



HISTORICAL ACHIEVEMENTS

## VALLEY OF THE GIANTS



**Lawrence B. Biebel**

1906 – 1989

Lawrence Burton Biebel was born in La Grange, Illinois, in 1906 and spent his youth in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where he attended the University of Pittsburgh. He graduated from Pitt with a degree in Electrical Engineering.

Larry's father worked for Westinghouse Corporation and among his father's duties was following all patents on electrical toasters; it is reported that he had them committed to memory, and could recall them by name and content. From that background, and encouraged by some friends in Pittsburgh, upon graduation from Pitt in 1927, Larry took a job at the U.S. Patent Office, then part of the Department of Interior, and

worked on applications relating to automatic elevator controls. He also enrolled at George Washington University Law School.

During this period, Larry met and eventually married Josephine Hopkins. Her father was Assistant Commissioner of Patents and was known to most of the profession then and for many years after. Upon graduation from G.W. Law School, Larry moved to Dayton in 1931, when he joined the firm of Marechal & Noe, later to become Marechal and Biebel, now Biebel & French, LPA.

In the course of time, Larry became involved with the local and state Bar Associations, and was a member of the Dayton Lawyers Club for many years. He was, for 59 years, active in the Engineers Club of Dayton, which he served as President in 1945 – 46. He was particularly involved with the national patent and trademark group, then called the American Patent Law Association, of which he was a Board member and President in 1955 – 56. He was also active in the International association (AIPPI) and participated in many of its multi-language meetings throughout the world. He was a member of the National Inventors Council, along with Charles F. Kettering and many other renowned U.S. engineers and scientists, in the mid-1950s. All this activity was a product of a mind that was uniquely capable of both legal and technical excellence.

Larry Biebel was a most inquisitive, dedicated perfectionist and persistent combination of engineer and lawyer. Two things were always of great interest to him: trains and exact time. He knew the origin and destination of every train track in Ohio. His electrical office clock was checked daily just to be sure something hadn't gone awry with the DP&L power frequency

and caused his clock to be incorrect by a second or two. When Larry retired from the Board of Directors of Duriron Corporation, they gave him an Atmos clock, powered by barometric pressure change. Such a precision instrument was a fitting match to Larry; he cherished it for years.

One story characterizes Larry to perfection. Years ago, he had taken up photography in a serious way. He was particularly interested in high speed photographs, and decided to catch on film the mail bag at Greenville, Ohio, as it was snatched by a passing high-speed Pennsylvania Railroad train. For many weekends, he packed up his camera and gear and he drove to Greenville, where he set up his equipment and waited for the moment when the train roared past and the mail car hook grabbed the bag off its track-side hanger. There was only one time each week he could do this! Once he had the picture he wanted, he was off to another unique endeavor.

Larry had a great personal interest in and love for opera. He was president of the Dayton Opera Association, and attended all its performances. During Larry's last few hours, his tape of "Aida" was playing all the time.

Material for this article was supplied by Joseph. Nauman, an active Engineers Club member since 1961, and President in 1980 – 81 and who was, until recently, an active member of Biebel's firm for many years (then known as Biebel, French and Nauman). It was very much regretted that Nauman's wife, Mary, passed away in mid-March this year, following an extended illness.

**Larry Biebel** was another person who has earned his place among the others named in our VALLEY OF THE GIANTS.