

# legacy

## DECADES OF SUPPORT FOR DEFIANCE

*Gordon and Katharine Dix leave their mark on Defiance College with ongoing support of the tennis facilities*

by Kathy Punches '96, Director of Public Relations and Marketing

In a 1987 article observing the 100th anniversary of *The Crescent-News*, Defiance's daily newspaper, retired publisher Gordon C. Dix reflected on the important role Defiance College plays in the community. "Besides giving the area a boost in the economy, the college makes a big difference in the life and tone of the community ... Defiance is a much better place to live because of Defiance College," he said.

Having lived and worked in four Ohio cities during his distinguished career in journalism – two with colleges and two

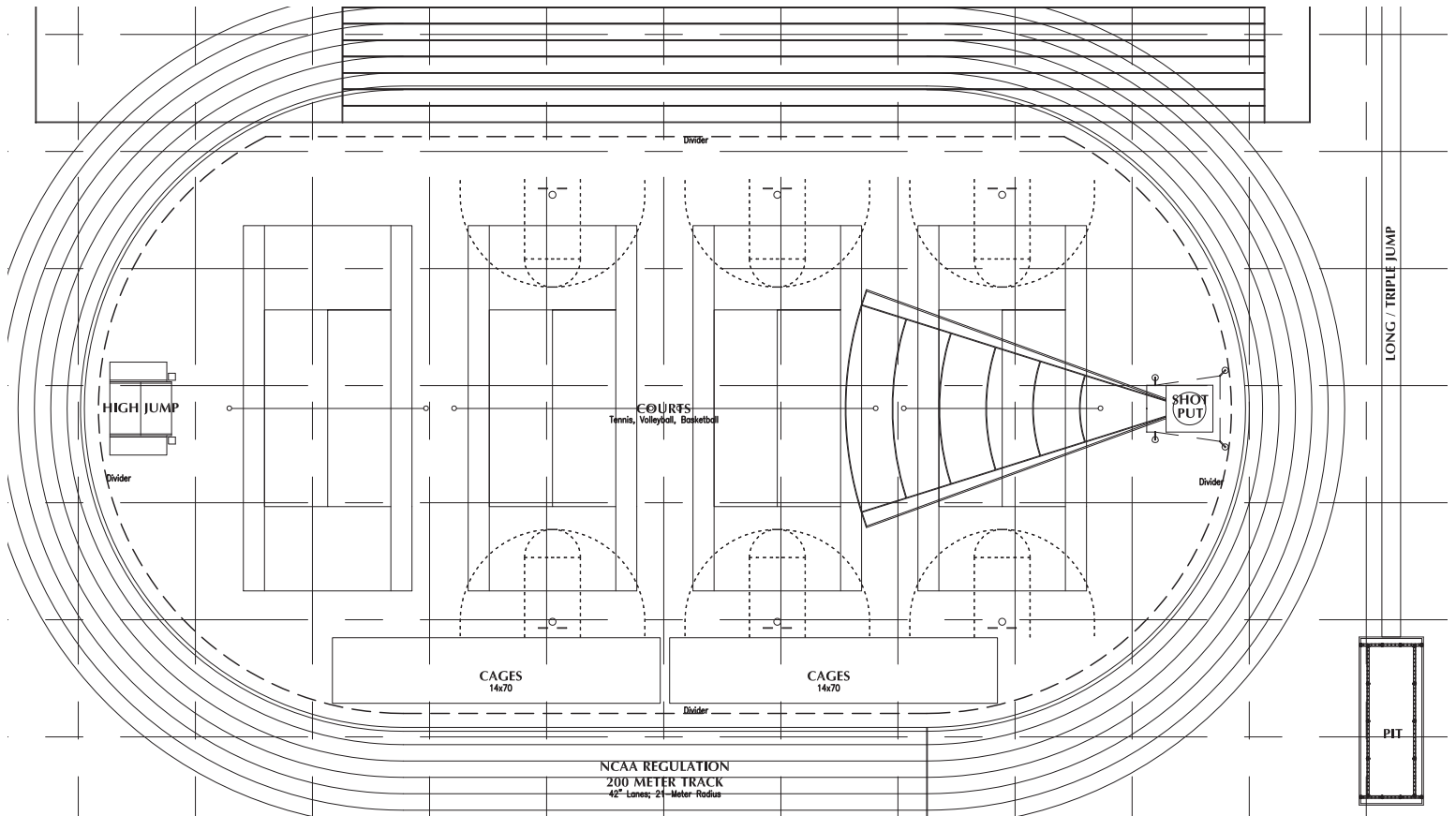
without - Gordon clearly saw the difference an institution of higher learning makes in the environment of a community. It was so important to him and to his wife, Katharine, that they made a lifelong commitment of their personal and financial resources to support Defiance College.

Gordon died in 2005 at the age of 90, leaving a legacy at Defiance College that was rooted nearly half a century earlier. As a young newspaper publisher, he arrived in Defiance in 1952 when he and his brothers purchased *The Crescent-News* as part of the family business started by their father in Wooster, Ohio in 1897. The *C-N's* former owners, the Tustison and Peters families,

wanted to sell the newspaper to a buyer who would have a direct interest in, and live in, the community. They couldn't have found a better buyer than the Dix family.

Gordon and Katharine quickly became immersed in the life of the community. Even though Gordon was stricken with polio in 1954 (a year before the development and successful testing of the Salk vaccine), Gordon's gritty determination and Katharine's steadfast support enabled him to improve his condition, overcome the limitations of his illness, and walk with the aid of a single cane.

He remained active in civic life, his church, and Defiance College, where in 1963



*Architect's rendering of tennis courts in new Athletic Center.*

he began a long association as a member of the Board of Trustees with encouragement from Ralph Peters and former president Kevin McCann. Gordon created *The Crescent-News* Internship with the College, a program that is still in existence today. The internship provides college students with substantial financial assistance and valuable experience in the newspaper business.

The affection that he and Katharine felt for Defiance College spread to their children as daughter, Penny, graduated from DC in 1969 with a bachelor's degree in education.

Eldest son, Steve, followed Gordon as the newspaper's publisher in 1977 and easily stepped into the role his father played as a community leader. He served on numerous civic boards and was appointed to the Defiance College Board of Trustees. The Dix family and the community suffered a terrible blow in 1982 when Steve Dix died in a plane crash along with local businessman Ed Buhner (son-in-law of former DC president Dana Hopkins).

After his son's untimely death, Gordon stepped back into the role of publisher for a brief time, then retired in 1985. For the next 20 years, he and Katharine spent much of their time in Naples, Florida, but Defiance and Defiance College were never far from their thoughts.

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**--Mark C. Gordon,  
Defiance College President**

Former DC president Dr. James Harris told *The Crescent-News*, "Two of the chief roles of a trustee are to serve as an ambassador for the institution and advise the president on broad issues concerning the college. No one has been better at fulfilling these two roles than Gordon Dix. ... I admire his sharp mind and quick wit and know that I can always get a candid answer or a pep talk if needed."



*Long-time Defiance College supporters Gordon (standing left) and Katharine (seated right) Dix are pictured here with friends Dr. John (standing right) and Elizabeth (seated left) Cameron and Ralph "Pep" and Margaret Stauffer.*

In 1998, the Dices funded construction of the E. Stevens Dix Tennis Facility at Defiance College in memory of son, Steve. At the time of the dedication of the six courts, Gordon noted that the gift filled the College's need for a top-flight set of tennis courts on campus to compete at the conference level. And, he said that he and Katharine felt the gift "fit well with two of Steve's loves – Defiance College and tennis."

The Dices' philanthropic support of Defiance College has taken many forms. Whether it was support of the Annual Fund, construction or special projects, their emphasis was centered on a scholarship fund, a lectureship, and the tennis courts, all named for son, Steve.

Katharine Dix now lives in Copeland Oaks, a retirement community in Sebring, Ohio, near son, G. Charles (Chuck) Dix II of Hartville, Ohio. Chuck Dix is the president of Dix Communications, which operates newspapers in Ohio and Kentucky and radio stations in Ohio, Maryland and Florida.

Current DC president Mark C. Gordon has had the pleasure of meeting and

collaborating with Katharine and Chuck Dix. President Gordon reports that the Dix family plans to continue its endorsement of the E. Stevens Dix Lectureship. In addition, he says the Dices recently pledged to fund not only resurfacing of the current outdoor tennis facility but also support for four new indoor tennis courts in the College's new athletic center currently under construction.

"We very much appreciate the continuing generosity of the Dix family. We are thrilled that we will now be able to upgrade the outdoor Dix Tennis Facility, and we look forward to the formal dedication of the new Dix Tennis Courts once our new Athletic Center is completed," says President Gordon.

"It has been a while since Kate has been back on campus, but her love of the College and of the community remains strong and warmly regarded," he continues. "The Dix support of this educational community speaks to a tradition that is inspiring for our current students and something that will have ongoing impact for the future. It seems to me that it is how they have always operated – with a view to the long-term along with a timely investment in the present."

Over the years, Defiance College has publicly demonstrated its deep regard for the Dix family, awarding Gordon Dix an honorary doctorate and its highest honor, the Pilgrim Medal. ◆