

## Lien finds professional success in family venture

By DEBRA BAKER BECK, ALUMNEWS Editor

For 1996 distinguished alumnus Bruce Lien (BS '53), professional success is a family affair.

Bruce and brother Chuck (BS '50) are the "and sons" of Rapid City-based Pete Lien & Sons, Inc. They were there as equal founding partners when dad Pete launched the company in 1944, and they are responsible for the company's tremendous growth in the 27 years since Pete died. The key, according to Lien, is family.

"There's something about your family that's special," he says. "Even though you have differences, he's (Chuck) my brother and my best friend. Family business is very special."

In a family-owned business, "You have the unity to make a good company, because you believe in integrity."

From the beginning, the Lien family has operated on the "ELF" principle: business must be ethical, legal and fun — in that order. And so far, it's a formula that seems to have worked well.

There's a number four on that list of criteria. It also must make money.

"Profit is not a bad word," Lien says.

Under the watchful eyes of Pete, Bruce and Chuck, Pete Lien & Sons has experienced its share of financial success. From \$16,000 in sales its first year (1944), it now grosses more than \$50 million annually in a variety of business ventures. Most of them are related to quarrying rock and other minerals and lime manufacturing.

Pete Lien & Sons markets in 13 states and operates plants in South Dakota, Wyoming and Colorado. Besides quarrying and lime manufacturing, the firm also is involved in block manufacturing (of concrete shapes such as picnic tables and curbs), steel fabrication, ready mix concrete (they own eight plants and 70 trucks), oil, and real estate.

But their biggest successes are in quarrying and lime manufacturing, according to Lien. The company runs 1-1.5 million tons of rock per year at its plant in Rapid City. The company has a rapidly growing operation at Colorado Lien Company's Owl Canyon plant, located between Laramie and Fort Collins on US 287. Pete Lien & Sons has a combined mineral production capacity of 5 million tons per year, which means there's room for even more growth in the future.

Lime manufacturing is the company's other major success story. Pete Lien & Sons operates one of the larger plants in the country. It also operates a large lime plant at Frannie, Wyo., in conjunction with Montana-Dakota Utilities and its coal mining operation.

Lien takes great pride in the contributions his company makes to environmental protection. When operating, their plants put 300 tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere every day, a "very necessary element in our environment."

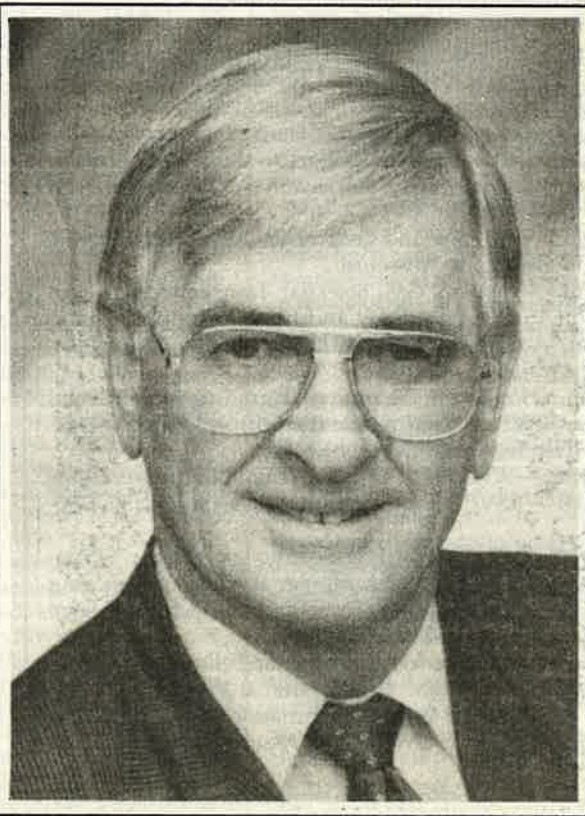
He adds that lime plays an important role in environmental protection. For example, it removes sulfur from the air in coal-burning generator plants, decreasing the overall amount of pollution released into the atmosphere. It also is used in water treatment processes and in sewage treatment plants.

Lien says the company has been recognized for its efforts since 1962, long before it became compulsory to reclaim land and adapt production processes to minimize environmental impact.

"What we produce contributes to the environment, and we have a long history of caring for the environment," Lien says. "It's worth it in the long run."

### 'Just Luck'

It was "just luck" that Bruce Lien ended up at the University of Wyoming. A South Dakota native, he began his college studies at the South Dakota School of Mines. He soon decided that engineering wasn't really the career path he wanted to take, so he dropped out and began searching for a business program that fit his needs. Lien transferred to Black Hills State University for a year, intending to enroll at South Dakota University later. But



Bruce Lien

different academic schedules that would have delayed graduation forced him to reconsider that plan. Instead, Bruce came to UW, where the schedule fit and where acquaintances reported satisfaction with the educational experience. He was a junior at the time.

Like many of his peers, Lien attended the university on the GI Bill. Drafted out of high school, he served at the end of World War II as a tank driver, at the rank of staff sergeant. Lien took a battlefield commission, a select assignment that very few attained, as most officers had gone through ROTC, OCS or the military academy system.

In October 1950, Lien again answered his country's call. During his Korean War assignment, he went to Okinawa to help secure the island for the Air Force, to use as a base for its bombers.

"You grow up fast," Lien says of his military experience. It not only taught him technical skills, it also taught him the value of humility, discipline, hard work and competition.

### Grateful to UW

Lien is quick to credit UW for a lot of his professional success. He modestly dismisses contributions of time and money as his "obligation" to return what he received during his years at Laramie.

"I feel I owe the university something," he says. "They were very, very key to whatever success I have had."

UW's business faculty challenged Lien to think, and go beyond memorizing data. One individual in particular, professor Jack Routson, embodied that approach to education.

"He had the unique ability to make you think and even provoke you," Lien says. Routson was tough and he wasn't always Lien's favorite person as a student. But his appreciation for what Routson gave him has grown over time.

"Years later, I really appreciated him and the way the faculty at the University of Wyoming function," Lien says. "They stimulate interest besides teaching out of a book." He holds similarly high respect for today's faculty, par-

ticularly those in the College of Commerce and Industry, now the College of Business.

"I've had a special, soft spot in my heart for the College of Commerce and Industry," he says.

By any standard, Lien's efforts to pay off his "obligation" have been considerable. Besides generous financial contributions over the years, he also has donated hundreds of hours of time. Lien has served on both the Alumni Association and Foundation boards, and he chaired the latter. Lien served on the board of UW's Centennial Campaign in the late 1980s and helped the university meet its multi-million dollar goal. He is a lifetime member of the Cowboy Joe Club and avid supporter of UW's athletic teams. In addition, he has provided financial assistance to athletes pursuing graduate studies in business.

Lien also has performed his share of PR work on behalf of the institution, doing what he can to encourage talented students to come to UW for their higher education.

A good role model for others, Lien isn't intimidated by the fund-raising goals the University of Wyoming faces in coming years.

"You will never find any more loyal alum than a Wyoming alum," he says. That, and a solid reputation among non-alum individuals and organizations, will help UW achieve its goals.

### Biographical Information

Lien is married to Deanna Browning Lien; they have no children. Among his other affiliations over the years: president, National Lime Association, 1973-75; president, International Lime Association, 1976-78; Boy's Club board member and past president; Salvation Army board member; past chairman, United Fund; Cosmopolitan Club; Elks Club; Masonic Order; Shrine, Veterans of Foreign Wars; American Legion; Trinity Lutheran Church.

Among the awards and honors bestowed to Lien over the years: National Lime Association Award of Merit (for service to the organization); UW College of Commerce and Industry (now Business) 1982 Distinguished Alumni Award; Meritorious Achievement Award for Public Service, South Dakota School of Mines and Technology; 1983 Cosmopolitan International Distinguished Service Award; 1988 Rapid City Area Chamber of Commerce "George Award" (for distinguished public service); honorary doctorate, South Dakota School of Mines, 1996; commissioner, Presidential Scholars Commission, 1983-1990.

As a student, he was active in Alpha Tau Omega fraternity.

### Alumni reunions set

Please join us for an alumni event near you:

**Sept. 21 — Laramie:** Ag alumni reunion following the UW/Air Force football game; Animal Science/Molecular Biology Complex; co-sponsored with the UW College of Agriculture.

**Sept. 27 — Las Vegas:** Golf tournament at Las Vegas Los Prados Country Club; \$50 per person for 1:30 p.m. golf scramble, \$13 per person for noon lunch. Cocktail reception following tournament.

**Sept. 28 — Las Vegas:** Pregame party at Sam Boyd Stadium; 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m.; tailgate park. Cost to be announced. *Traveling fans, please note: the booster hotel is the MGM Grand Hotel, 1-800-929-1111. Rate is \$65 per night; ask for the "Wyoming football" block.*

**Oct. 5 — San Jose:** Pregame function at the San Jose Hilton; 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m.; Cost TBA; cash bar; *Wyoming booster rate at the Hilton is \$85. Call 408-287-2100 to make reservations.*

**Oct. 11-12 — Laramie:** Homecoming.

**Nov. 7 — San Diego:** Pregame function at the Westgate Hotel; 2:30-4 p.m. Cost TBA. *Wyoming booster rate will be available at the Westgate. Call 619-238-1818.*

**Nov. 16 — Fort Collins:** Pregame event at the Fort Collins Holiday Inn Holidome (at I-25); 10-11:30 a.m.; cost TBA. *Booster rate available at the Holiday Inn. Call 970-484-4660.*