



Harry T. Wilks

March 11, 2014

Harry T. Wilks passed away peacefully at his home on March 11, 2014, his 89th birthday. He dedicated himself to improving his community in many large and small ways. Born in Chicago on March 11, 1925, he moved to Hamilton at the age of two. He attended St. Ann and St. Peter Elementary Schools, Wilson Junior High and Hamilton High School, where he was voted class president and played varsity basketball. He served four years in the Pacific during WWII and returned to the area to attend Ohio University, Miami University and University of Cincinnati earning a degree in Law. After marrying his high school sweetheart, Patricia Stoll, he joined attorney Clem Pater in the practice of law. His interest in Civic responsibility was evident early on as he served as Democratic State Representative, Hamilton City Councilman, and the leader of campaigns for the YMCA, United Way, Red Cross, and Easter Seals. He, along with his brothers and sister, renovated St. Raphael Social Service Center in Hamilton in honor of their parents. He was founder of the City of Sculpture Committee and a founding member of the Hamilton Civic Theater. He was an early funder of Kyle Braid scholarships, sending students to Colorado for leadership training. He was voted "Outstanding Young Man" by the Chamber of Commerce in 1960 and in 1992 he was named Hamilton's "Citizen of the Year". He served on the Cincinnati Opera Board, where he had the same box seats for over 40 years, and funded the Harry T. Wilks Creative Director position. At age 70, he provided a lasting legacy to the community of Hamilton and the tri-state area by his founding of Pyramid Hill Sculpture Park

on 320 acres which he saved from development and donated to the park. The park, one of the largest in the country, features monumental sculptures set in a park-like setting overlooking the Miami River Valley, and offers many artistic and cultural opportunities to the community. He established the Harry T. Wilks Foundation, which sends students from local high schools to Italy every year to study the classics first hand and continues to fund other worthwhile endeavors in the area. He established and funded the Hamilton City Education Awards, which honors outstanding educators and provides funding for original educational projects, proposed by local educators. He also sponsored contests in geography and history at Hamilton schools to foster interest in these two subjects which he had enjoyed. His legacy at Miami University (Hamilton and Oxford) supports two causes he was especially passionate about, furthering the arts and providing educational opportunity. The Harry T. Wilks Conference Center and Harry T. Wilks Lecture Series were dedicated in Hamilton in 1992, bringing speakers of international renown to lecture free of charge at the Miami Hamilton campus. The Harry T. Wilks Theater at the Armstrong Student Center was dedicated this year at Miami University. In addition he supports the Wilks Scholarship program which provides approximately 15 scholarships per year at the Miami Hamilton campus, and founded the Harry T. Wilks Leadership Institute at the Oxford campus which develops ethical and transformational leadership and ensures decision making should be based on enduring principles. His commitment to Miami University also led him to serve on its Board of Trustees. Though he was dedicated to his local community, he travelled extensively and was a man of the world. During his lifetime he visited all 7 continents, including a trip to Antarctica and a trip behind the "iron curtain". When his family was young, he took several months off from his law practice every summer to travel the world with his wife and two daughters, sometimes towing an airstream trailer. He was preceded in death by his sister, Margarite "Marge" Handel and brother Francis "Deed" Wilks. He is survived by his two daughters, Barbara Wilks (New York City) and Nanci Lanni and husband Nick (Hamilton); his brother, Bi