

VERNON B. STOUFFER

By Gay A. Christensen-Dean

Vernon Bigelow Stouffer, former resident of Lakewood, Ohio, was born August 22, 1901. Fast forward to 1923 when he graduated from the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania. Initially, he opened a food counter in the Arcade in downtown Cleveland, selling dairy products, sandwiches, and his mother's (Lena Stouffer) Dutch apple pies. After one year, he and his father (Abraham Stouffer) opened "Stouffer's Lunch" restaurant at East 9th Street, which featured tasty meals at moderate prices.

In 1929, Stouffer's went public as the Stouffer Corporation, and then expanded into a chain of restaurants, motor inns (1960), and frozen foods (1946). Vernon personally tested new products and secretly visited and inspected his restaurants and inns. In 1965, Vernon moved from the Clifton Park neighborhood of Lakewood to Winton Place and opened the premier Stouffer's Pier W restaurant there. Stouffer foods were also selected by NASA for the crew of Apollo 11, 12, and 14. The frozen foods division became the corporation's main focus, and in 1967 Stouffer's was sold to Litton Industries, which merged with Nestlé in 1973.

In 1966, Vernon bought a controlling interest in the Cleveland Indians baseball team, but held it for only five years. In later years, he started the Vernon Stouffer Corporation, which supported medical research, education, and public welfare.

Vernon died at Winton Place on July 26, 1974, and is buried in Lakewood Park Cemetery, Rocky River.

Sources: Encyclopedia of Cleveland History
www.lakewoodobserver.com, www.wharton.upenn.edu