



2016 WALKS OF LIFE HONOREES

John F. McGarry and Lawrence J. McGarry



As owners of one of Cleveland's premier painting companies, Jack and Larry McGarry this year will celebrate the 70th anniversary of the company their father founded. The company had a curious start, the brothers have said. Their father, Michael McGarry, who came to America in 1922 from County Roscommon in Ireland, was a painter at Cleveland Graphite Bronze Co., back in the 1940s. In 1946, he was asked to work the second shift. Fearing he would not be able to spend much time with his nine children, he refused and was fired. The next Sunday, he took the last few dollars from his pocket and placed them into the collection basket at St. Aloysius Church. After hearing about McGarry's job loss, the president of Graphite Bronze called him the following day and offered him the job of painting his own house. McGarry liked the freedom of working on his own, and the business was born.

Both Jack and Larry say they started in the business while still in school working summers and weekends helping their father paint houses. As the business grew, the company took on industrial and commercial jobs, such as painting the steel at Jacobs Field and the interior of Gund Arena. Other clients have included Cleveland Clinic, Progressive Insurance, Sherwin-Williams, Lincoln Electric, Eaton Corp., and Cuyahoga Community College. Along the way, they have provided jobs for more than 3,000 union painters, not only in Cleveland, but throughout Ohio.

Jack McGarry met his future wife in the fourth grade, but it was more than a decade later when he and Meg began dating. They married in 1961 after he spent two years in the Army. The couple are the parents of Sean, Timothy, Brendan and Meghan and nine grandchildren. They now live in Euclid. For many years, Jack entertained those attending the kick-off for the annual St. Patrick's Day in Cleveland with the singing of the American and Irish national anthems.

Larry McGarry, who celebrates his 72nd birthday on the day of the Walks of Life dinner, joined the Navy after graduating from Collinwood High School and spent most of his service time in dry-dock in Philadelphia. After returning from the service, he split his time between painting and bartending at the family-owned Euclid Lanes bowling alley and McGarry's Lounge, both of which were later sold. Larry and his wife, Patricia, will celebrate their 47th anniversary in May. They are the parents of Larry Jr. and Elizabeth and have four grandchildren. The couple are residents of Eastlake.

For the last 25 years, the brothers have operated the painting business from a family-owned building on E. 49th Street, just a block south of Lake Erie.

2016 Walks of Life Award of the Irish American Archives Society, Cleveland OH.