

Obituary

April 26, 2022

Obituary of our company founder Fritz Stotmeister

Our company founder dies in Germany at the age of 94

Stühlingen-Weizen. On 21 April 2022, the founder of our company, Fritz Stotmeister, passed away at the age of 94. The entrepreneur and Honorary Chairman of the Supervisory Board is mourned by his family and the employees of the Sto Group. "A life that saw radiant happiness and bitter pain has come to an end. In deep mourning, we bid farewell to our father and the defining personality of our company. After a fulfilling life, he passed away peacefully in his home," writes his eldest son Jochen Stotmeister, Chairman of the Supervisory Board of STO Management SE.

Fritz Stotmeister left his mark on the company and thus also on the construction industry like no other. Under his leadership, Sto grew from a regional plaster and paint manufacturer to a leading international group of companies. Today, the group has 50 subsidiaries in 38 countries and employs over 5,700 people. His personality continues to shape the values of the company to this day: personal interaction and cooperation based on willingness to help each other, mutual respect, and discipline were very close to his heart. In this way, he created an exceptional corporate climate in which customers and employees felt part of the "Sto family".

The birth of the yellow bucket

Born in the South German town of Villingen in 1927, Fritz Stotmeister passed his “Notabitur” (emergency school-leaving examination during war times) in 1943, was drafted into the Wehrmacht as “Luftwaffenhelfer” (member of the auxiliary staff of the German Luftwaffe) and was taken prisoner in 1945. As a numerus clausus in the Federal Republic of Germany prevented him from studying architecture, he joined the cement and lime company of his father, Wilhelm Stotmeister, a firm called "Cement- und Kalkwerk Weizen Stotmeister & Cie". When the demand for lime declined in the early 1950s, the search for new products began. In 1954, Fritz Stotmeister discovered a newspaper advertisement looking for a licensee for a new type of organically bound plaster.

He proved to have had the right instinct by convincing his father to invest. He always looked back fondly on the beginnings with an anecdote: "It all started with three people: One person, namely Wilhelm Hamburger, who stirred the plaster in a former goat shed, a second one, Fritz Stotmeister, who showed the craftsmen how to work with the plaster, and the third one who sold the plaster - that was also Fritz Stotmeister."

The bold start underlines the pioneering spirit of the time – with sales tours in Volkswagen Beetles to convince the craftsmen of the new product. His wife Ingeborg († 2 September 1979), the mother of his four children and to whom he had been married from 1948 until her death in 1979, supported him enormously. The new

material quickly became a success: In the very first year, turnover already amounted to 320,000 Deutsche mark. In 1962, the company was renamed "Stotmeister & Co. Farben- und Baustoff-KG" and the "Sto" brand was born – including the iconic yellow bucket. Two years later, the company launched "StoTherm Classic" – and with it the story of facade insulation, which soon developed into Sto's core business field.

In 1988, Fritz Stotmeister transformed the rapidly growing company into an "Aktiengesellschaft" (public company limited by shares), with his son, Jochen Stotmeister, taking over as Chairman of the Executive Board. Fritz Stotmeister became Chairman of the Supervisory Board. The very successful IPO followed in 1992. In 1998, his second son, Gerd Stotmeister, was appointed Chief Technology Officer. After 14 years as Chairman of the Supervisory Board, the distinguished entrepreneur retired in 2002 and remained connected to his life's work as Honorary Chairman.

Fritz Stotmeister also left a lasting mark on "his" industrial sector, especially in the Verband der Lackindustrie (VdL, German Paint and Printing Ink Industry Association): from 1967 to 1992 as member of the VdL's Executive Board for Baden-Württemberg's district group, and from 1982 to 1989 as Deputy Chairman for the VdL Advisory Board of Baden-Württemberg. At the federal level, he was a member of the Board from 1989 to 1995, and an honorary member since 1995.

A life between the company and the family

Fritz Stotmeister was a person for whom the word standstill was always synonymous with regression, for whom the cogs had to keep turning. Throughout his entire life, he put all his energy, ambition, knowledge and experience into his company, into the realisation of ideas and the development of advanced construction products and systems. Fritz Stotmeister, who had been married to his second wife Inge († 9 February 2014) since 1983, did not only have a strong sense of family but also of social commitment: he supported the aftercare clinic for children with cancer in Tannheim/Germany, and the proceeds from the golf tournaments he initiated also went to social purposes.

In 2005, on the occasion of Sto's 50th anniversary, he established the Sto Foundation, an organisation that supports young talent in the trades and in architecture. In 1992, he was awarded the Federal Cross of Merit on Ribbon for his efforts, and in the same year he became an honorary citizen of the town of Stühlingen.

In 2013, when Sto AG was converted into Sto SE & Co. KGaA – a European public limited company on the basis of a partnership limited by shares, the foundation was laid for the company to continue to be run in the family's interests, although the day-to-day operational business is not currently controlled by a member of the family. However, the affairs of the Supervisory Board are still steered by two of Fritz Stotmeister's four children.

Fritz Stotmeister enjoyed the last couple of years of his life on the beautiful shores of Lake Constance, and in 2017, on the occasion of his 90th birthday, he said: "I know our company is in good hands."

With the death of Fritz Stotmeister, his two daughters Heidi and Helga, as well as his two sons Jochen and Gerd and their partners, his ten grandchildren and four great-grandchildren have lost their head of the family – the employees of the Sto Group their company founder and pioneer of Sto's corporate values.

Captions

[-Fritz Stotmeister.jpg]



Fritz Stotmeister has died at the age of 94.

Image: Stotmeister

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Fritz Stotmeister with his sons Jochen Stotmeister (left) and Gerd Stotmeister.

Image: Foto Conrads, Waldshut