



## James G. Apple

**J**ames G. Apple knew early on he wanted to follow in his grandfather and father's footsteps when it came to having a career in baking. James' grandfather, Benjamin Apple, co-founded Butter-Krust Baking Co. in Sunbury, Pa., in 1920, and James said he just gravitated to the business.

James and his brother, John B. Apple, began helping their father, John A. Apple, and grandfather at the bakery in high school and college by cleaning floors, scrubbing pans and packing. After high school, James attended Gettysburg College, graduating in 1958. After graduation he served as an officer in the U.S. Army but then resumed full-time duties at Butter-Krust in 1959. He became president in 1983 after the death of his father, and his brother became vice-president.

The company has grown extensively over the years. In 1921 the company had only 10 or 12 employees, but by the time James joined the business the company was up to 200 employees. Today, the company has more than 900 employees in seven states. Butter-Krust was the first baker east of the Mississippi river to offer sliced bread and the first to wrap bread in cellophane packaging. During Mr. Apple's career the company introduced the Golden Round loaf in the 1960s, and after the company was automated its products continued to evolve to meet the market. Other notable product introductions included licensed brands such as Roman Meal and Country Hearth and the company's own brands such as Milano Italian and Butter Krust Country bread. At one time in the company's history it produced 50 loaves a minute and thought that was impressive, but today the company produces 200-plus loaves a minute.

"The development of people has been a major part of our success," Mr. Apple said. "You simply cannot exist without developing your people. It's been a key to our growth.

You can't know everything. I want people surrounding me who are more intelligent or more knowledgeable than I am. I welcome those who can challenge me because it's the only way you can learn enough to grow in business. And then there's the additional challenge to get all of your talented people to really work together. You can't run a thriving business without a true team. We've been fortunate to put an exceptional organization together."

Mr. Apple served on the board of directors for The Long Co. for 33 years, 18 of which he was board chairman. Butter-Krust also featured the The Long Co. brand Holsum, and this company was in a position to help Butter-Krust purchase ingredients and assist with packaging, financials and more. Mr. Apple said so much of the company's



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## 2011 Baking Hall of Fame

growth from the 1950s through the 1980s may be attributed to the association between the two companies. Additionally, Butter-Krust was first named "Baker of the Year" by The Long Co. in 1993 and was given the honor a total of four times during a 5-year period. The company has also consistently achieved high scores in The Long Co.'s annual bread and bun quality competitions.

Additionally, Mr. Apple served as a board member for the American Institute of Baking and chairman of the American Bakers Association. Before his involvement in the A.B.A., he also was involved in the Central Pennsylvania Bakers Association, serving as president.

Another milestone came in 2006 when Sara Lee purchased Butter-Krust and also became known as Sara Lee Butter Krust.

"My brother and I saw the (Sara Lee purchase as) opportunity to take Butter-Krust to another level," Mr. Apple said. "We saw it as a positive development. We thought, 'They'll learn from us. We'll learn from them.' Their programs on production and engineering and sales and



James G. Apple accepting his Hall of Fame award.

marketing reflect their expertise and track record as a global brand. It's been a marvelous relationship. We've grown with it, and I know they have, too.

"Sara Lee has always been open to our ideas, and our team has always been open to theirs. One of the key issues I always care about is the treatment of people. You have a responsibility not just for your employees but for everyone who's affected."

Mr. Apple said his greatest accomplishment is that he and his brother were able to put together a team of people and take the bakery

to even higher levels of excellence and national prominence. He said they were fortunate to inherit a business that was profitable, well-run, well-maintained and well-equipped.

"They say it's the third generation that typically runs a family business into decline," Mr. Apple said. "I like to say we beat those odds. So I guess I'd say our greatest accomplishment has been to take Butter-Krust from one level of expertise and raise it several levels to where there's been substantial growth with significant increases in employment. We were able to hand over to Sara Lee a thriving, profitable business that is still growing today." MBN



James G. Apple in 1991.



James G. Apple in 1995.