

In Memoriam

Brenton H. Ruppel, Sr.
1924 – 2010



Brent Ruppel

“Brent was a spectacular human being, and Baird has lost a great friend and role model.”

– Paul Purcell



A portrait of Brent from the 1950s.



Brent was named President of Baird in 1973, CEO in 1976 and Chairman in 1978 – a position he held until his retirement in 1989.

Baird mourns the loss of Brent Ruppel, 86, retired Chairman, President & CEO, who passed away Oct. 17 of natural causes. Brent’s career spanned 41 years at Baird, and he maintained close ties with the firm throughout his retirement.

“Brent was a spectacular human being, and Baird has lost a great friend and role model,” said Paul Purcell, Baird Chairman, President & CEO. “He served as a tremendous role model for me and many other associates at Baird, as well as the countless others he touched. He personified Baird’s strong cultural values that are so important to how we do business.

“In fact, one of Baird’s highest honors for associates, the Brenton H. Ruppel Citizenship Award, was created in Brent’s honor to recognize exemplary and extraordinary community involvement.”

A World War II veteran, Brent joined Baird in 1948 after earning a B.S. in Economics from the University of Wisconsin–Madison and spent his entire career at the firm. He was named a Partner at Baird in 1958, Executive Vice President and Director in 1967, President in 1973, CEO in 1976 and Chairman in 1978. He remained Chairman until his retirement in 1989.

That retirement never took him far from Baird, however, as he remained a friendly face at the firm, maintaining an office at the Milwaukee headquarters until he was 81. Known for his positive outlook, warmth and wisdom, Brent kept in touch with colleagues across the firm and never missed the firm’s annual luncheon welcoming associates with 25 years of service to the Quarter Century Club. The past two years, he also helped present the Ruppel Citizenship Award at the firm’s Annual Meeting, including the 2010 meeting held on his 86th birthday.

“Brent was a terrific mentor for me,” said Fred Kasten, who worked with Brent for many years and succeeded him as Baird Chairman, President & CEO. “He was incredibly kind to everyone, and his commitments to the community of time and treasure truly followed in Mr. Baird’s footsteps.”

Fred said how proud he and Brent were to have spent their entire careers at Baird: “Our culture made it so special; Baird has always cared about doing things the right way and that’s something Brent and I found exciting. And I think that culture has only gotten stronger.”

“Brent was a true gentleman in every respect,” said Jim Bell, Director of Baird Foundation, who worked with Brent for decades. “He breathed the Baird culture and beliefs in everything he did.”

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In Memoriam

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Brent at the 2009 Quarter Century Club inductee lunch with Rosa Kubena and Chris Rither.



Brent and Carl Wilson, Brent's predecessor as Baird Chairman.



Brent (dark suit, third from the left) celebrates signing the lease for Baird's "new" home at the US Bank Building in 1974.

Jim noted Brent's extensive commitment to the community. He was a member and former Chairman of the Executive Committee for the University of Wisconsin Foundation as well as a past President of the Greater Milwaukee Committee. He also served a leading role with more than 25 major groups in the Milwaukee area, including the American Red Cross, Milwaukee YMCA, United Way of Milwaukee, the Medical College of Wisconsin, Milwaukee Heart Research Foundation, the Milwaukee County Council of the Boy Scouts of America, Carroll College, the Milwaukee Symphony and more.

That dedication to community service helped shape Baird's culture, and led to the creation of the Brenton H. Ruppel Citizenship Award. The award was presented to Brent in 1998, marking his 50th anniversary with Baird, and it is presented annually to an associate who plays an exemplary role in the community.

In recognition of Brent's tremendous contributions to the community and to Baird, the Baird Foundation is making a donation to one of Brent's favorite charities.

Brent held numerous national professional leadership positions. He was an executive committee member and a former vice chairman of the Securities Industry Association and served as a governor for the Investment Bankers Association, the American Stock Exchange and the Securities Industry Association. Brent also served in leadership roles with the Securities Investor Protection Corporation and the Financial Accounting Standards Advisory Council.

"He was one of the most honest people you could ever meet – anything he said, you could trust him," said John Seaman, who retired from Baird in 1991 as an investment officer after working with Brent for nearly 40 years. The two still had lunch together a couple times a year. "He was a really fine person and a good father."

Brent is survived by his wife of 63 years, Betty; children Marty (Jim) Suttmiller, Scott (Jill Marie) Ruppel and Brenton (Mary Reaves) Ruppel, Jr.; five grandchildren; and other family and friends.

Funeral services were held Oct. 21. Brent's family asks that memorials be made to the University of Wisconsin Foundation, 1848 University Avenue, Madison, WI, 53726; the Medical College of Wisconsin, Office of Development, 8701 Watertown Plank Road, Wauwatosa, WI, 53226; or YMCA of Greater Milwaukee, 161 West Wisconsin Avenue, Milwaukee, WI, 53203.



The first board meeting held at the US Bank Building, in what is now known as the "old boardroom." Carl Wilson (bow tie) is at the head of the table; Brent is to his right; Fred Kasten, Brent's successor, is seated to the far right of the photo.