



# VALLEY OF THE GIANTS

by  
**Joseph P. Martino**

**RALPH J. STOLLE**  
**1904 - 1996**

**T**he Miami Valley lost one of its giants with the death of Ralph J. Stolle. Mr. Stolle died at his home near Lebanon, Ohio, on January 13, 1996, at the age of 92.

Ralph Stolle had been a member of the Engineers Club since 1936. He began his career as an engineer, inventor and manager after graduating from the University of Cincinnati with a degree in Chemical Engineering. During his career he was listed as the inventor on more than fifty patents.

His greatest claim to fame as an engineer may have been the invention of the "easy-open" beverage can, later to be known as the "pop-top" can, and the machinery for its production. Stolle Can machinery is now in use throughout the world.

He founded the Stolle Corporation in Cincinnati in 1923. In 1934 he moved the company to Sidney. It was this firm for which he developed the easy-open can and the manufacturing machinery for it. The Stolle Corporation was sold to Alcoa in 1975. Mr. Stolle retained the position of Chairman of the Board after the sale of the firm.

He also founded the Ralph J. Stolle Company, which owns and operates some twenty subsidiaries in the metal forming, stamping, tooling, and milk biologics industries. Some of these firms are the Sheffer Corp., Hydroelectric Lift Trucks, Inc., Deerfield Manufacturing Co., Lebanon Farm Implements,

Inc., Stolle Precision Tool Co., and Stolle Research and Development Corp.

In addition to manufacturing, Mr. Stolle had a strong interest in farming. For over 40 years, he sponsored research on the immunization of cows to produce milk with antibodies effective against human diseases. Stolle Immune Milk is now sold in Taiwan, Japan and Hong Kong in a joint venture with the New Zealand Dairy Board.

In addition to his own companies, Mr. Stolle served as a Director of the Copeland Corporation in Sidney, and the First National Bank.

Mr. Stolle was a benefactor of many educational institutions, community projects and charities. His philanthropies included the Greater Cincinnati Foundation, Children's Hospital, Ohio State University, and Wilmington College. He helped found the Countryside YMCA in Lebanon, Ohio, which is considered to be one of the most outstanding of such facilities in the United States.

Mr. Stolle will be sorely missed. Our condolences go to his widow Kathleen, his surviving sisters Margaret Hilliker and Vera Yearout, and his three daughters, Sandra Jane Perry, Gail Judkins Norris, and Mary Jo Cropper.

It is with pride that we place the name of Ralph J. Stolle on the list in this, our Valley of the Giants!