

For Investors Community Bank Founding CEO Bill Censky, Navigating Change is Second Nature

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Investors Community Bank co-founder and former president, CEO and Chairman of the Board William (Bill) Censky has likely seen faster technological change during his 50-year banking career than any other time in history. From manually writing checks and rendering accounts, to being one of the first bankers in the state to use a personal computer (a 1982 Apple II+) to working virtually during a global pandemic, Bill has seen it all.

Bill recently stepped down from his position as Investors Community Bank Chairman of the Board, wrapping up a banking career that began in 1969 at Manitowoc County Bank. Bill's father, the late Gerald Censky was also a banker and one of the founders of that bank. Even prior to his official start in banking, Bill would help his father at home with the rendering the bank's month-end DDA statements. This completely manual process involved verifying check endorsements and matching physical checks to the ones that were listed on the monthly DDA statement.

Bill officially joined Manitowoc County Bank as a teller in 1969. After graduating from University of Wisconsin – Oshkosh with a bachelor's degree in finance and an M.B.A in finance and accounting, he worked his way through the ranks at the bank, becoming a consumer lender in 1973, vice president/cashier in 1981, first vice president/cashier in 1989, and finally was named first vice president – retail banking in 1993. During these later years, Manitowoc County Bank merged with First Wisconsin Bank, and then Firststar Corporation.

It was during these transitions in the mid-to late 1990's that Bill and a few of his colleagues, Mark Binversie, Wayne Mueller and Tim Schneider, realized that the business of banking was changing. They took a chance, built on the entrepreneurial spirit they each possessed, and started Investors Community Bank based on the philosophy that people bank with people, not banks.

Bill's strong knowledge of banking policy and procedures, combined with Mark, Wayne and Tim's agriculture backgrounds and lending experience led the way to the bank's opening in the old Schuette Department Store building in Manitowoc in March of 1997. Bill served as the bank's first President and CEO, and had a total staff of just eight. The Schuette Building remodeling project was truly a labor of love, as the banks founders, along with that first handful of employees and their families all pitched in to help build walls, paint and set up office equipment.

"In the beginning, we really wanted to try to keep our expenses down, so remodeling that first ICB location became a family affair," said Bill. "My son Phillip and I sanded and painted, and Mark's kids followed us around vacuuming. Wayne even took a road trip to a bank in Eldorado,

WI and jackhammered out a used, but encased in concrete, teller vault they were giving to us. Every single one of those first eight employees jumped in to help get the work done. Even years later when we moved over to the Rapids Road location, we had staff show up to help cut down trees and clear the land. ICB has been a great team since day one.”

Investors Community Bank opened as technology was changing at lightning speed. The World Wide Web was in its infancy, but ICB was ahead of the technological curve.

“Email and the web were just beginning to gain mainstream popularity when the bank opened, and we had to use dial up modems if we wanted to get online,” said Bill. “We were able to get all eight of our initial employees a networked PC workstation. This was very unusual at the time. Most banks had ‘dumb terminals’ with just a monitor and keyboard. How would we have handled a worldwide pandemic?”

The bank performed well right from the start and grew at a pace almost unheard of for a start-up bank. ICB opened additional locations in Stevens Point in 2010, and Appleton and Green Bay in 2016, as well as four loan production offices scattered throughout the state. This success led to another highlight of Bill’s career, when County Bancorp, Inc. (the holding company for Investors Community Bank) went public and began trading on the NASDAQ Global Market in 2015. Several months later, a group from ICB had the opportunity to go to New York to ring the closing bell at NASDAQ, right in the heart of Times Square.

“If you’d have been walking down Broadway at JUST the right time, you’d have seen some of our faces on the big outdoor screens in Times Square!” Bill said proudly.

Other highlights of his illustrious career include serving on the Wisconsin Bankers Association (WBA) security committee and as WBA group president, speaking at a Community Bankers of Wisconsin annual meeting, and attending several corporate Asset-Liability Committee (ALCO) meetings – some of which were attended by George Darling, one of the early pioneers in ALCO.

In November of 2013, Bill passed the CEO torch to Tim Schneider, and served as his co-CEO and mentor until Bill’s retirement on December 31, 2016.

“I had the honor of co-founding the bank with Bill back in 1996 and have always been impressed with his business acumen, said Tim Schneider, CEO, Investors Community Bank. “When Bill, Mark, Wayne and I formed the holding company, County Bancorp, Bill was integral in pulling together our business plan. He also was vital in our early success as an organization with his vast and varied banking background. Personally, Bill has been a tremendous mentor to me and my development and has guided me into my current role at Investors Community Bank. When Bill tapped me on the shoulder early on in our existence and asked if I’d be interested in becoming CEO someday, I modestly accepted and he mentored and helped develop me into the leader I am today. He has always been supportive of my growth and laid out a solid path for a farm boy from Hilbert to move into this position. I will always be grateful!”

In addition to his role as co-founder, president and CEO, Bill has served as the chairman of the board of the Company since the bank's beginning. While he remains on the board of directors, he recently handed the chairman of the board reigns over to Andy Steimle.

"Bill was born with banking in his DNA, said Steimle, an attorney with Steimle Birschbach in Manitowoc. "He is very well known and highly thought of in the industry, and with good reason. Bill has been a wonderful mentor to me and so many others at the bank. He led this organization every single day with class and grace. I look forward to carrying on his tradition of success."

As for what the future holds, Bill looks forward to the opportunity to spend more time with his family; wife of 45 years Nancy, adult children Phillip and Laura, and their two grandchildren. He also hopes to spend more time traveling and on the golf course.

And where does he see Investors Community Bank another 20+ years down the road?

"It is my hope that as the years pass, ICB stays true to our original mission and values," said Bill. "Our agriculture focus was our initial motivation when we were founding the bank, but as we have grown and become financially successful, we have been able to diversify and add business and consumer banking to the mix. Why is staying true to our ag roots so important to our mission? Very few banks are able to do ag banking just right. The majority of our ag bankers grew up around agriculture, and understand the struggles of today's farmer, seeing them as a person with a story, and not just a number. We truly walk in our customers shoes, and I hope that continues for a long time to come."

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Investors Community Bank, a wholly-owned subsidiary of County Bancorp, Inc., is committed to serving the financial needs of businesses, farmers and families in our communities. Founded in 1997, Investors has become one of the most successful bank startups in Wisconsin's history and has full service offices in Appleton, Green Bay, Manitowoc and Stevens Point, as well as Loan Production Offices in Eau Claire, Sheboygan, Darlington and Fond du Lac. County Bancorp Inc.'s common stock is traded on the NASDAQ global market under the symbol ICBK. For details visit www.InvestorsCommunityBank.com.

