

When asked about his proudest moments with The Erie County Community Foundation, **Melvyn J. Stauffer** stated that speaking at the Sandusky Rotary Club meeting announcing the Foundation's creation is one that he continues to celebrate. After spending many years as a lawyer representing Sandusky clients with large amounts of wealth to invest, Stauffer became interested in the fact that the area had no community foundation for charitable funds. This, in combination with his generosity and benevolent character, motivated Stauffer to help found the Sandusky/Erie County Community Foundation, now known as the Erie County Community Foundation, an organization of which he was the first chairman. Since this time, Stauffer has become a philanthropic icon in the community, his work in both the legal and non-profit sectors benefiting countless members of Sandusky and beyond.



Stauffer was born on October 21, 1926 in Brookville, Ohio to Melvin John Stauffer and Ruth Pearson Stauffer. He attended the Brookville school district along with his siblings Evalou, Gloria Ann, and William Joseph, and in the spring of 1944 he graduated from Brookville High School in a class of 39 students. The summer immediately following graduation, he enrolled as a freshman at Otterbein College and began taking basic courses. While at Otterbein, he pledged Eta Phi Mu fraternity and played on the varsity basketball team during the winter season. His high school and early college years were at a time when the United States was involved in World War II, however, and on March 8, 1945 Stauffer was called into the Army Air Corps to become a navigator. By the time he completed basic training and entered the waiting phase to be sent overseas, the war was coming to an end as Japan surrendered in August of 1945. Three months later, Stauffer was discharged.

He returned to Otterbein and although he did complete the year in May, decided to transfer to The Ohio State University, where in September of 1946 he enrolled as a student in the School of Architecture. While at OSU, he pledged Acacia fraternity and, after deciding architecture was not in his future, took up other studies. He graduated in December of 1947, and from January to May of 1948, Stauffer taught high school science, biology, chemistry, and physics at Brookville High School. In September of that year, Stauffer enrolled as a freshman at the University of Michigan Law School, where he would complete his law degree and meet his future wife, Mary Peterson.

The story of how Stauffer met Mary begins when one of Stauffer's friends, Fred, visited him at Michigan. Along with another of his friends, Ken, the three young men were set up with blind dates and the six of them went to a university hockey game. Mary was Fred's date, as she had been set up with Fred through a friend of Stauffer's. Following the evening, Stauffer decided to call Mary and ask her on a date, even though he was not with her originally. The two hit it off immediately, and continued dating as Stauffer finished his junior and senior years in law school and Mary completed her sophomore and junior years as an undergraduate. In 1953 the two were married, and they now have five children, fourteen grandchildren, and one great-grandchild.



Stauffer graduated from the UM Law School in June of 1951, and after completion of the Ohio Bar Exam, became employed at Flynn, Py & Kruse, the downtown Sandusky law firm to which Stauffer was connected with through the Law School's placement office. During his early career years, his work mostly centered around labor negotiations and arbitration, and in the 1950s he participated in litigation with the Federal Trade Commission. One of the highlights of his law career occurred in 1963 when he represented the Lester Morton Truck-



ing Company of Tiffin in the United States Supreme Court after the company was subjected to a secondary boycott by the Teamsters Union. During this time, to represent a client in front of the Supreme Court as such a young lawyer was rare and for Stauffer the undertaking was quite an accomplishment. In the following years, he continued in the areas of business law and estate planning until more recently when his practice became limited to the representation of private and charitable foundations.

Stauffer's relationship with the City of Sandusky extends far beyond his work in the law. In the early 1970s, he joined the Board of Trustees of the Good Samaritan Hospital Association, and following this played an active role in the 1985 consolidation of Good Samaritan Hospital and Sandusky Memorial Hospital, as the two merged to form Firelands Community Hospital. In 2005, when the Firelands Regional Health System Board of Directors voted to create a development department that would help raise money and continue the vision of the hospital, Stauffer's leadership allowed the department to raise more than \$13 million in ten years. Stauffer also continues to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Foundation for Firelands.

In the 1960s, Stauffer's work was crucial in the establishment of Bowling Green State University, Firelands College. He was the first chairman of the Firelands College Advisory Board, and he assisted in the creation of a public-private business plan that opened the Caryl Crane Children's Theatre. Along with his work in establishing the Erie County Community Foundation, Stauffer helped form the Frost-Parker Foundation and the Sam S. and Rose Stein Foundation, where he served as legal counsel and as a trustee on the Board of Trustees and would later help secure over \$1 million to assist in the founding of Stein Hospice Service, Inc. He also served as President of the Randolph J. and Estelle M. Dorn Foundation.

Throughout his career, Stauffer has been awarded with countless recognitions, such as the 2011 Community Service Award at BGSU Firelands College's annual Recognition Program, the 2016 Foundation for Firelands Legacy Society Lifetime Achievement Award, and his 2017 induction into the Ohio Senior Citizens Hall of Fame. He was the past president of many local organizations, including the Sandusky YMCA, Erie County Bar Association, Sandusky Jaycees, Sandusky Junior Chamber of Commerce, Sandusky Lion's Club, and Grace Episcopal Church Vestry. To this day, Stauffer and his family continue to give back to community organizations, promoting a charitable and distinguished legacy that will thrive for generations to come.