

# The Triumph of Flight®

Bringing an Icon to Dayton - The Birthplace of Aviation

Branding America's Only National Aviation Heritage Area  
Memorializing the Achievement of Flight

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Soaring 270 feet above the intersection of I-70 & I-75 and seen by thousands of vehicles daily, this 144 foot wingspan monument to the Wright Flyer will symbolize Dayton, Ohio throughout the world.



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## WIG Mourns Loss of a Stalwart

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George Gianopulos, for many years an enthusiastic, dedicated member of the Wright Image Group's Board of Directors, and for the last eight years, its chief fund-raising officer, passed away in his suite at One Lincoln Park in Kettering early Sunday morning, January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

George had been experiencing several health issues in the past months that had gradually limited his ability to fully participate in the

WIG's activities, but he fought through most of that and remained engaged with his Development Committee. However, earlier last Fall he realized that he would have to limit his activities until those issues were put to rest. That led him to appoint Joe Lehman acting Director of Development until Joe could stand for election in his own right in December.

Meanwhile he scheduled a necessary heart surgery at the Cleveland Clinic. That operation was to have taken place on Tuesday the 8<sup>th</sup>, two days after George passed away.

George was easily the most passionate board member about building the Triumph of Flight – always pushing us onward and keeping our level of excitement up. It was impossible to be pessimistic or discouraged when George was in the room!



His enthusiasm came from his roots as a pilot. During the Korean war the Marines sent him to Naval Flight Training at Pensacola. As a Marine fighter pilot, he polished his stick and rudder skills flying off carriers. One of his favorite stories was how he returned to the states, and for a while got to live the Tom Cruise "Top Gun" lifestyle – flying fighters, playing beach volleyball, and drinking beer – in southern California! That came to an end when he resigned his commission and returned to Ohio to marry Jodie, his wife of 60 years. However, his love of flying and abiding interest in aviation continued – especially the aviation heritage of Dayton. His telephone answering message at Gianopulos & Associates included the phrase, "Dayton...the birthplace of aviation!" As so aptly written in his obituary, "George lived life from a bird's eye view. Strong and charismatic, he dared to stand by his convictions and live life as he saw it. In his soul, George was the young man in the cockpit; a dreamer with a whim to see greater things than what meets the eye, and it is with peace in our hearts that we let him soar among the clouds once again."



Mission accomplished, George – a splendid job! Your name will be forever coupled to the Triumph of Flight. Heartfelt thanks from all of us! You're cleared to RTB *{return to base}*. The forecast is CAVU *{ceiling and visibility unlimited}*, and there's no more need to check six – it's all friendly skies from here!

## One Step Closer to Reality

Our Triumph of Flight® monument is one step closer to the start of construction because of two very generous recent commitments from local Dayton Region philanthropies.

The Berry Family Foundation and the Kettering Fund have made separate commitments to the Wright Image Group to support the acquisition of additional land at the planned location for the monument at the southwest corner of Interstates 70 and 75. Together, those commitments represent a significant step in our fund-raising plan and constitute credible evidence of local support. To capitalize on that, we issued a press release that was picked up by the Dayton Daily News and the Dayton Business Journal as well as the Associated Press. What follows is extracted from that press release:

“The Triumph of Flight will stand 270 feet tall, just short of the height of the Statue of Liberty. The Wright Image Group, Inc., formed solely to build this iconic structure, selected this site about six miles north of Dayton because of its high visibility to the 65+ million vehicles that pass through the intersection annually and for its location – the heart of the nation’s only National Aviation Heritage Area and not far from Huffman Prairie, where Orville and Wilbur Wright perfected the world’s first practical aircraft. The Group initially received a *{conditional}* pledge of 3.6 acres of land at that site from titleholder Singer Properties and plans to purchase an additional 8.3 acres to support its current project plans. The Berry Foundation will fund the first year of a planned option-to-buy, and the Kettering Fund will cover an environmental assessment and the site engineering services needed to meet storm water runoff and retention requirements.



“While we still have a great deal more work to do,” said Executive Director Curt Nelson, “I cannot overstate the importance of having the support of these two Dayton-based and highly respected organizations. As we reach out to potential benefactors having a more national focus, a solid base of support locally is extremely important.”

“According to chief architect, Steve Brown, ‘This monument will be visible from up to three miles away and will consist of a 144-foot wingspan, glistening stainless steel facsimile of the Wright Flyer III resting atop a pedestal sheathed in backlit, woven stainless steel panels. Nearly two years after the Wright Brothers succeeded with a “proof of concept” flight at Kitty Hawk in 1903, the Wright Flyer III became the world’s first aircraft to take off successfully, maneuver under full control, and land safely.’ Though the flyer was the brainchild of Orville and Wilbur Wright, the monument is much more than a salute to Dayton’s world-famous brothers. Rather, it is a fitting and lasting tribute to one of the world’s greatest achievements – FLIGHT!”

“The Evolution of Flight Park at the base of the monument will include a reflecting pool, a large plaza imprinted with a world map, and an enclosed 10,000

square foot STEM learning and visitor’s center. A collection of public art and bronze statuary, including Neil Armstrong and John Glenn, will adorn the curvilinear walls and grounds inside the park. Grouped into seven “Triumph” themes, the collection will tell the story of aviation, beginning with Greek mythology and extending to space travel and beyond. Each display will be linked to

See [Step Closer](#) on page 3

*Step Closer* from page 2

interactive digital descriptions as well as geographic locations. Life-size bronze statues of Orville and Wilbur Wright will welcome visitors as they enter the park.

“Once adequate funding is secured, construction will take approximately two years. The Group expects ... a significant positive economic impact on the local economy and on all aviation heritage sites in the Dayton region. The Group hopes to make the monument and park available to the public without an admission fee.

“The Wright Image Group currently estimates the total cost of the project at \$22 million, which includes a \$2 million operating/maintenance endowment. They are actively pursuing pledges from major corporations as well as private foundations and individual donors.”

Judging from the increase in local interest since publication, the press release served its purpose well. Potential corporate donors with whom we are in discussions also took note. This is another small step up “Fund-Raising Mountain!”

## Director Assumes Emeritus Status

As his second term of three years on the Wright Image Group Board of Directors ended in December, Al Leland chose not to accept nomination for another term. His management responsibilities throughout the past year have virtually precluded his active participation on the board, and he chose to make his seat available.

Al has been a strong, effective director who has innumerable times provided sound financial and managerial advice as we navigated the complexities of fund-raising strategies and organizational challenges. More than once his steady hand and experienced insights helped us cut through to the essence of a problem.

We are very grateful he has consented to remain available to us as a Director Emeritus. Thank you for those years of service, Al. We wish you the very best in the future and look forward to your continued counsel.



*Director Emeritus Al Leland*

## Officer and Director Elections Results

At the annual Wright Image Group Board of Directors Meeting in December 2018, the board appointed Mrs. Sandy Anderson an interim board member until her directorship could be confirmed by an affirmative vote at the 2018 Annual Membership Meeting (which followed immediately after the Directors Meeting).

The Board also re-elected the following directors in their respective offices: **Walt Hoy** – Chairman, **Curt Nelson** – Executive Director, **Steve Brown** – Director of Design and Engineering, and **Jacqie Nawroth** – Treasurer.

Newly elected were:

**Joe Lehman** – Director of Development

**Sandy Anderson** – Secretary

***We welcome these two outstanding, dedicated individuals as officers of the Wright Image Group!***

Election of Directors at the Annual Membership Meeting resulted in the re-election of **George Gianopulos** (since deceased), **Amanda Wright Lane**, and **Curt Nelson** for additional three-year terms, and **Sandy Anderson** was confirmed for her initial term. A special welcome to Sandy!

To join, donate, or get information explaining the different contribution and recognition levels, write to us at:

**Triumph of Flight®**

1605 N. Main St  
Dayton, OH 45405

or visit our website,

[www.triumphofflight.org](http://www.triumphofflight.org)

**Annual Membership Dues\***

1 year - \$20

2 years - \$35

3 years - \$50

*\*Applicable to Individuals, Families or Businesses*

**Board Member Spotlight**



**Sandy Anderson - Secretary**

Our newly installed Secretary was born in Dayton, grew up on a farm in Butler Twp, and graduated from Vandalia-Butler High School. She was introduced to the world of flight at her first job working for Aviation Sales in Vandalia – riding in a variety of aircraft from Cessna 150’s to an experimental aircraft known affectionately as “Breezy” because it only had a frame on the fuselage – no skin! She loved it all.

Seventeen years ago, she went to work as the office manager for Gianopulos & Associates (aerospace consultants) in Dayton and remained with the company until George’s recent passing. Because of George’s close involvement with the Wright Image Group, she frequently found herself working in some fashion to support the Group’s efforts to build the Triumph of Flight. For the past several years she has been the board’s acting secretary, taking the minutes at our monthly board meetings.

She always admired George’s philosophy of never giving up, that if you wanted something badly enough, you could

make it happen. George’s passion for the monument was part of the reason for her own passion. As she says, “I want to be able to stand in the park in awe, and tell George, ‘We did it! We never gave up!’”

Over the years, Sandy has been a volunteer for SICSA, the Boy Scouts, and many other organizations. She loves camping and spending time in the outdoors. She and her husband Forrest live in Clayton and have one son who lives in Hilliard OH.

The WIG is a proud partner of the National Aviation Heritage Alliance.

As such, we ask our donors to make checks out to the Aviation Heritage Foundation and mark them so that it is clear the donation is specifically intended for the Wright Image Group.

By flowing our donations through the foundation, the federal government will match a portion of them. This additional funding goes to support the aviation heritage of the entire region. (See instructions below)



**Make checks payable to:  
Aviation Heritage Foundation, Inc.**

**With the following comment  
on the “For” line:**

**“Restricted for WIG”**

**and mail to:**

**Triumph of Flight®  
1605 N. Main St Dayton OH 45405**

**WIG Board of Directors**

- Chairman – Walt Hoy
- Executive Director – Curt Nelson
- Dir Design & Engineering – Steve Brown
- Dir Development – Joe Lehman
- Secretary – Sandy Anderson
- Treasurer – Jacquie Nawroth
- Linda Kahn
- Byron Kentner
- Tom Kleptz
- Bill Koop
- Amanda Wright Lane
- Ralph Link
- Ed Phillips
- Walter Rice

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