

WABASH VALLEY

P R O F I L E S

A series of tributes to hometown people and events that have shaped our history.

Lenhardt Bauer

Lenhardt Edwin Bauer was a steadfast patriot, a loyal Democrat and “Generalissimo” of the Strawberry Hill Cannoneers, the social organization he founded in 1960 as Terre Haute’s “last line of defense,” in order to “revere freedom and fight like hell for its preservation, if necessary.”

But those characterizations only begin to describe Bauer’s impact on the community. Before Christian Frederick and Ada Frances (Schurz) Bauer’s son was a teen, he was honored by the American Wildlife Protective Association for distinguished service to wildlife. His achievement was recognized in the Boy Scouts of America manual. His father died when Lenhardt was 13, compelling the youth to work while attending school. Eventually he became a cook at Smallwood’s Restaurant at 1708 Wabash Ave., later known as the Nighthawk. Upon graduating from Wiley High School in 1928, he enrolled at Indiana University. Intent on becoming a lawyer, he was a member of the IU debate team and earned expenses cooking in several Bloomington restaurants. Bauer toured Europe twice during college days, once as a reporter for the *Terre Haute Tribune* and the other time as purser’s clerk on ships operated by Holland-American Lines. He was admitted to the bar on June 23, 1931, a year before he received a college diploma.



In 1933 — shortly after joining Richard A. Werneke in a Terre Haute law partnership — Lenhardt was elected to the Indiana House. Colorful speech brought the 22-year-old legislator early newspaper notoriety. Re-elected in 1935, Bauer was chosen majority caucus chairman. He was defeated for Congress by Virginia Jenckes in 1940. During World War II, Major Bauer served in the Judge Advocate Corps at Fort Knox, Ky. and as chief of military justice in Hawaii and Okinawa. His citations included the American Defense Medal and Victory Medal. A member of the U.S. Army Reserve for 20 years, Bauer was commander of American Legion Post 346. He was named a Kentucky Colonel and a Sagamore of the Wabash.

Vigo County Juvenile Court referee (1951-63) and a member of the Alcoholic Beverage Commission county board, Bauer was chairman of the Indiana Industrial Board between 1965 and 1969. He was also a member of the board of control at the Indiana Boys School from 1957 to 1960. Before forming a law partnership with his two sons, he was associated in practice with Leonard Kincade, another colorful Terre Haute lawyer. On April 28, 1972, an engraved limestone plaque and flagpole at the Vigo County Fair Association, donated by Bauer, was installed and dedicated.

The lifelong Terre Haute resident found time to amuse many groups with his wit, homespun philosophy and tales of local history. Few Hoosier orators in this century could match his style. A gourmet cook, he assisted his wife — the former Ethel Elizabeth Gross — raise three children: Terre Haute lawyer Frederick T. Bauer, Barbara Ann (Erwin) and Lenhardt Eric Bauer. Ethel Bauer died on Nov. 25, 1967, and in 1970 Lenhardt wed Ethel’s sister Mary M. Gross Reentz. Daughter Barbara died in 1991 and Terre Haute attorney Eric Bauer died of cancer May 28, 1983, at age 38. Lenhardt died Feb. 21, 1986, at age 75. Mary now resides in Warsaw, Ind.

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