

BUILDING A LEGACY

Hall of Famer Jay Ricker took a tank wagon oil business and turned it into a leading convenience store chain

By Angela Hanson

WHEN JAY RICKER AND HIS WIFE NANCY

launched Ricker Oil Co. Inc. in 1979, they planted the seed for what would eventually become a successful convenience store chain, known for its experimentation and advocacy for the industry as a whole.

Between the time he graduated college and started his own business, however, Ricker planned to leave Indiana behind for good.

"I thought it was a boring state," this year's retailer inductee into the *Convenience Store News* Hall of Fame said with a laugh.

A native of the Hoosier State, Ricker lived in a region where generations of his family had lived, but none worked for large businesses. He set his sights on working for a large corporation that could send him to interesting places, and eventually accepted a role with Shell.

In a 10-day period, Ricker graduated, got married, went on his honeymoon and moved to Iowa, where he began his career in the fuel industry shortly before the first fuel shortage of the 1970s.

For the next seven years, he held various sales roles with Shell in several regions of the United States, including back in Indiana, before deciding to return to his home state to be near family and go into business for himself.

"The only thing I really knew at that point was the oil business," he said.

When Ricker Oil Co. began operations, it was a small jobber. Nancy ran the office and Jay drove the tank wagon, with no convenience stores to be found.

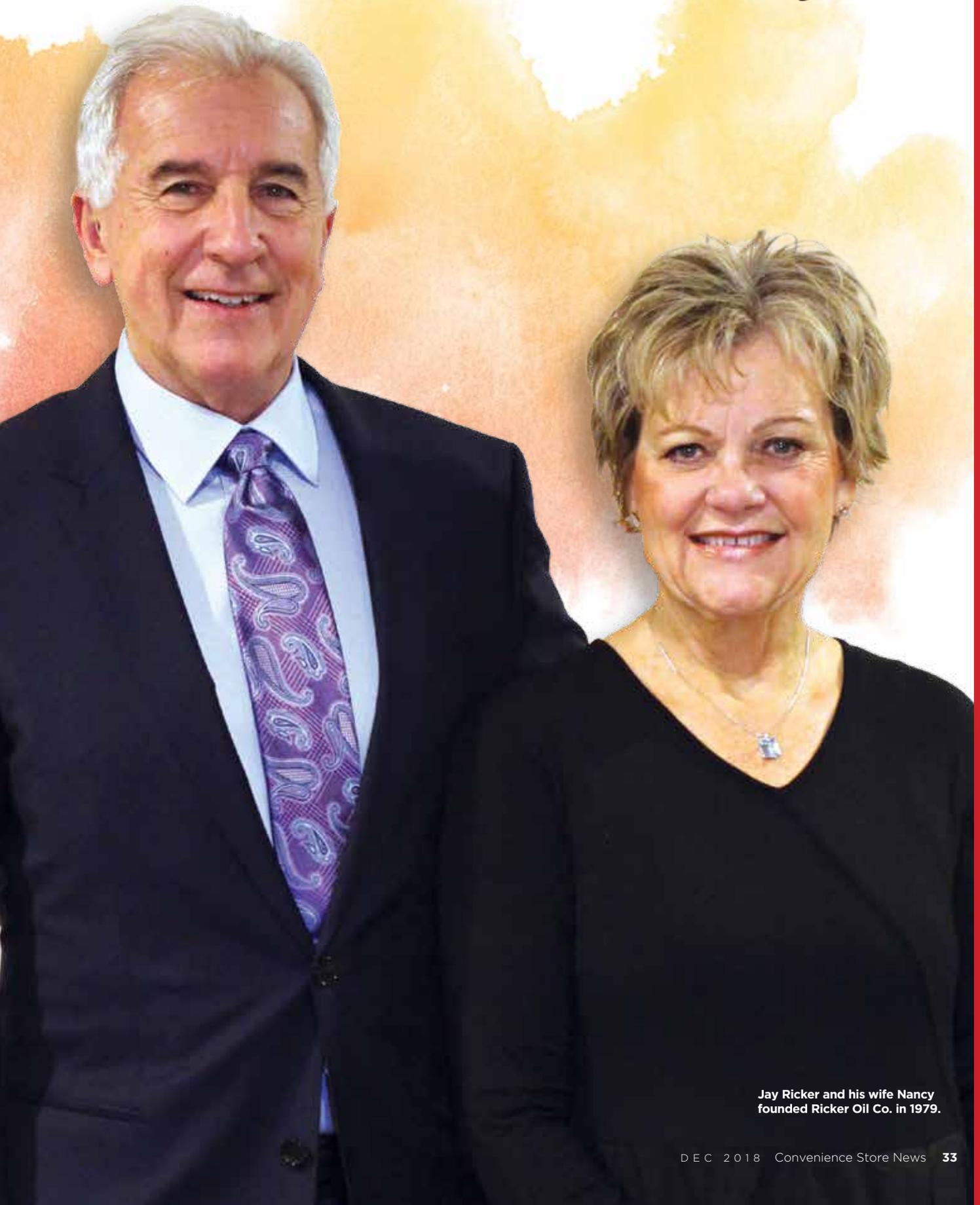
Nearly 40 years later, the company has acquired five oil companies and opened 56 Ricker's c-stores, while Ricker has made a name for himself as a well-regarded leader in the industry.

The Networker

Today, Ricker is the chairman of Ricker Oil, while his son Quinn serves as president and CEO. He is also chairman of the Fuels Institute, a nonprofit research-oriented think tank that evaluates market issues related to vehicles and fuels. In the past, he has chaired NACS, the Association for Convenience & Fuel Retailing, the BP Marketers Association, and the Indiana Petroleum Marketers and Convenience Store Association.

Outside of the convenience and fuel industry, he sits on the boards of directors for the Conner Prairie Living History Museum and the Community Hospital Anderson. He previously chaired both of these Indiana-based organizations.

Combined with his experience as the founder of his own company, Ricker has amassed an impressive set of leadership credentials. Still, he credits much of what he knows to his habit of spending time with and listening to fellow retailers.



Jay Ricker and his wife Nancy
founded Ricker Oil Co. in 1979.



"Our industry is so, so sharing," he said.

During his early days with NACS, as he went from committee member to board member, he was able to exchange ideas and information with his peers, which prompted Ricker to institute certain initiatives at his stores. He pointed to Sheetz Inc. and Kwik Trip Inc. as examples of successful family-owned convenience store chains whose experiences were particularly helpful to him.

While some of those initiatives were strategic moves — such as the installation of free ATMs — others were smaller changes that had surprisingly noticeable effects. For instance, Ricker's was already in the habit of recognizing employees of the month, but when it began taking them to lunch as part of the honor, it made a major difference to those employees and helped the company cultivate a strong team.

"It turned out to be one of the best things we've ever done," Ricker said.

He remains a proponent of involvement with NACS and its study groups. "That's brought us all kinds of best practices, and we share ours, too," he explained.

His willingness to learn from others and make connections helped him in the early years of his company, when success was anything but guaranteed despite the skills he had gained during his time with Shell. The move to

Anderson, Ind., to start the business was marred by illness, the wrong size U-Haul truck and a frightened cat that spent the trip clinging to Ricker.

Other early challenges included the bank's refusal to issue a loan to a new business despite the Rickers having purchased an existing jobbership, and getting stuck with \$20,000 in bad checks from a dealer they serviced that began kiting checks.

"We didn't have any extra cash when we started this business," Ricker recalled.

With perseverance and support from family, which Jay and Nancy resolved to pay forward to their own children if they wanted to strike out in business with a sound plan, Ricker Oil began to grow. It acquired four smaller businesses, two of which owned a couple of small stores, and in 1989, it extensively remodeled an old service station into a c-store. Around this time, Ricker and his general manager discussed the news that farm bureau co-ops had begun buying into the tank wagon business. The manager suggested thinking about getting into that themselves.

"I don't think there's any thinking. We need to do it," Ricker recalls saying.

The company invested in itself, building four stores in one year — which he called "crazy" for a business that size — and settled into a pattern of expanding by two to three stores each year.

Two major growth milestones occurred when Ricker's acquired nine Amoco stores in the Fort Wayne, Ind., market in 2000, and when it purchased BP's Indianapolis assets in 2008.

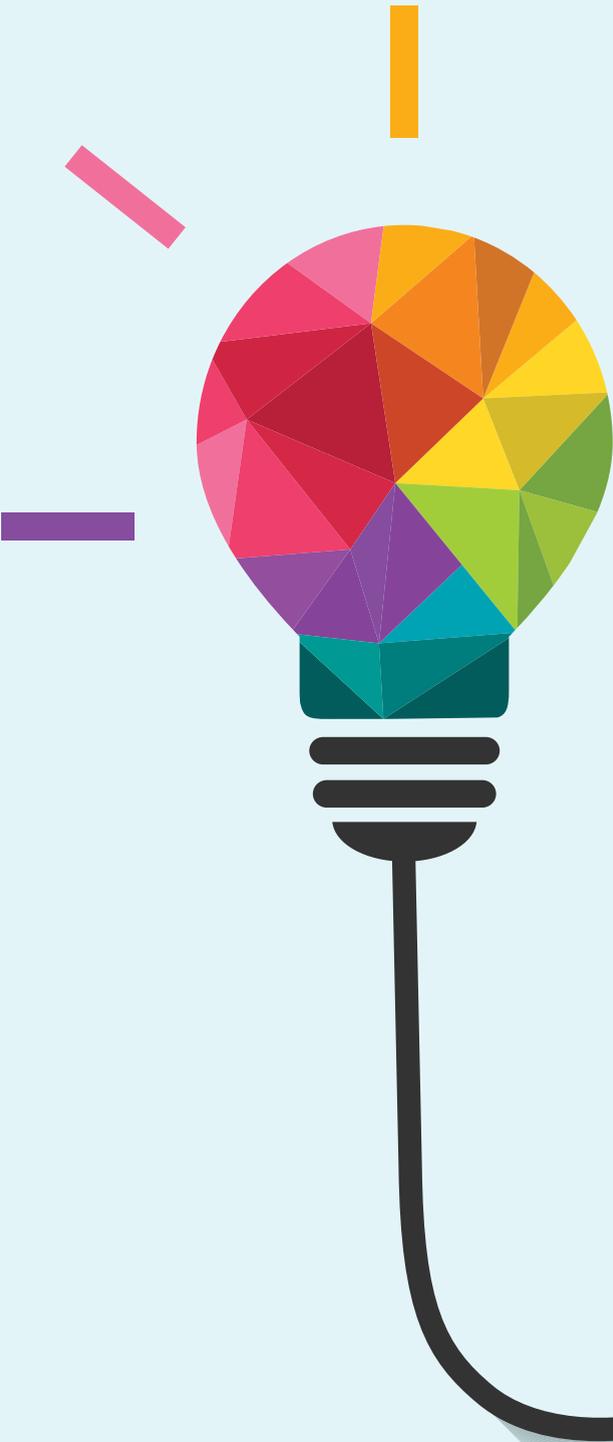
"We had bad things happen," Ricker acknowledged, recalling when they invested in a business unrelated to the convenience industry. But even that financial loss served as a useful lesson. "Stay in your core business or something that's directly related to it," he said. "We had our adversities, but also lots of successes."

As he's progressed throughout his career, Ricker has passed the lessons he's learned on to his children, including son Quinn, who joined the company as a second-generation executive.

"I am so proud of my father. He had the guts, the strength to leave a great job at Shell and strike out on his own," said Quinn. "He did this with two young kids and a wife. He took the risk and it paid off. He built something really special."

Along the way, Quinn said his father had a talent for connecting with other people in the industry, learning from them, giving back, and making the industry and his company better.

"I am so proud of everything he has accomplished. I am lucky to be his son. To be guided and taught under this type of leadership," he said.



Solving Big Problems, Inspiring Bold Ideas

EnsembleIQ is a premier business intelligence resource that believes in **Solving Big Problems** and **Inspiring Bold Ideas**. Our brands work in harmony to inform, connect, and provide predictive analysis for retailers, consumer goods manufacturers, technology vendors, marketing agencies and service providers.

EnsembleIQ's integrated suite of solutions-based, total-market resources give you all the tools you need to achieve a strategic market advantage, giving you the insights, positioning, focus, and access, along with a team of dedicated strategic consultants to help you bring it all to life.

EnsembleIQ
SMARTER TO MARKET



Change Is in the Air

Over the last four decades, Ricker has seen — and contributed to — a tremendous amount of change in the convenience channel; something he expects to continue. He points to technology and foodservice as undergoing the biggest shifts during his career.

“Technology has changed so much,” he said, noting that

while they didn’t have computers when he was a child, “I couldn’t live without a computer today.”

The shift to nearly instant communication provides the opportunity for major gains in efficiency compared to when he was driving the tank wagon on the outer edges of the company’s territory. There was always the possibility he would return to the office only to receive a message that he’d been needed just past his previous location.

While upcoming advances in technology may not reach the level of difference between land lines and cell phones, Ricker advises retailers to constantly be mindful of their business practices and products, and how they are likely to change in the next five years.

“It’s a very entrepreneurial industry, and I know people will succeed, but you really have to be on top of things,” he said.

The world of convenience foodservice is also dramatically changing, going from having a roller grill, popcorn and “maybe nacho chips, if you were really forward-thinking,” to now offering sophisticated, in-depth fresh food programs.

“The investments you have to put in the stores ... I remember when \$1 million was a lot,” he said. “It’s become a competitive, expensive business.”

To maximize experimentation and opportunities and minimize cost and mistakes, Ricker’s took a unique approach to foodservice. The chain hit the road with an iAhhBurritos! food truck, testing a program that offered high-quality ingredients, reasonably priced without being a giveaway.

After some refining, Ricker’s rolled out the program in-store to considerable success, even replacing some national quick-service concepts that were in place.

“Food is not a roller grill, in my mind,” Ricker said. “Food is fresh-prepared, good ingredients of any kind.”

The evolution of Ricker’s in-store foodservice program led it to challenge Indiana’s law regarding the sale of cold beer. Normally prohibited at convenience stores, Ricker’s received alcohol sales permits typically granted to restaurants, kicking

Leaving an Impact

Jay Ricker’s industry peers reflect on his leadership and industry influence

“I am truly honored to call Jay Ricker a dear friend. Our introduction was through our retail study group, in which Jay and I have spent the past 13 years sharing in the successes and challenges of business and life. For me personally, Jay has been more than a friend, he has been a mentor. I have watched Jay work hard to grow his business, while at the same time dedicating himself to serve this industry in various roles, but ultimately as chairman of NACS. Thank you Jay for being a friend, mentor, and all you have done to help strengthen our industry.”

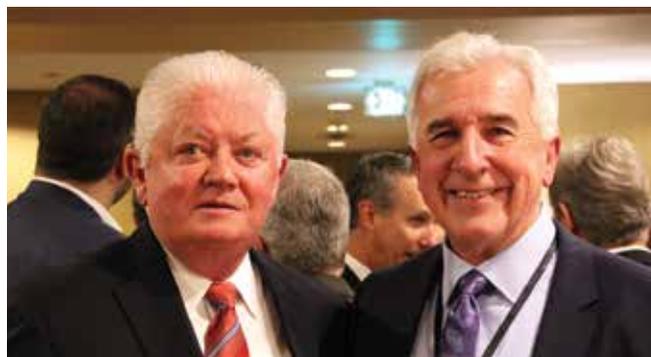
— Kevin Smartt, President & CEO, Kwik Chek Food Stores

“Jay and Nancy Ricker are a genuine self-made duo. They built their empire from a single truck. Jay is the definition of a gentleman. He handles all aspects of life in such a gentle manner. He’s heavily involved with his community and often seen ‘clowning around’ at charitable events. Although Jay may become less involved with the future of our industry, he’s destined to better the political future of the state of Indiana. And believe you me, Indiana will be the fortunate beneficiary of the honorable Jay Ricker.”

— Tom Waddle, President & CEO, Fastrac Markets

“I met Jay 30 years ago and have been his primary center-of-the-store wholesale partner for seven years. I’ve always admired how Jay and Nancy built their business. Starting as an oil jobber without stores, then organically growing with convenience stores over the years as a family business similar to the Wake family at Eby-Brown. Jay has always been a true advocate of our industry and so dedicated in serving at all levels, from our state-level petroleum marketers [association] to NACS as a past chairman. From the day I met Jay, he has always been approachable and a good listener of everyone’s concerns. I am so pleased to see him being honored with induction to the *Convenience Store News* Hall of Fame. Well-deserved Jay!”

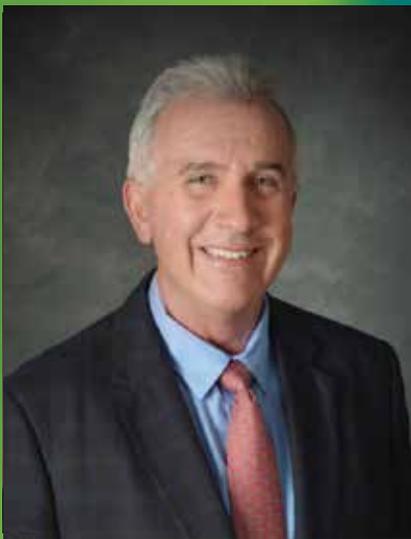
— Brent Shay, Vice President of Sales, Eby-Brown Co. LLC



Tom Joyce of Hershey celebrated with the newest Hall of Famer.

HIGH-FIVES ALL AROUND.

Congratulations to
Jay Ricker



**2018 HALL OF
FAME RETAILER
OF THE YEAR**

Building relationships. Building growth.



off what Ricker once called “a real firestorm.” The state liquor lobby objected and, in 2017, lawmakers passed legislation that would exclude Ricker’s from renewing those permits. However, the conflict brought considerable attention to the state’s ban on cold beer sales, which does not exist in any other state.

The battle is ongoing. Ricker is confident it will lead to change — one day.

“We live in a state with arcane rules and regulations,” he said. “People who have that monopoly fight tooth and toenail ... [but] I think we’ll get it changed eventually.”

A Look Into the Future

Looking back at the start of his business, Ricker says he never would have expected that he would be able to build it up into what it is today.

“Absolutely not,” he said. “I didn’t think it would be this big, by any means.”

Another unexpected development is the very recent decision to sell the business to Giant Eagle. In September, the companies announced that the Pittsburgh-based retailer would buy all 56 Ricker’s stores, retaining all 850 employees.

“I really wasn’t looking to sell,” Ricker said.

With Quinn already in the role of president and CEO, and other “very competent” people in the next generation to run the family-owned business, it was a look at the future of the industry as a whole that opened the Hall of Famer’s mind to the possibility of selling.

“It made sense to. If you don’t grow at a substantial rate, I



Ricker poses with supplier Hall of Fame inductee Rick Brindle (left) and Retailer Executive of the Year Joe Sheetz.

think you’re going to get left behind,” he said.

While he wants to travel and spend more time with his grandchildren, Ricker doesn’t envision a complete retirement. He expects to continue being involved in the industry, and is looking forward to seeing more of the coming changes.

“I want to see what’s going to happen to fuels,” he said.

His time with the Fuels Institute has allowed him to be involved with more than just fuel and convenience retailers; he’s been exposed to people from academia and suppliers he wouldn’t normally interact with at Ricker’s. He predicts a fuels landscape that is different from what exists today, but not one that’s uniform across the country.

“I think there’s going to be a cocktail of different fuels depending on where you are, depending on infrastructure,” he said.

Building a successful business from the ground up is undoubtedly an impressive accomplishment, but Ricker points to something other than numbers as the achievement he is most proud of: the people who work for Ricker Oil.

“We are big believers in promoting people within our organization,” he said.

Early on, quite a few Ricker’s employees had only a high school diploma or GED, and many were the breadwinners for their household. By investing in people who were willing to work hard and show what they could do, the company has cultivated a group of longtime employees that includes many managers and district managers who started out as cashiers.

The path upward isn’t necessarily restricted to in-store roles, either. Ricker recalled how the person who now runs the company’s IT department never received his degree but took courses and educated himself based on the chain’s technical needs.

“It makes me really proud to see people like that be very successful,” Ricker said. **CSN**



Ricker accepts his Hall of Fame trophy from Jack Stout of 7-Eleven Inc.

Convenience Store News
Hall of Fame
2018 HONOREES

we are inspired by your ability to

EVOLVE**ELEVATE**

your business

JAY RICKER

Chairman Ricker Oil Co.
Retailer Hall of Famer

RICK BRINDLE

*VP of Industry Development
Mondelēz International Inc.*
Supplier Hall of Famer

JOSEPH S. SHEETZ

President & CEO, Sheetz, Inc.
Retailer Executive of the Year



Altria

Altria Group
Distribution Company

Servicing:

Philip Morris USA
U.S. Smokeless Tobacco Company
John Middleton
Nu Mark
Nat Sherman

THE ROAD TO LEADERSHIP

Hall of Famer Rick Brindle's 40-year career has seen him advance from food clerk to vice president By Danielle Romano

IN RICK BRINDLE'S EXTENDED FAMILY, it seems as though you pursue one of two career paths: you either join the law enforcement field or you go into the grocery business.

In 1977, at the age of 17, Brindle chose the latter, becoming a food clerk at supermarket chain Safeway Stores. The job funded his college education at Frostburg State College in Frostburg, Md. — where he triple majored in general business, management and marketing — and ultimately became the foundation for his love of the convenience retailing industry.

During his second year of college, Safeway offered Brindle the opportunity to travel to Hamburg, Germany, where he would be responsible for training management and marketing for the chain's German division. It was a six-month assignment that, unbeknownst to him at the time, would pay off bigtime after his graduation in 1982.

"Not long after graduation, I married [my wife] Dee. During our honeymoon, I interviewed for a position with Procter & Gamble (P&G). The only reason P&G gave my resume a second glance was because of my Safeway and international experience," recalled this year's supplier inductee into the *Convenience Store News* Hall of Fame.

He got the job at P&G and in his 13 years with the company, he worked his way up from sales representative and unit sales manager to sales promotion and project manager before moving into roles supporting teams for big-box retailers, including district sales manager — Price Club/Costco Team and district sales manager — Walmart Team.

From P&G, he joined Nabisco. The move from Procter & Gamble was a family decision. While Brindle enjoyed his position as district sales manager for the Walmart team, the relocation to Bentonville, Ark., where the retailer is headquartered, took the Brindle family even farther away from its extended family, prompting him and his wife to discuss the possibility of other job opportunities. One thing led to another, and Nabisco offered Brindle a position in Richmond, Va., just a short drive from their extended family in Maryland. So, Rick, Dee and their three children, Richard III, James and Caroline, made the move.

Rick Brindle celebrated his Hall of Fame induction with his wife Dee.



CONGRATULATIONS

Jay Ricker



2018 *Convenience Store News*
Hall of Fame

Swedish Match North America is proud to be your partner,
and we look forward to your continued success in the future.

☆☆☆
Swedish Match®



A Rick of All Trades

With business development leadership assignments spanning the convenience, grocery, club, e-tailing and mass merchandiser classes of trade, Rick Brindle uses his diverse experience to contribute to various industry associations. His involvement has included, but is not limited to:

- **Food Marketing Institute** (2012-present), including co-chairman of the Industry Collaboration Council (2017-present)
- **Grocery Manufacturers Association** (2012-present), including chairman of Industry Development & Advisory Council (2016-present)
- **National Association of Chain Drug Stores** (2012-2017), including Steering Committee vice chairman – Retailer Advisory Board (2017)
- **NACS, the Association for Convenience & Fuel Retailing** (2013-present), including Supplier Board vice chairman (2017-present)
- **National Confectioners Association** (2012-present), including the Board of Trustees (2012-present)
- **National Grocers Association** (2001-2017), including one of only three manufacturers on the board of directors (2013-2017)
- **Retailer Owned Food Distributors Association** (2013-present), including Executive Committee – Retailer Advisory Board (2013-2015)

Brindle also has been honored across the multiple channels he serves. He was a 2017 inductee in the National Confectioners Association's Candy Hall of Fame. He is a recipient of the National Grocers Association Board of Directors Service Award and the Supervalu Vendor of the Year honor. He's also earned a spot on *Consumer Goods Technology's* Consumer Goods Industry's Top 25 Visionaries ranking.

Throughout the following two decades, Brindle wore many hats for many different iterations of the company, which today is known as Mondelez International Inc. From 1996 to 2001, he held various directorial roles at Nabisco, which was acquired by Kraft Foods Inc. in 2001. At the newly formed company, he was promoted to vice president of e-sales and industry relations for North America. Brindle retained this title until 2012 when Kraft Foods changed its name to Mondelez and spun off the Kraft Foods Group, becoming a global biscuit, chocolate, gum and candy manufacturer. For the last six years, Brindle has served as Mondelez's vice president, industry development for North America.

Brindle receives his Hall of Fame trophy from Convenience Store News Editorial Director Don Longo.



"Over time, we have lived in many areas and I have been able to work in several retail verticals. I truly feel that all of my experiences have culminated into a solid fit for what the convenience retail segment is today and where it is going tomorrow," he said.

In his current role as Mondelez's vice president, industry development for North America, he is responsible for representing Mondelez to the industry across all classes of trade within the U.S. He spends most of his time in the marketplace engaging with the supplier's retailer, wholesaler and distributor customers and driving insights, strategies and solutions that benefit the retail industry as a whole.

"I connect our solutions with marketplace opportunities, and marketplace solutions with our opportunities," the Hall of Famer explained. "In addition to being a vocal advocate of our industry as an honorable industry — on Capitol Hill and elsewhere — I am very passionate about developing our future talent and uplifting the convenience retailing sector's image in our communities."

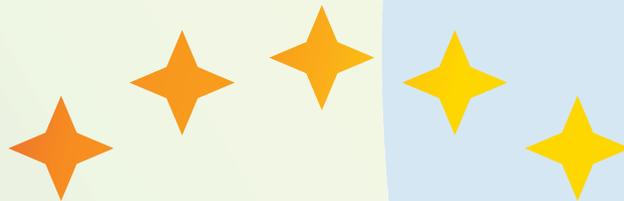
Front-Row Seat to Change

Throughout a more than 40-year career, it is not surprising that one might encounter challenges, but Brindle views the leaps and bounds as a good thing. In fact, when things are running too smoothly and he doesn't feel challenged, he admits that he gets bored.

"I think that is why I have enjoyed industry development so much. It provides constant change and personal growth," he said. "Industry development provides significant depth of understanding on emerging megatrends and strategic issues facing manufacturers, wholesalers and retailers across multiple fronts. It also provides incredible networking opportunities with customers in a neutral setting."



FOUNDING AND PRESENTING SPONSOR OF



CONGRATULATIONS

to all of the inaugural members of
Future Leaders in Convenience on behalf of
the proud founding and presenting sponsor,
RAI Trade Marketing Services Company.

Brindle cites specific aspects of developing new business channels throughout his professional career at each organization as points of pride. At Safeway, it was contributing to its expansion in the Germany division. At P&G, it was being in the early stages of the club and mass channel development with his roles at Price Club, Costco and Walmart. And at Nabisco and Kraft, it was creating the role of vice president of global e-sales.

“It was great fun being on the forefront of e-commerce — and equally satisfying to see much of what we advocated and pursued now coming to fruition,” he said.

As one of the industry’s more enduring veterans, Brindle has had a front-row seat to the evolving industry. Channel blurring is the biggest industry change he’s observed during his career. He recounts how when he entered the business, one would eat at a restaurant, buy food at a grocery store, get beer from a liquor store and fill up at a gas station.

“Not so today,” he emphasized.

The aggressive pursuit of diversity throughout the industry is another change he’s observed. While there is still a ways to go, the industry continues to make progress every day. This progress has poured over into the way convenience retailing is viewed today.

“Promises made, promises kept. This facilitates the trust required for deep strategic relationships.”

“Working in convenience retail was once considered a job. Today, it is a viable career opportunity,” Brindle noted. “A diverse workplace has contributed greatly to this.”

The top-of-mind disruptor for the industry, though, is e-commerce. Technological enhancements in digital, social and mobile have proven to be an enabler for convenience retailing, as voice recognition, and electric and autonomous vehicles start to come into the limelight, he said.

Blazing the Trail

Over the years, Brindle has had visibility across all aspects of retail, which has given him clarity in terms of best practices, emerging trends and



During his acceptance speech, Brindle said he “couldn’t have asked for a better group of people in the room.”

potential synergies. Still, every day can be a learning experience for even the most experienced veteran.

“I really enjoy my job. I just want to be better at it,” he told *Convenience Store News*.

When reflecting on his career path from food clerk to vice president, Brindle has some key insights on what it means to be a leader. Chief among them: listening for opportunity.

The list also includes understanding what motivates individual team members; creating an active, collaborative culture that understands customer intimacy and focuses on continual improvement in everything you do; and lastly, you are only as good as your people and your boss.

When asked what advice he would offer to the next generation of industry leaders, Brindle shared these five recommendations:

- **Culture eats strategy for breakfast.** “This is a people business. Period.”
- **Be a lifelong student of the industry.** “There is much to learn and the pace of change and ongoing innovation truly keeps it interesting.”
- **Deliver results with honor.** “Promises made, promises kept. This facilitates the trust required for deep strategic relationships.”
- **Actively recruit mentors/advocates.** “And actively become a mentor to many.”
- **Develop relationships throughout your journey.** “Develop customer relationships that are so strong that no matter the business issue, both of you want each other to succeed.” **CSN**

CONGRATULATIONS RICK BRINDLE

INDUCTEE INTO THE 2018
CONVENIENCE STORE NEWS SUPPLIER HALL OF FAME



The entire Mondelez International family
would like to thank Rick for his many years
of prime leadership and excellence—
here's to many more!

Mondelez
International

