

Memorial

Ernest Gordon Muntz

When Ernest Gordon Muntz was president of the Literary Club in 1995-96, at least eighty percent of you were not here to observe him. He was tall and took the podium erect with the bearing of a bird colonel in the US Air Force Reserve. Some of us are still around to remember that presence clearly. He died June 5, 2019 in a Deupree House cottage at age 95, having moved there in 2012 from Augusta, Georgia, with his wife Marjorie who predeceased him. They would have been married 70 years.

Ernie was born and raised in Buffalo, where his father was a pastor and Marjorie's father was deacon. His BA is from Wheaton College, received after service as an officer in the Army Air Corps during WW II in the Philippines and Okinawa. He went on to complete a Ph.D. in history at the University of Rochester. He remained active in the Air Force reserve, as a liaison officer with the newly established US Air Force Academy and helped with the AF ROTC at college campuses until retiring as full colonel with 31 years of active and reserve duty.

Following teaching stints at Blue Mountain College in Mississippi and Union University in Tennessee, Ernie arrived at the University of Cincinnati in 1961 as a history professor. Eight years later, he became dean of Raymond Walters College (now UC Blue Ash), a position he held until 1990 when he retired. He is still the longest serving dean in that college's history. I first met him on the University's Council of Deans, where his crisp sagacity tempered the hot blood of us younger deans of that era.

Muntz joined the Literary Club in 1971; and during his approximately thirty-year membership, he contributed ten papers. His first paper, titled "Not a Demagogue, He," focused on the conflict in New York between Catholics and Protestants over the place of religion in public

education during the governorship of William Seward. Now, you can take the historian out of the classroom, but he is still a historian. And Muntz capped this first presentation with 62 endnotes, a salute to his training but perhaps overdoing it a bit for club members. Later contributions, which combined both personal and professional insights, are notable for their intelligence and wry sense of humor . . . but no footnotes.

A good example of his style is shown in his 1982 paper, "For 3 ¢ Plain." Ernie provided a detailed account of this country's acquisition of the Louisiana Purchase, and he summed up the complicated narrative in the following: "And so one might say that in the Louisiana Purchase of 1803 we were buying land from a country that had no right to sell it, represented by two diplomats who had no right to buy it and who didn't even know the boundaries of the land they were contracting for, representing a president firmly convinced it was unconstitutional to add to the territory of the United States by purchase, and with money we didn't have but indirectly borrowed from England so that France could use it to buy guns and ammunition with which to kill British soldiers."

In addition to being a long time member of our club, Ernie Muntz distinguished himself in several capacities as a club officer. He served as secretary from 1992 to 1994; as vice-president in 1994-1995; and as president in 1995-96. What comes most readily to mind, at least to some, is Ernie's outstanding work as secretary. His secretarial efforts were marvels of concision. A review of the minutes of those days reveals that his summary of an individual performance seldom exceeded one page. Ernie's wit and deft understanding of what the reader was trying to convey were exemplary. He combined a succinct analysis of the argument of the paper with his perception of what was at the heart of the matter.

Additionally, Ernie revived a dormant tradition of the Club, putting together at year's end a Secretarial Report, taking an inventory of the types of papers and the number of each presented that year. These efforts were not without humor, and members of this memorial committee remember

them with affection. This tradition has long since again fallen into desuetude. During his presidential year, he ably steered the Club through several turbulent issues, such as whether cigars should be offered at the anniversary dinner and whether the Club should return to the “tradition” of introducing guests at the beginning of the meeting. Most significantly, he oversaw the initial planning for the Club’s 150th anniversary, celebrated in 1999. After their retirements, Ernie and Marjorie (who retired as a professor of education at NKU and UC) traveled widely, leaving footprints on all seven continents. They will be united in the Big Ridge Cemetery near Glenville, North Carolina, where Marjorie was born.

The Muntz’s had three children: Carolyn Crosthwaite of Denvill, New Jersey; Deborah Krehbeil of Cincinnati, Ohio; and Dr. Howard G. Muntz of Seattle, Washington. And they enjoyed six grandchildren and eight great grandchildren.

Ernest Muntz was not only highly intelligent but had genuine affection for his fellow members and a healthy respect for Club traditions. As we used to say: He was “clubbable”.

Respectfully Submitted,

Gordon Christenson, Chairman

Anthony Covatta

Robert Vitz