

CLASS OF 2009

Inductee Biographies

Elmer Armstrong – Alumni

Was born in Monroeville on Feb 9, 1874 and graduated from Monroeville High School in 1891. Throughout the course of his life Elmer was incredibly active in his community. As a young man Elmer worked at Heyman Milling Company. In 1936, Elmer founded his own insurance agency and in 1948 he founded Armstrong and Myers.

Much of Elmer's life was dedicated to service. He served as Worshipful Master and Secretary of the Roby Masonic Lodge. Additionally, he served one term as the Mayor of Monroeville. Elmer was on the Huron County Selective Service Board during World War II as well as being a charter member of the Monroeville Kiwanis Club. His church was very important to him and as such, he acted as the President and Vostryman of the Zion Episcopal Church.

Elmer passed away in December 1959. When he died he left no surviving relatives. He chose to give a substantial portion of his estate to Monroeville High School in order to establish the first scholarship fund. This scholarship is still given and it bears his name. The Elmer Armstrong Scholarship is given each year to the Senior with the highest GPA and has been as much as \$500 to the recipient. Over the course of this scholarship, over 45 students have benefited from Elmer's generosity.

Fred Deering – Alumni

Fred Deering was born and raised on a farm near Kimball. He graduated from Monroeville High School in 1941 and continued his education at Ohio State University. Fred returned to Monroeville where he became a community leader and for 14 years was the Veteran's Vocational Agriculture Instructor, teaching returning WWII veterans farming and business principles. Additionally, when his brother entered the service, Fred became the family farm operator. The farm was expanded in 1952 when Fred built his first broiler chicken house and produced 120,000 broiler chickens per year. He was the first to promote chicken Bar-B-Q's in this area.

Fred served on the Perkins School Board from 1952 until he was elected as Erie County Commissioner from 1961 to 1973. In 1973 Fred was elected to the Ohio House of Representatives, where he stood out for his integrity and honesty. During his tenure in the Ohio House, Fred wrote over 80 bills. Some of his work included: starting the CAUV, encouraging drainage laws to be revised and updated, initiating a .04 cents per gallon wine tax for promotion and research in the Ohio wine industry, supporting and funding agriculture programs including the Ohio Department of Agriculture, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and the Ohio Extension Service. When Fred retired in 1992 he was nicknamed the "Four Billion Dollar Man" because that is how much was raised from gasoline taxes since 1981 as a result of a bill he sponsored. This money has been used to fund construction and repair of Ohio roads and bridges.

The family farm had been converted to raising 260,000 starter pullets and Fred's sons joined the 1,400 acre grain and poultry operation. After retirement, Fred was appointed a Trustee of the Erie Metro Parks, which included the Firelands College McBride Arboretum. With Fred's help, the excavation of a 5.5-acre pond was donated to begin the 25-acre arboretum from a barren field next to BGSU Firelands College Campus. He also helped establish the Edison Woods Reserve, a 1,500-acre virgin timber stand along Lake Erie marshes.

Fred is still active in his community and with his farm, Deering Farm Inc, where he and his late wife Dorthy raised 3 sons and one daughter. He is also busy with his horticulture projects at home and supervising the ever-increasing chicken business with his current wife

Jim Herner – Alumni

Jim Herner was born in Monroeville and graduated from Monroeville High School in 1950. Upon graduation, Jim served our country in the Army during the Korean War. After the war he attended The Ohio State University where he received a degree from the School of Architectural Design. He returned to Monroeville and in 1964 co-founded Janotta & Herner Inc. Beginning as a small building contractor based company, Janotta & Herner steadily grew over the past four decades to become one of the most respected and envied design/build contractors in Northern Ohio. Known for high quality work and a true concern for its employees, JHI has brought many good things to Monroeville. First and foremost, it has brought employment income and jobs to 175 families.

Jim has also been a very active member of his community, serving in the Roby Lodge, the Scottish Rite Freemasonry, Monroeville Kiwanis Club, and the American Legion. Jim was involved in the design and construction of the front that was put on the Legion Building. Jim has also dedicated much of his time to historical preservation projects and historical education in and around Monroeville. Some of these include: Designing and building the agricultural heritage exhibits building at the Huron County Fair, designing and carving the Monroeville Village Seal, designing the layout and helped construct the Fisher Brothers Memorial Park in Norwalk, and completely building new wheelwright wheels for the old cannon in the Monroeville city park.

Active in his church, Jim did the design work on the additions to Trinity Lutheran Church as well as donating materials and supervising the construction including the new parking lot. Finally Jim has been a long time supporter of education in Monroeville. A long partnership with the school is evidenced by the Art and Gay Herner scholarship that is given annually for the past 15 years. It is given to a student to further their education based primarily on need, citizenship, and scholarship. This scholarship has enabled many students to continue their education.

Jim and his late wife, Marilyn, raised four boys in Monroeville. Jim now resides in Norwalk with his current wife, Margaret.

Gene Smith – Alumni

Gene was born in Monroeville and graduated from Monroeville High School in 1982. While at Monroeville Gene played football and wrestled and was Captain of the football team his senior year. Upon graduation Gene attended Heidelberg College, where he played defensive lineman and was team captain. In 1986 Gene graduated with a degree in education and the following year received his masters degree with an emphasis in athletic administration from Ohio University.

Gene began his college-coaching career at Ohio University in 1986 as a graduate assistant and later served as an assistant coach. In 1989, he moved to Edinboro University, where he served as an assistant coach, recruiting coordinator and strength and conditioning coordinator. In 1994, Gene joined the Jacksonville Jaguars as the teams scouting representative for the northeast with the BLESTO scouting combine, which he joined earlier that year. He was the southeast regional scout for BLESTO in 1995 before becoming solely the southeast regional scout for the Jaguars. After six years of being the team's scout in the southeast region, Gene became the Director of College Scouting in 2000. As such, Gene guided the team's NFL draft for the next seven years. Gene was then promoted to Executive Director, college and pro personnel. His duties included scouting and evaluating college and pro players, directing the draft and pro free agency. Early this year, Gene was named General Manager of the Jaguars, the first person to hold that position. As General Manager, Gene will be responsible for all football operations for the Jaguars.

All the while Gene has been moving up the ranks of the NFL, he has never forgotten where he has come from. Gene continues to keep close ties to Monroeville and gives frequently of himself. From handwritten letters to athletes encouraging them in their pursuits and goals, to returning to speak to at camps and clinics for students and coaches, Gene understands the importance community. It is this loyalty, hard work, and dedication that have earned Gene the respect of his co-workers and colleagues.

Gene currently resides in Fleming Island, Florida with his wife Debbie and their two daughters Alana and Carlie.

1984 Boys Basketball State Championship Team – Athletics

It has been said by many that this team was truly special, from its coaches down to its players. The path to the state championship began during the 1982-83 season, when they finished with a 19-3 record and were defeated by Buckeye Central in the sectionals. Many players have cited that loss as what motivated them going into the 1983-84 season.

The 83-84 season started with high hopes as all five starters were returning. Those hopes were dealt a setback as Auggie's Eagles suffered defeat the first game of the season, losing a close contest to Mansfield St. Peter's 80-78. From that moment on, the Eagles didn't look back as they rattled off 19 straight wins heading into the tournament with their second conference title.

In the tournament, Auggies Eagles defeated Carey and Tiffin Calvert to advance to the District Tournament. The District semi final was a rematch with Mansfield St. Peters in which the Eagles avenged their only loss of the season, 52-49. This set up one of the most exciting games of the season, a 3rd game with conference rival Western Reserve. Monroeville had beaten Western Reserve twice during the year and Western was determined to ruin the Eagles tournament run. In a tight game, the Roughriders were ahead by one point with seconds on the clock. Senior Mike Landoll, falling away from the basket, hit a shot as time ran out to give the Eagles the 59-58 win, the District Championship and a trip to the Regionals at Bowling Green State University.

Regionals proved easier for the Eagles than had the District tournament. Wins over Miller City and Van Buren gave Monroeville a Regional Championship and it's first trip to the State Final Four at St. John's Arena on the campus of Ohio State University. In the State semi final game the Eagles defeated Marion Local setting up the championship game with Columbus Wehrle. In a game that will live in the memories of every resident of Monroeville, who was alive at the time, the Eagles defeated Wehrle 66-62 to capture the 1984 Class "A" State Championship.

When asked later, players and coaches credited this team with always finding a way to win by depending on each other and knowing that their teammates were going to come through for them. This team possessed the toughness, self-confidence, desire and determination that it takes to accomplish a state championship.