

Hugh Field

Service 'suits' tailor's son

PAT KINNEY

For The Courier

WATERLOO — Hugh Field will be the first to tell you he stands on some strong shoulders.

First came his father, Burton Field, the longtime owner-operator of Palace Clothiers in Waterloo.

Second was senior law partner W. Louis Beecher, practically a legend in Waterloo for the expansion of John Deere, business and retail development, KWWL television, the R.J. McElroy Trust and the Waterloo airport.

Those are shoes you don't fill, Field says, but he felt obliged to carry on their initiatives. Like his mentors, he's been involved in business, the law, economic development and leadership on local hospital boards.

And like Beecher, he played a prominent role in Republican politics.

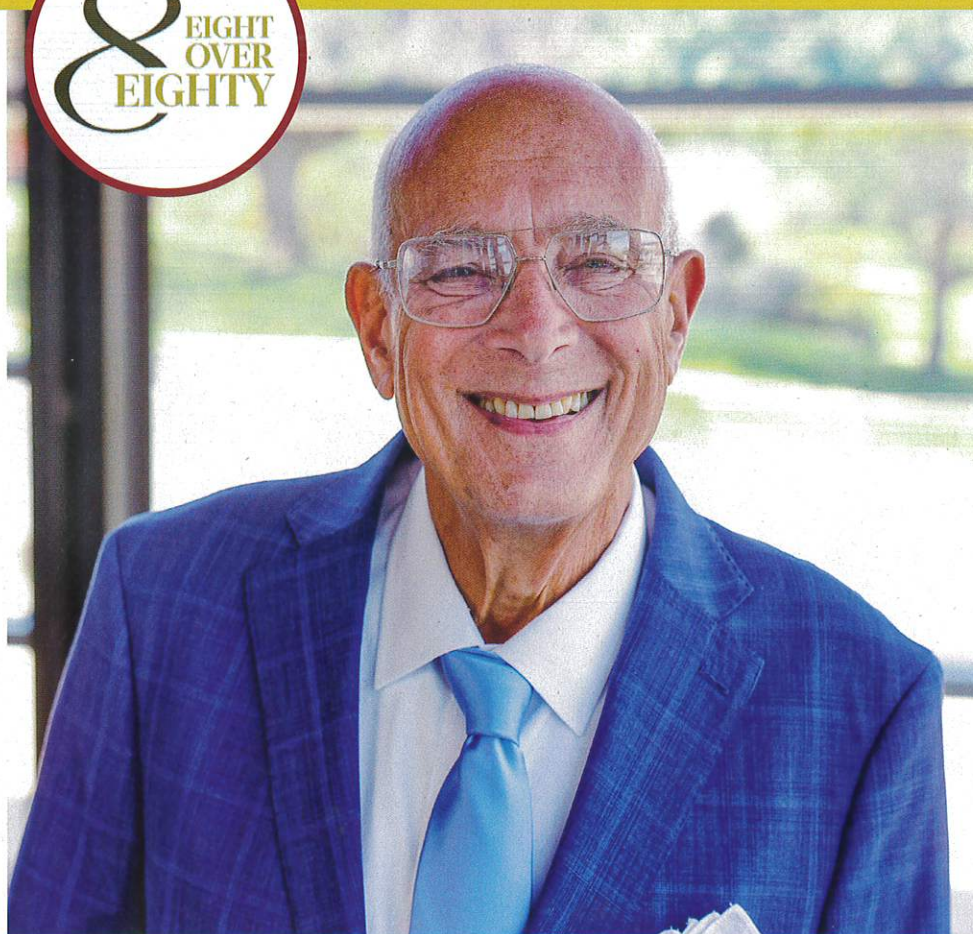
"Part of it, if you'll excuse me saying it, comes from noblesse oblige: 'Much is given, much is expected,'" Field said. "I have been such a lucky person, all of the opportunities and successes I had. I just feel I should give back.

"My dad and Louie were just fabulous guys. Both were smarter than hell and great business people. Louie was a great lawyer; my dad was a great businessman.

"A lot of guys my age talk about filling shoes," Field said. "Am I gonna fill (KWWL executives and attorneys) Bob Buckmaster's shoes or Harry Slife's shoes? Or Louie Beecher's shoes? Or my dad's shoes?"

"I can make a list of those great guys I was lucky enough to know growing up as a businessman, as a lawyer and as a community person. Their shoes are too big!" he said with a laugh.

He worked alongside his father on the



CHRIS ZOELLER, Courier Staff Photographer

boards of Schoitz Hospital and Covenant Medical Center and worked behind the scenes of Schoitz's merger with St. Francis Hospital to create Covenant in the mid-1980s.

Like his mentors, Hugh has gone on to serve in his own rite.

"I've had my charitable stuff, United Way, community development stuff with Grow Cedar Valley, and I was on the President's Council on Rural America, which was a tremendous experience," under President George H.W. Bush.

Field played a role in the merger of the Waterloo and Cedar Falls chambers of commerce and the creation of what is now the Grow Cedar Valley economic development organization.

"I don't serve on boards for my resume; I serve on boards to move the needle," Field said.

Field, born in Milwaukee where his mother's family hailed from, came to Waterloo shortly after his father finished military service in World War II. Hugh's father and uncle Jack had purchased Palace in 1937. Hugh graduated from Waterloo

West High School, Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, and received his law degree from the University of Iowa in Iowa City.

His working life started in the family business.

"I grew up in a mercantile background. I went down when I was seven, eight years old and unpacked suits and put them on hangars. I was selling clothes when I was 14, 15 years old."

The family was always community minded. For example, longtime civil rights activist Anna Mae Weems would tell the story that when she brought the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. to Waterloo in November 1959 and the charismatic young minister from Birmingham, Alabama, lacked winter clothes, she took him to Palace. Burton Field fitted King out with a suit made for the colder Northern climate. Service to community was a given.

"I've given thousands of hours to my community, and I don't think I've reaped any financial reward for it," Field said. "If I have, I don't know what it is."

Field and his wife, Jane, who herself was involved as an advance person in overseas travel planning for both Presidents Bush, have four children, five grandchildren, two step grandchildren and a great grandchild. Field has had to step away from leisure-time loves of skiing and scuba diving but still is an avid golfer.

In nominating Field for Eight Over 80 recognition, law partner Eric Johnson wrote: "Hugh exemplifies outstanding leadership, dedication to the community, and excellence in his profession."

"Beyond his professional role, Hugh has worked tirelessly behind the scenes to improve the lives of others," Johnson wrote. "He has dedicated countless hours to chair numerous boards within the community such as Schoitz Medical Center, United Way, Sunnyside Country Club, Waterloo Industrial Development, and the Greater Cedar Valley Alliance."

"Hugh was also a member of fundraising committees for Waterloo-Cedar Falls Symphony, Juvenile Diabetes Foundation and Cedar Valley Hospice. Hugh

currently serves on the board of Waterloo Memorial Park (cemetery)," among other organizations, in addition to practicing law for more than 50 years and a stint as Waterloo city attorney during most of Mayor Bernie McKinley's administration.

"Perhaps one of Hugh's most remarkable qualities is his role as a mentor," Johnson said. "He has taken numerous individuals under his wing, providing guidance, encouragement, and wisdom. His generosity of spirit and belief in others has made him an invaluable role model."

Previous Eight Over 80 honorees 2024-2019

2024

Fred Abraham
Ruth Buck
Richard Congdon
John Eveland
Marv Heller
Kathryn Koob
Frank Magsamen
Mary Potter

2023

Rex Boatman
The Rev. Chuck Lane
Jerry & Joann Kramer
Mary Ann Burk
David Buck
Catherine Wieck
Herstine Ferguson
Barbara Zemke

2022

Paul Rider
Marlene Behn
Lois Wishmeyer
Louise McGinnis
JoAnn Stigler
Diana Blake
Nyle McMartin
Eileen Kruse

2021

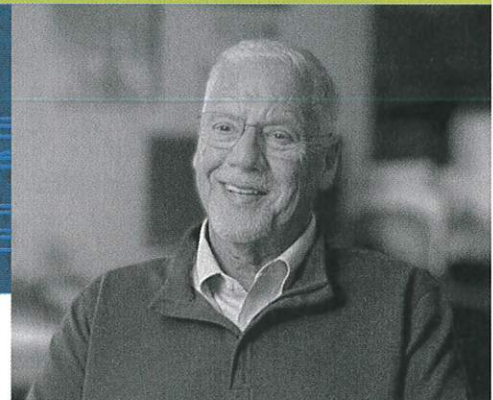
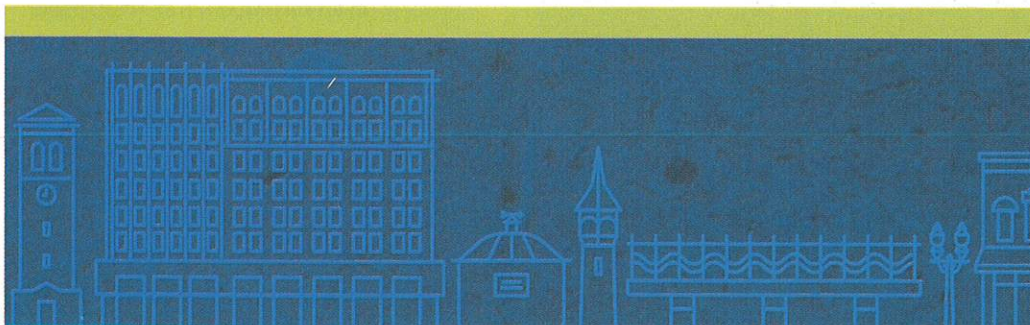
Ann Phillips
Ron & Mary Esther Pullin
Tom DeLong
Liane Nichols
Luane Lorenzen
Donald Frazier
Stan and Bev McCadam
Kay Connelly

2020

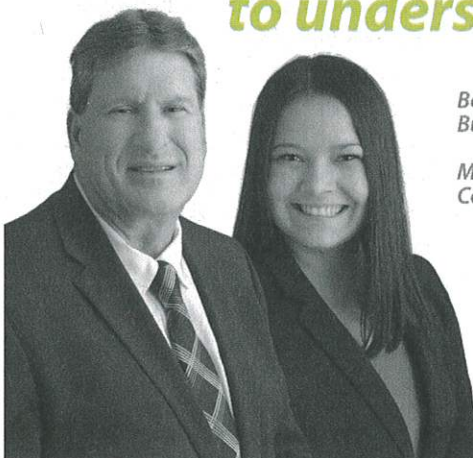
Barbara Corson
Charlene Montgomery
Marvin and Helen Schumacher
Karol Rae Hoth
John Focht
Dorothy Haugebak
Lillian Thomas
Lana Hochreiter

2019

Marie Nitzschke
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Donna Hoffman
Saul Austin Jr
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