

Eulogy for Charles O. Carothers, M.D.

Literary Club

12 October 2015

The death of Charles O. Carothers was recorded here in Cincinnati on August 16, 2015. At the age of 92, he was the longest living member of the Literary Club, having joined in 1959 and having participated actively for the following 56 years.

A native Cincinnati, after graduating from Walnut Hills, Chuck did his undergraduate work at Williams College and completed medical school at Harvard. After serving in the Navy, he returned to Cincinnati and became the third generation of orthopedic surgeons in his family. This began with his grandfather Dr. Robert O. Carothers; his uncle and long-time Literary Club member Dr. Ralph Carothers; his son Dr. Thomas Carothers, II; and his grandson Dr. Joshua T. Carothers.

Chuck's interests were many and varied and he pursued each and all with an energy, a curiosity, a tenacity, and an enthusiasm.

His mother, known to family and friends as Squaw, was herself interested in theater and he picked up on that interest and considered a career in that direction. However, he later explained to his family that he thought it better to try to be a first-rate doctor than a third-rate actor and so he was able to pursue his professional skills and passion and still devote himself to advocacy for theater over a period of many decades.

A long-time board member and guiding spirit of the Playhouse in the Park, he subsequently took a defining role in the Ensemble Theatre in Cincinnati. Shortly, the theater will be named for him and his wife Lucille as a tribute to the commitment they both felt and both shared with that innovative organization.

His love of art extended across many cultures with a special focus on Cincinnati artists. He derived pleasure from hunting and fishing; from flying and skiing and sailing and golf; from travels around the globe and annual holidays in Michigan and Florida; and from regular bridge games at the University Club.

In 1986, Chuck received the Corbett Award for individual contribution to the arts. The recognition saluted his unparalleled 11 year presidency of the Playhouse in the Park Board which, without his leadership, faced closing in 1974. He turned a deficit into a financially viable operation and continued his dedication to theatre which extended all the way back to the drama program at Walnut Hills.

During his membership in the Literary Club and his eventual election as an Honorary Member, he presented many papers on a wide range of subjects: the first in 1972 and the last in 2006. His was a combination of intellect, humor, and forthrightness. There was no mistaking where Chuck stood on any subject, and he was as direct as anyone

could possibly be. His integrity was unimpeachable, and his vigor laced with the caring, the pugnacious, and the fun-loving. Long-time Playhouse managing artistic producer Ed Stern, himself the subject of Howard Tomb's Literary Club paper "*Bow to Stern*" remembers a classic Carothers meeting he and Howard had with Chuck. The subject was another in a number of financial asks. Howard, at a First Watch breakfast table, was fumbling around before making the request and the always direct doctor fumed: "get to the point. I call a spade a fucking shovel."

His long-term involvement with and contributions to the Literary Club serve as a proxy for his same enduring engagement to this community. The Club and Cincinnati itself are richer for his 92 years among us. His proudest legacy is his wonderful wife; his three children; three children-in-law; eight grandchildren; and ten great grandchildren. We're all the better for the life of Chuck Carothers.

Paul G. Sittenfeld