The A.C. Buehler Legacy

A S FERNWOOD FARM passed into legend, and Victor Adding Machine Company, later Victor Comptometer Corporation, would join other illustrious names at the Made in Chicago Museum, the one man who was at the heart of the success of two such disparate enterprises, A. C. Buehler, found the time and resources to give back in no small measure to the communities around him.

When Albert Carl “Shorty” Buehler passed away in September 1971, his generosity had already found worthwhile recipients in both fledgling and established institutions. Northwest Community Hospital was founded in 1959, and Buehler was an early donor, especially supporting the pediatric ward. He would also contribute considerable time as a trustee and chairman of the board from 1961 to 1967. A supporter of Little City, he delighted in bringing the children to Fernwood for days in the country. Family and staff were involved in these visits and shared the happiness of the children as they walked with the ponies and enjoyed rides in the wagons and carriages.

Elmhurst College was founded in 1871 and its library has a distinguished history as a study center and for its print collections which total over 220,000 volumes and thousands of audio visual materials. In the 1960s, the student population almost doubled, and thus did demands on the library. A.C. Buehler, then a trustee of the college, came forward to offer financial assistance in the building of a new library. It was dedicated in December 1971, just three months after Buehler’s death. Today, part of the mission of the librarians at the A.C. Buehler Library is to select and highlight collections of books, periodicals, electronic resources, and multimedia materials on topics of interest to the Elmhurst College campus and the community. Buehler was a graduate of the University of Illinois. He also received an honorary Doctor of Laws degree in 1968 from Elmhurst College.

A household name in the Barrington and Palatine areas is the Buehler Y. First opened in 1968 as the Countryside YMCA in a converted house on Johnson Street in Palatine, by 1970 its board of directors had purchased 10 acres of land on Northwest Highway to build a new “Y”. In 1971, A.C. Buehler and his family made a $750,000 contribution towards the construction of the new YMCA. In April 1973, the name was changed to the Buehler YMCA in memory of its principal benefactor.

These major and many smaller gifts to the community were all made during A.C. Buehler’s lifetime. At his death, his estate made a provision for the creation of a Buehler Family Foundation, first headed by A.C. Jr., and now by his grandson as president. A.C. Jr. and his wife, Patricia Holmes, also created their own foundation, and the gifts of both, with a focus on health-related initiatives, continue to this day. They are a testament to A.C. Buehler’s lifetime of hard work, extraordinary achievement, and ultimately, love of his family and community.