was sent first to

Fort Benning, where he was commissioned as a second lieutenant, and then to Fort McClellan to train new recruits. Affectionately known by those recruits as “Old Man Arn” at the ripe old age of 35, Ed believed that he was too old for combat, and was somewhat astounded to find himself being shipped to the European theater of operations as a platoon leader with the F Company, 119th Regiment, 30th Division, in 1944. Spending sixteen months in combat on the front lines, Ed saw action in the hedgerows of Normandy, the Battle of Mortain, the push through northern France and the Netherlands, the Battle of the Bulge, the Ardennes Campaign, and the invasion of the German heartland to the Elbe River, earning two Silver Stars, a Bronze Star, two Purple Hearts, and the rank of captain, along the way. Ed’s distinguished service also earned him induction into the Ohio Veterans Hall of Fame in 2003.

When Ed returned to the States at the end of the War, he rejoined American Seating in Dallas, Texas. It was there, in the local officers club, that a young woman caught Ed’s eye one night. In his inimitable fashion, Ed tells it this way: “I said to Charlie, the bartender, who knew me rather too well, ‘Who’s that good looking gal with the second lieutenant?’ He replied, ‘She’s one of the nicest girls who comes in here. She’s not your type.’” To make a long story short, Ed and Pat celebrated their 57th wedding anniversary this past April. They are the proud parents of five children, one foster daughter and a Rotary exchange student from Australia, with whom they have maintained close ties. Ed’s children are equally proud of him, and are eager to tell tales of what a wonderful father he has been: despite his fastidious nature (Ed files his socks by color, and lines up his hangers an inch apart in military fashion), Ed filled his children’s days with magic and make believe, and instilled in them a love for several of his passions: sports, reading, and volunteerism.

So how did the Arns end up back in Wooster? And did Ed ever get to put that College of Wooster English degree to good use? In 1958, Howard Lowry, then President of the College, persuaded Ed to move his young family back to Wooster and to utilize his sales skills as the College’s Director of Development. In that capacity, Ed was instrumental in the Kauke Hall renovation of 1960, and is legendary for his fund-raising efforts there, where he once logged over 7,000 miles in 36 straight days on the road, to put the alumni building fund’s one million dollar campaign more than \$100,000 over the top. In 1963, Ed became the Director of Alumni Relations at the College, and held that position until 1974. Those efforts are

only part of the story of his involvement in College affairs, however. He is a charter member of the Downtown Rebounders Club, and continues to be active in the “W” Association. He has helped to recruit many an athlete to the College of Wooster. For his efforts, Ed was inducted into the “W” Association’s Athletic Hall of Fame, and was honored earlier this summer as the College’s Distinguished Alumni Award Recipient for 2005.

Following his retirement from the College, Ed embarked on his fourth career, serving as Executive Director of the United Way of Wooster for three years, and then became a consultant for the International Executive Service Corp. in Costa Rica. Along the way, Ed has served the community in numerous capacities: as Co-President, with Pat, of the Beall Avenue PTA, the Friends of the Library and the Men’s Association of First Presbyterian Church; as Finance Chairman of the Boy Scouts of America, Killbuck District; Secretary of the Optimist Club; member of the YMCA board of trustees and an active volunteer with the swim team; the list goes on and on, as do the honors that have been bestowed upon Ed. He has been inducted into no less than five halls of fame, including, in addition to those already mentioned, the Wayne County Sports Hall of Fame, and the Ohio Optimist Club and Ohio Elks Club halls of fame.

A life-long prolific reader himself, Ed has authored numerous articles and speeches over the years, and completed his first book, *Black and Gold: The History of College of Wooster Athletics, 1870-1945* last year. But perhaps the best is yet to come. Ed, we are all eagerly awaiting the publication of *Arn’s War: Memoirs of a World War II Infantryman* in the very near future. Described as an exceptional account of a man who came of age during the World War II generation, *Arn’s War* is said to provide readers with “keen insights into the daily life of soldiers locked in gruesome events far beyond their experience and describes how it feels to be under fire, to suffer a wound, to agonize over the deaths of friends, to endure true suffering, to sacrifice, and to survive.”

Ed, we salute you, and thank you for your exceptional service, to our club, our community and our country.