



## VALLEY OF THE GIANTS

by Elwyn Treat



**William A. Chryst**  
1877-1958

William A. (Bill) Chryst will always be remembered as a member of the original Barn Gang that developed the first successful auto ignition and starter systems. One of the interesting facts about the original Barn Gang is that the members had regular daytime jobs, and worked many long evening hours and weekends on Barn Gang projects without pay.

There were no books written

about Bill Chryst, however, every book written about Charles Kettering contains many complimentary comments about Bill.

Soon after Kettering arrived at NCR he was put in charge of the development department called Inventions 3. The man designated as Kettering's first assistant was Bill Chryst, who had been a designer in one of the inventions departments. That choice turned out to be fortunate, for Bill Chryst became the perfect complement to Mr. Kettering. Kettering was essentially an idea man. For his ideas to be fully successful, someone was needed to see what was necessary to make them work practically. For many years, both at NCR on Barn Gang projects and at Delco, Bill Chryst—capable, sincere, and sound in judgement—was the man.

The Dayton Engineering Laboratories Company was formed to produce the inventions of the Barn Gang. Bill Chryst resigned his job in 1910 at NCR to become the chief engineer. It was Mr. Chryst who suggested that the name be shortened to "DELCO." He believed the original name was unwieldy.

A native of Dayton, Mr. Chryst was graduated from Central District Elementary School at Brown and Hess Streets in 1892. His first job was at the Baker Hardware Store at Fifth and Jackson Streets, where he earned \$2 a week. He went to NCR for a weekly raise to \$3, as an office boy for John H. Patterson, company president, and worked his way up to invention department chief. In his spare time he studied electricity and mechanical drawing at the old YMCA night school. He worked closely with Kettering, helping design department store systems, drawer-operated cash registers and hotel and banking systems.

During W.W. I, General John J. Pershing sent Mr. Chryst to France as an ignition expert. In 1918, he worked with Kettering on a pilotless plane. In conception, it was the forerunner of the guided missile called "the Bug," the first

pilotless plane to carry an explosive. Signing of the Armistice put an end to the project.

In 1928, Mr. Chryst went to Russia to oversee the testing and servicing of a number of Liberty aircraft engines purchased by the Soviets. In 1931, he accompanied Charles M. Kelso on a global voyage, visiting France, Germany, Italy, Africa, China, Japan and Hawaii. He visited eastern Europe as a member of the Sherwood Eddy study group in 1937 and in 1941 made a trip to Alaska with E.B. Lau of the Lau Blower Company.

Mr. Chryst became a consulting engineer for Delco in 1931, and retired January 15, 1947.

Mr. Chryst was a charter member of the Engineers Club, and served as its President from 1925 - 26.

Active in the affairs of Grace Methodist Church for years, Mr. Chryst also was one of the charter members of Christ United Methodist Church.

He also was a member of Conservancy Blue Lodge 661, F&AM, Reed Commandery No. 6, Reese Council No. 9, Royal and Select Masters, Knights Templar, Scottish Rite, Society of Automotive Engineers, American Society of Mechanical Engineers and the Kiwanis Club. He served as president of Kiwanis in 1926. Also, he was an honorary trustee of Miami Valley Hospital and trustee of the Kettering Foundation.

The Chrysts had three children.

People living today who knew and worked with Bill Chryst back in the 40s and 50s remember him—not just as a successful business man of world renown, but as a down-to-earth member of each organization to which he lent his support.

As one of the six original Barn Gang members, and the 42nd and life-long member of the Engineers Club, as well as being a hard-working technical genius and international diplomat, William A. Chryst has earned his place among the others listed on the roll of our **Valley of the Giants!**