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## Gather 'Round the Table

*C.W. Brown Foods continues a family legacy, dishing up homestyle Italian fare and leading the meat-products market. P. 72*

A person wearing a hat and a life vest is in a red canoe on a river. The river flows over a waterfall. The background is a dense forest of tall trees under a clear blue sky. The scene is split into two panels by a vertical line, with the text overlaid on the top panel.

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Bob Bryar of C.M. Meiers Company on ...

# The benefits of being a privately held brokerage

by Thalia A-M Bruehl

**F**or C.M. Meiers Company, it is not just the buffet of coverage that makes the brokerage indispensable to its clients, it is the carefully perfected mix of personal service and private ownership that separates it from its competitors who are, for the most part, owned by publicly traded companies. Founded in 1934, C.M. Meiers is one of the oldest insurance brokerages in California. The privately held, large, regional broker handles all lines of coverage, from healthcare to its specialty, entertainment.

Being a private company has also afforded C.M. Meiers many luxuries, including the option to make the best decisions for its clients without having to gain outside approval. "Our culture at C.M. Meiers is basically, let's do whatever makes sense for our clients, our employees, and our company," explains Bob Bryar, president of the brokerage.

C.M. Meiers has four locations: Dallas; Las Vegas; Rolling Hills Estates, California; and Woodland Hills, California, which serves as its primary location. Licensed in all 50 states and currently ranked among the top one percent of privately held insurance brokers, the 80-person firm considers knowledge of the business to be its greatest asset. "Adhering to our core value that our customers are our first priority and that the level of knowledge of our people is among the best in the industry has brought us terrific success," Bryar says.

The firm has also earned a name for itself in the entertainment industry. The entertainment division is divided between the film and television unit and entertainment and business management. "Film and television speaks for itself, and there are only a handful of brokers in the country with the ability to write a [policy for a] major motion picture and television series," Bryar notes. "Those limitations are driven by the number of insurers who are willing to write those risks, and, fortunately, we are appointed by all those carriers." The entertainment and business-management division deals primarily with the personal insurance needs of individuals both in front of and behind the camera, along with other high-net-worth individuals.



**COMPANY COHESION:** Clockwise from top left: Herbert Rothman, CEO; Cathy Kerhulas, senior VP of commercial entertainment; Charlene Hill, senior VP of personal entertainment; Jennifer Riggio, VP of entertainment administration; Dianne Ewing, senior VP of insurance operations; Robert Bryar, president; and Eric Rothman, VP.

Along with the producers, actors, and directors they serve, C.M. Meiers counts Fireman's Fund as another one of its prestigious contacts. The firm has a long history with Fireman's Fund Insurance Company, as it historically focuses on the same types of risks as C.M. Meiers. Fireman's Fund is a major player in the film and television industry as well as real estate and personal insurance for individuals with specialized needs, such as insurance for yachts and aviation. Bryar knows the importance of a good ally and feels fortunate to have found one in Fireman's Fund, saying, "I am happy to say that, throughout my career, I have always felt Fireman's Fund

was my partner, and it continues to be."

It has been almost 80 years since Clarence M. Meiers founded C.M. Meiers, and it has been growing and thriving ever since. Bryar knows that the company's longevity is no fluke; for it to continue, C.M. Meiers will have to provide more of the high-quality service it's been serving up for nearly a century. "Our sense is you look down, put one foot after the other, and adhere to the core values of client service, employee education, and creative management. Again, we don't have a corporate culture that forces us to look too far into the future, so our focus is today, tomorrow, and to a limited horizon." [P]

# Commitment.

## **H** LOOKING AHEAD...

"We hope next year will reflect a small rebound in the economy, which will, in fact, create a rebound for the insurance industry. C. M. Meiers is looking forward to that bounce, and we hope it will continue into 2012 and on. As for the future, C.M. Meiers and its owner, Herbert H. Rothman, are 100 percent committed to remaining independent and privately held. We have begun working on a creative perpetuation plan that will make us viable for at least the next 10 years."



"The economic downturn was no friendlier to the insurance industry than to any other, but for C.M. Meiers Company, being privately held meant being able to strategize locally as the economy changed. Revenue in the industry has gone rather flat, but, as Bryar explains, "C.M. Meiers has been able to maximize revenue so that we have not needed to downsize like many of our competitors." And though C.M. Meiers expects a full turnaround for the firm by mid-2011, it is hard to predict whether others will be so lucky."

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