



Soaring 220 feet above the intersection of I-70 & I-75 and seen by thousands of vehicles daily, this 120 foot wingspan monument to the Wright Flyer will symbolize Dayton, Ohio throughout the world.

# The Wright Icon News

Bringing an Icon to Dayton - The Birthplace of Aviation

Today's Modern Aerospace Hub - Tomorrow's Aviation

April 2010  
Volume 2, Issue 2

## Wright Bros and Flyer - The Soul of Dayton By Louis Chmiel

*Editor's Note: Mr. Chmiel has graciously agreed to the Wright Image Group's use of his article in this newsletter to support the rationale for building a monument of the 1905 Wright Flyer, inextricably linking it with the Wright Brothers and Dayton, Ohio. The original article, titled "The Importance of October 5<sup>th</sup> 1905," was written in 2005 to celebrate the Flyer's centennial anniversary. It is longer than a single newsletter will accommodate, so we will serialize it over two issues. Mr. Chmiel is currently working on a book on the Ohio pioneer family of the Wright Brothers.*

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The soul of Dayton and the State of Ohio is imbued with the realization that two of our own, two men who walked among our ancestors as apparently ordinary members of the community, captured lightning in a bottle one hundred years ago and raised the vision of the world.

Bill Gates said of the Wright Brothers, "The Wrights created one of the greatest cultural forces since the development of writing, for their

invention effectively became the world wide web of that era, bringing people, languages, ideas and values together. The Wright Brothers and their invention, then, sparked a revolution as far reaching as the industrial revolution and the digital revolution."

This is our legacy as Daytonians and Ohioans to preserve and to pass on to future generations. It is the legacy of two unpretentious, grounded men who walked the streets of Dayton with a vision that was set in the skies. They possessed the character to stay the course through years of

incremental successes, and the genius to reason through to its completion an age old dream of man. Of the dream, Wilbur Wright once said, "I sometimes think that the desire to fly after the fashion of the birds is an ideal handed down to us by our ancestors who in their grueling travels across trackless lands in prehistoric times, looked enviously on the birds soaring freely through

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*The great bird will  
make its first flight, fill  
all records with its  
fame, and bring eternal  
glory to its birthplace*

*- Leonardo da Vinci*

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See [Wright Bros and Flyer](#) on page 3

## More Support Lining Up

University of Dayton President Dan Curran: "The Wright Bros. plane at the intersection of I-70 & 75 would be a significant icon identifying the Dayton region. It will make a very positive statement about Dayton and the entire area."

The Clayton City Council on February 4th, and the Xenia City Council on March 25<sup>th</sup>, approved Resolutions of Support for the Wright Icon, adding those communities to an expanding list of municipalities that support the concept of the monument.

## Why 220 Feet High?

It's not as arbitrary as it may seem. The height of our proposed monument was determined after a scientific experiment!

About 5 years ago, Steve Brown, our architect, was wondering how high the Flyer had to rise to be visible on the freeway approaches to the intersection of I-70 / I-75. Steve hit on an idea that stemmed from the 11" helium-filled balloons he uses prior to balloon flights to determine wind currents. His thought was that he could fill a larger balloon with the helium he keeps in his shop for that purpose, tether it to the ground, and raise it to a height that provided adequate visibility. Realizing he would need a team to do this, he enlisted the help of his son Tim, 15 years old at the time, and daughter Michelle, 12.

Steve found 300 feet of mason's line for the tether, tied a knot in it every 25 feet and purchased a 4 foot diameter weather balloon. His idea was to take Tim and Michelle to the anticipated site of the monument overlooking the interchange, fill the big balloon with helium, and tie it to the knotted tether line. Tim's and Michelle's job as ground crew would be to raise or lower the balloon in response to Steve's instructions as he drove his car east, west, north, and south on the highways. Of course, in those days before such wide-spread use of cell phones, walkie-talkies used for ballooning provided the all-important communications link between Steve and his ground crew. He would carry one in his car and leave the other with them.

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*“Sounding”  
the  
atmosphere  
for the  
proper  
height!*

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On a day with good weather and almost no wind, the test team set out from home equipped with balloon, tether, helium, walkie-talkies, and peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. They set up shop at the future monument site and got ready. Steve instructed Tim and Michelle to let the line out to the fourth knot so the balloon would float 100 feet above the ground, and set off in his car.

The first pass, north on I-75, revealed that 100 feet was just too low. Steve couldn't see the balloon above all the “ground clutter” (road signs, neon lights, trees, buildings, etc.) until he was way too close to the site. The Flyer was going to have to be much higher to have the commanding aerial presence it deserved at a much greater distance; so he radioed the kids and told them to raise it two more knots (to 150 feet). He made a couple more passes, still wasn't satisfied, and finally had them let out two more knots (to 200 feet!). This finally did it. The balloon was visible going west on I-70 at the intersection of Hwy 202 (close to the current location of Gander Mountain), and coming east it was visible approaching the Dixie Drive overpass. On I-75 southbound, he could see the balloon a quarter mile south of the Highway 40 interchange, and northbound it came into view about the time he passed the Wyse Road overpass. He had his answer!

To close the loop on this story, Tim is now a 20-year-old student at DeVry University studying computer networking and communications, and is a glider pilot in his own right. Michelle, 17, is a student at Troy Christian High School, wants to be a veterinarian, and is learning to be a hot air balloon pilot. Steve continues as the Wright Image Group architect and continues to fly balloons, gliders and fixed wing aircraft. The Wright Flyer monument has grown up to reach its 220 foot height!

***(Where did the extra 20 feet come from, you ask? That's the height between the Flyer's upper and lower wings...!)***

Wright Bros and Flyer from page 1

space, at full speed, above all obstacles, on the infinite highway of the air."

In this late summer and early autumn of 2005 we reaffirm our realization of the Wrights' visionary work here in Ohio through the celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the completion of their invention, the fully functional airplane. After the burst of euphoria at the success of their first fleeting flights in 1903 the Wright Brothers did not become full of themselves and lose sight of their dream's fruition. At legendary Huffman Prairie flying field outside of Dayton, they labored and brainstormed for two more years to bring their invention to completion in the fall of 1905.

The story of the Wright Brothers is the story of two seemingly regular men whose success has given currency to the dreams of other ordinary people who have had visions of what might be and have pursued the fulfillment of those dreams. The inspiration of the Wright Brothers comes from their boldness to think original thoughts and their tireless effort to fulfill their vision no matter what obstacles they encountered. How many imaginations, young and old alike, have been inspired by the lore that begins, "Two simple bicycle mechanics from Ohio...."

The Wright Brothers had a deep and abiding identity as Daytonians and Ohioans, that came



from growing up steeped in the knowledge that their ancestors were among the original small band of settlers who scaled the banks of the Miami River in 1796 to create the town of Dayton. There are numerous examples over their lives that show through words and actions their interest in reflecting their success on their hometown, and the State of Ohio. In 1903 they were deliberate in telegraphing back to their family in Dayton news of their successful flights on December 17<sup>th</sup> so that the announcement to the world would come out of Dayton, home of their ancestors. When investors offered the Wrights the opportunity to set up a

manufacturing plant on the East Coast they insisted that their planes be manufactured in Dayton. In 1910, Wilbur Wright in a speech in New York City said, "If I were to suggest to a young man how to be successful in life, I would say choose good parents and begin life in Ohio." Their autumn of 1905 burst into full and unfettered flight on Huffman Prairie was the pinnacle of their reflective successes.

After their first short flights at their southern test site in December of 1903 the Wrights immediately upon return to Dayton began plans for a new plane and were at work building by January of 1904. Wilbur and Orville Wright were tenacious and steadfast in their pursuit of the completion of the airplane. In the years 1904 and 1905 they made 154 flight attempts at Huffman Prairie. So imposing was their task that it took them 28 flights in 1904 before they replicated their longest flight of 852 feet from 1903. It was cerebral and tedious, and rough and tumble work.

### Our Supporting Communities

Beavercreek  
Butler Twp  
Centerville  
Clayton  
Fairborn  
Kettering  
Miami Twp  
Washington Twp  
Xenia

***(To be continued in the July 2010 Newsletter)***

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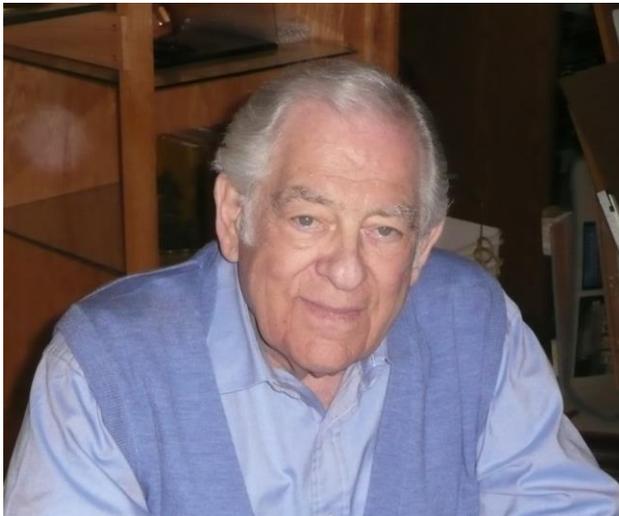
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**Board Member Spotlight**



**Walter Ohlmann - Secretary**

Walter is the President and CEO of the advertising agency Penny/Ohlmann/Neiman, Inc., whose business office hosts the Wright Image Group. Knowledgeable about every facet of marketing and advertising, Walter maintains an active management role on a number of accounts, and is involved in strategic planning on many more. He has guided local, regional, national and international accounts over the years and is the "in-house" coach to the client services staff on research, strategy and implementation. His energetic support and expertise have been vital to the Wright Image Group.

Walter was also very active in other community, civic and charitable organizations including the Montgomery County Juvenile Court Advisory Council, Hospice, Dayton Foundation, Kettering Medical Center Foundation, Governor's Committee for a Drug-Free Ohio, Dayton Dialogue on Race Relations, and many more. He's currently either president or past president of a dozen organizations. In 1995, Walter received the prestigious American Advertising Federation's Silver Medal Award for his service to clients, the marketing industry and his community.

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**Published by:** Wright Image Group, Inc.  
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