

PRACK, Alvin Ronald (1911 – 1995)

The life of Alvin Prack is invariably tied with the firm of Prack and Prack, one of the three architectural powerhouses of Hamilton that left the region a legacy of schools, industrial and office complexes, hospitals and other public buildings. The company was founded by Prack's uncle, Bernard Prack, a Pittsburgh architect, who was drawn by American industrial investment in Hamilton in the early 1900's. Alvin's father, Fred, took over the reins when the Architects Act of 1931 created administrative difficulties for non-nationals.

Born in Hamilton on August 1, 1911, Alvin Prack began university life at McGill, later transferring to the University of Toronto, where he graduated in 1936, with a Bachelor of Architecture. He immediately joined his father in business in Hamilton. A gregarious man who, despite his ambivalence to golf and curling, was able to move effortlessly in and among the prominent social circles, Prack fell into the business with ease, later assuming partnership of the family firm that also included his two brothers.

Prack was known to be a great family man, and his notion of family extended to the community of which he was part. He was active in Kiwanis and became President of both the Hamilton Chamber of Commerce (1968) and the Hamilton Automobile Club (1973-4). He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Architectural Institute of Architects in 1955. He sat on the Ontario Association of Architects Council during

1952 to 1957. During his tenure as President, he had the honour of laying the cornerstone of the very first (and pivotal) headquarters building of the OAA, on October 9, 1954. Described by his contemporaries as a 'marvelous' host, Prack was in his element. No doubt recalling his Air Force days in World War II, he was impressed with the fastidious 'drill manual' for the event in which were staked the strategic positions for all the dignitaries throughout the building.

Prack was the head of a very successful office, staffed, at one time, with well over sixty employees. It was also stressful. A few years after his wife's death in 1978, Prack retired to Fort Lauderdale, Florida, where his cousins had property and where he was able to pursue his interests in motorboating and gourmet cooking. He later returned to the Hamilton area to be close to his four children. He died on February 25, 1995 at the age of 83.

Some of the buildings designed by Prack and Prack, which hold particular significance to Alvin Prack:

Hamilton Wentworth County Courthouse;
Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital, Burlington;
University Athletic Complex at McMaster and
Toronto;
Sir John A. MacDonald Secondary School and
Auditorium, Hamilton;
Dofasco Main Office, Hamilton;
Bell Canada Branch Office, Hamilton.