Sanford Shuler: Scientist, Dreamer, Philanthropist

Whether it was nuclear fission or a better way to rake leaves, Sanford Shuler never met an engineering problem he didn't want to solve.

He used alternative fuel sources when gasoline was rationed during World War II, he built the first deep freezer, he invented heat tape – by accident, when trying to make a better ski wax, and he conceived of the idea of a gasoline-powered lawn mower.

The Schenectady native and GE engineer, was on the GE team that developed the first American jet engines. He was on the forefront of the technology that brought us rockets, nuclear submarines, space exploration, and much more.
In a 2007 article in the Issaquah Press, Mr. Shuler said: "I happened to hit all these things just as the wave was about to crash. This is one of the more interesting times to be alive. Never again, in the history of change, will the rate of change be that high."

Sanford Shuler, who died in 2011 age 95, is remembered by friends as a brilliant engineer, a visionary, and a dreamer.

One of his dreams was to help someone else have the opportunity to pursue a career – a passion – in science and engineering.

Thanks to a $250,000 bequest to The Schenectady Foundation from the estate of Sanford and Marilyn Shuler, that dream has been realized. The Schenectady STEM Scholarship (Clarence E. Crowfoot and Mary Clarke Scholarship Fund) is now available to graduating seniors of Schenectady High School who intend to pursue engineering and science in college.

"Sanford named the scholarship in honor of Clarence E. Crowfoot and Mary Clarke. We know that they were people who took him in as a young man and instilled in him the importance of education, and who supported his pursuit of science," said Frank Crawford, the Shulers' lawyer and personal friend of several decades. "Sanford worked with Mr. Crowfoot on an invention to remove leaves and grass. It was patented in 1949, and was one of four patents he held during his lifetime."

"Sanford grew up poor, with no assumption that he would go to college. He felt that others helped him when he needed help. He wanted to return the favor."

"The Shulers could have done anything with their estate, but they chose to give back to Schenectady through their bequest to The Schenectady Foundation," said Robert Carreau, TSF Executive Director.

Sanford, who held degrees from RPI and the University of Arizona, wasn't the only pioneer in the family. His wife Marilyn shared his fearless spirit. As a divorced mother of two, she built a successful corporate career at a time when few women – and fewer mothers – were doing so. She was Accredited Executive in Personnel with extensive experience in human relations, industrial and labor relations, personnel corporate accountability and administration. She and Sanford had met at GE many years before they became a couple.
After they married, he took a job with Exxon and they moved to Issaquah, WA, near Seattle, and built their dream house where they lived for more than 40 years. He had a passion for aviation, and owned his own plane for a time.

In a letter to the Foundation, the Shulers' daughter wrote: "Sanford believed you should pay forward the opportunities you were provided. My brother and I hope that this will help someone pursue their dreams and be part of the next wave of new inventions and explorations that Sanford was able to be a part of throughout his life."

Sanford Shuler left a legacy of exceptional achievements. And because of his generosity and forward-thinking, his legacy will also help the next generation of scientists make their own exciting discoveries.

You too can leave a lasting legacy. Regardless of the size of your estate, your membership in the Stockade Society will help seed the future strength of our community, and ensure that we continue to have impact for years to come.

For more information about the Stockade Society, contact Robert Carreau, Executive Director, at (518) 393-9500; rcarreau@schenectadyfoundation.org