LEGENDS

FROM THE HILL TO THE ATRIUM

A Tribute to the Men and Women Who Made It Happen

ISSUE 19

The Breiel Family
What comes to mind when you hear the word “Breiel”? For many people in the Middletown area, it’s probably Breiel Boulevard, one of the city’s major north-south thoroughfares. Long-time Middletonians, however, know the whole story: The road was named after G.W. (Bill) Breiel.

In 1927, Bill came from Cincinnati with his wife, Susan (Sue), and two children, Wilson and Susan, to join Armco Steel, where he rose through the ranks to become general sales manager.

Both Bill and Sue were active in the community. Among her many affiliations, Sue served as chair of the Middletown Hospital Auxiliary from 1939 to 1941. Bill served on the Middletown City Planning Commission for 25 years. Upon his 1965 retirement and move to Arizona, the Planning Commission named an as-yet-to-be-developed road in his name: the now familiar Breiel Boulevard.

The Breiels’ departure from Middletown, however, in no way ended the family’s contributions to the city. Son Wilson took up the banner as one of the city’s most influential executives, civic leaders and philanthropists. His sister, Susan, who was once society editor of the Middletown Journal, died in 2005 at age 77 in New Mexico.

The Next Generation

Wilson, now 93, grew up on South Main Street in the center of what is now Middletown’s downtown historic district. He remembers Middletown having a wonderful family environment. As a child, he played with neighborhood children from some of the city’s
leading families. Wilson attended high school in Middletown and Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, at the Cranbrook School and went on to Cornell University, where he earned a degree in mechanical engineering. From 1943 to 1946, he served as a lieutenant in the U.S. Navy’s V-12 training program.

Wilson joined Armco Steel in 1946. Over a 40-year career, he held numerous positions in Ohio and Texas. As Wilson says, “We did everything but make the steel.” When he retired in 1986 as president of Armco’s Construction Products Division, he was directing 50 plants across the country.

Soon after, the division spun off from Armco to become Contech Construction Products, now based in West Chester, Ohio.
Building a Family

Wilson met his wife, Nancy, on a blind date at the University of Cincinnati Tri Delta House. Originally from Sycamore, Illinois, Nancy attended New Trier High School in Wilmette, Illinois, and went on to study education at Western College (then affiliated with Miami University) and the University of Cincinnati. The couple married in 1950 at the Seventh Presbyterian Church in Cincinnati.

Wilson spent the early portion of his career working for Armco in Houston and Austin, Texas. Daughter Sara, now a realtor in Cincinnati, was born in Texas. Upon returning to Middletown, the family lived on Alamo Road. Wilson was an avid golfer and active member of the Church of the Ascension in Middletown. Wilson and Nancy later downsized to the Woods Condominiums and then, in 2010, to the Deupree House in Cincinnati’s Hyde Park.
Nancy was a member of the Junior League and the Middletown Garden Club. She was also active at Middletown Arts Center, where she painted in oils and watercolors. In 2015, just a month short of their 65th wedding anniversary, Nancy passed away. Wilson continues to reside at Deupree House, where he enjoys playing bridge and socializing with his many friends.

**Champion for Middletown**

Like his father before him, Wilson has been a champion for Middletown and generously given both time and treasure to the institutions and civic causes at the heart of the city, including as chair of both MiddFest and the United Way. He was also chairman of Middletown Federal Bank (now Fifth Third).

Wilson was a founding member and a former chair of the Middletown Community Foundation, which has continued to grow, supporting arts education and community development. Community foundations make things happen, and Wilson says he saw Middletown Community Foundation as an opportunity to help the city fulfill important needs and achieve its goals, especially in a time of transition as old-line businesses were leaving the city.
Visionary Leadership

As a community leader, Wilson has always taken a keen interest in Atrium Medical Center and its predecessor hospitals and has never shied away from the potential for growth and progress. During his time on the hospital board, he served in numerous leadership roles. Under his watch, the board made some of its most important decisions, such as changing the name of Middletown Hospital to Middletown Regional Hospital (MRH), which began the process of regarding the institution as more than the “hospital on the hill.”

Wilson and his board colleagues understood that competition among hospitals was heating up. After adding outpatient surgery and an imaging center, it became clear that the land-locked MRH could not continue to meet the service and quality demands created by population growth and technological advances. In addition, without interstate accessibility, the hospital could not compete with the myriad of emergency facilities and satellites popping up at every highway interchange. With these insights came the stark realization that the hospital needed the ability to grow and continuously improve in order to fulfill its founding mission to build a healthier community. It was time to move.

An early and vocal advocate for Atrium Medical Center, Wilson regards the decision to move and expand the hospital as the most important decision during his time on the board. He and Nancy generously gave to the Foundation to make Atrium a reality. Wilson’s reasoning in a nutshell: “If you don’t stay up, you’re left behind.” And without easy access to the surrounding community and the region, there can be no growth. Wilson sees escalating costs and an intensifying focus on quality of care – including service, technology, education and outcomes – as defining challenges for health care around the country,
Atrium Medical Center included. When competition is moving in, you don’t back off; you strive to be the biggest and the best.

Wilson counts his years as an MRH board member as his most gratifying community service. In Wilson’s opinion, Atrium Medical Center Foundation has played a key role in strengthening the hospital’s quality of care and service. He is impressed with the depth of involvement from community leaders that the Foundation has created and sustains.

These relationships are important for the hospital and the community at large because, as in the past, they lay the groundwork for the hospital’s continued growth.

Have a conversation with Wilson and it soon becomes abundantly clear that he takes pride in his and Nancy’s commitment to community in every place they lived, especially Middletown. Wilson learned the value of civic leadership early on as he watched his parents work hard to uplift their community.

“I can’t imagine why anyone would not do what they can to support their city and its vital institutions;” he says.

With Nancy’s involvement in the arts and city beautification and Wilson’s commitment to Atrium Medical Center, civic leadership and community service, the Breiels are role models for us all.
This article is the 19th in a series of profiles celebrating the 2017 centennial anniversary of Atrium Medical Center (formerly Middletown Hospital and Middletown Regional Hospital). The series honors the men and women whose civic-mindedness and genuine caring for others helped Greater Middletown grow and contributed to the first-class medical center the region boasts today.

Past Legends focused on:
Paul Galeese, Issue 1; E.O. Bauer, MD, and John L. Bauer, MD, Issue 2; Educating Our Caregivers, Issue 3; Russell L. “Rusty” Malcolm, MD, and Albert S. Malcolm, MD, Issue 4; Ann and Arthur Bidwell, Issue 5; Atrium Auxiliary Middletown, Issue 6; Dr. Dick and Charlotte Nisbet, Issue 7; The Wilbur Cohen Family, Issue 8; Middletown Area Federation of Women’s Clubs, Issue 9; Dolly Frieman Casper, Issue 10; The Sawyer Family, Issue 11; Southwest Ohio Businesses, Issue 12; Dr. Raymond and Jean Anne Kiefhaber, Issue 13; Richard “Dick” Slagle, Issue 14; Celebrating 100 Years, Issue 15; The Levey Family, Issue 16; Walter H. Roehll Jr., MD, Issue 17.
Atrium Medical Center Foundation, Issue 18.

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