



CANADA JCI SENATE

## JOHN H. ARMBRUSTER

John H. Armbruster was one of the most influential founders of the Junior Chamber movement, and continued to be one of its most ardent supporters until his death in 1978.

On December 19, 1916, John Armbruster "joined Junior Citizens" in St. Louis, Missouri. Since that time, his steadfast dedication, his vision and his determination have set the standard for all Jaycees to follow.

Armbruster was an orphan. Taken in by his uncle, his first job as a boy was cleaning a saloon. Apparently, Armbruster learned much from this experience. He raised himself up by the bootstraps to become a self-made man, a teetotaler, and a very bright "guiding light" in the most exciting leadership training organization in the world.

Armbruster started early to seek out opportunities for his ambitious, hard-working nature. He began his career as an office boy in a real estate company at age fourteen and rose to vice president before establishing his own real estate company in 1932. Armbruster also organized and served as president of Community Savings and Loan in St. Louis.

Armbruster was never content to sit idle, especially when a need existed in the community. In addition to his extensive Jaycee involvement, he participated actively in a myriad of social, civic and charitable organizations. Among them were Boy Scouts, YMCA, Rotary International and The Salvation Army.

Armbruster's involvement with Jaycees began before the Jaycees organization began. He joined the Young Men's Progressive Civic Association (YMPCA) in St. Louis, Missouri, and held every office in that group from assistant secretary in 1916 to president in 1929. He served as national director of The United States Junior Chamber of Commerce (USJCC) for two terms, from 1929 through 1931. He was named an honorary vice president of the national organization in 1936.

John Armbruster was instrumental in the formation of the Junior Chamber International (JCI) Senate. This organization is made up of those few who have received the coveted JCI Senatorship. Armbruster initiated the Senate's newsletter, *The Elder Statesman*, and assumed responsibility for its publication and expense. He was named honorary president of the JCI Senate at the XXII Jaycees International World Congress in 1967.

For forty-seven years, Armbruster was "Keeper of the Log" - a chronicle of the details about the crew of the mythical ship, S.S. Fellowship. In order to maintain communications and to keep alive the many friendships made during his active Jaycee days, Armbruster founded the imaginary ship and invited other "old-timers" to become mates on the fancied crew. Today, the Log continues in the true Armbruster spirit.

Armbruster was the official JCI historian. He also authored "The First Twenty Five Years of the Junior Chamber of Commerce." By keeping such careful record of its early days and founding ideals, Armbruster emerged not only as the foremost chronicler of the Jaycee movement, but as a young man determined to maintain and carry on the rich heritage of the principles and vision that turned a dance club into a world-wide dynamo.

To rise from orphan-hood to such professional heights and to have such influential impact on the direction and the content of the entire scope of the Jaycee movement is testimony to Armbruster's vision and drive.

Armbruster was a success, too, as a husband and father. Armbruster and his wife, Eleanor, were married April 3, 1919. The joys of their nearly sixty years of marriage included their four daughters, Priscilla, Alice, Joan and Elizabeth.

In later years, one of Armbruster's keen interests was the preservation of the mementoes of the organization's history. He had already preserved videotape interviews outlining some of his recollections.

In the middle of February 1978, staff members at the national headquarters in Tulsa, Oklahoma, were previewing those videotapes to prepare for his arrival. He was to give more detailed audiotape interviews. The staff had just watched Armbruster's taped image say that he hoped the movement's pioneers had left their footprints on the sands of time. Suddenly, someone burst into the room with news that Armbruster had died en route.

He died on a mission close to his heart: to aid his beloved Jaycees. He died on a plane before it could leave St. Louis. In word and in deed, in life and in death, meaning was a big part of John Armbruster's life and legacy.

The comprehensive influence of John Armbruster has spawned one of the highest awards that Jaycees bestow.

The U.S. Junior Chamber's John H. Armbruster "Keyman" Award is given each year to five outstanding Jaycees, who, following their first year of membership, have continued to show support, dedication and enthusiasm to the organization.

The legacy of John H. Armbruster is a firm belief in the whole Jaycees movement, and in each of its participants. This belief will continue in the vanguard of service that distinguishes a Jaycee in today's society. That service is a part of Jaycees' heritage through men and women such as John H. Armbruster. It is also a promise of the presence of Jaycees in tomorrow's society.

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