

Sam Ballweg: He is president of Endres Manufacturing

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Sam Ballweg was destined to return and preside over his family's and Waunakee's long standing business of Endres Manufacturing Company, but he took the long way home.

As the great-grandson of the founder of Endres Manufacturing, Ballweg was born and raised in Waunakee. He attended St. John's grade school and went on to graduate from Edgewood High School.

Ballweg and his siblings Ben and Katie spent their youth working at the family business. Whether performing office work or painting, cutting or sanding in the pier department, it was part of learning the family legacy.

Attending Boston College, Ballweg earned a double major in finance and theology, which usually raises a few eyebrows. At Boston College, a Jesuit institution, Ballweg met and became acquainted with many priests. One of his finance teachers was a priest and steered him into the theology degree.

"It's two ends of the spectrum. In my business classes, we were talking about making money, and decisions were always made by what outcome resulted in the best rate of return or bottom line profits. In my theology classes we were always focused on the greatest good and improving yourself and society, and often time those two worlds would be in conflict," Ballweg said. "I specifically remember a discussion in an economics class where a drug company would rather throw away vaccines to limit supply and raise demand rather than give it away to needy third world countries to keep their prices high."

During his time in Boston, Ballweg fell in love with it out East.

"I'm a big Red Sox fan and our dog's name is Fenwick," Ballweg said.

He caught the running bug in college after watching friends run the Boston Marathon. He started running and participated in the Boston Marathon four times and has been running ever since. While his wife and high school sweetheart, Annie attended graduate school at Boston University, Ballweg worked one year for the Massachusetts Department of Telecommunications and Energy as a rates regulator after graduation.

It wasn't long before Ballweg switched gears and headed to Los Angeles.

"It was time to try something new," Ballweg said.

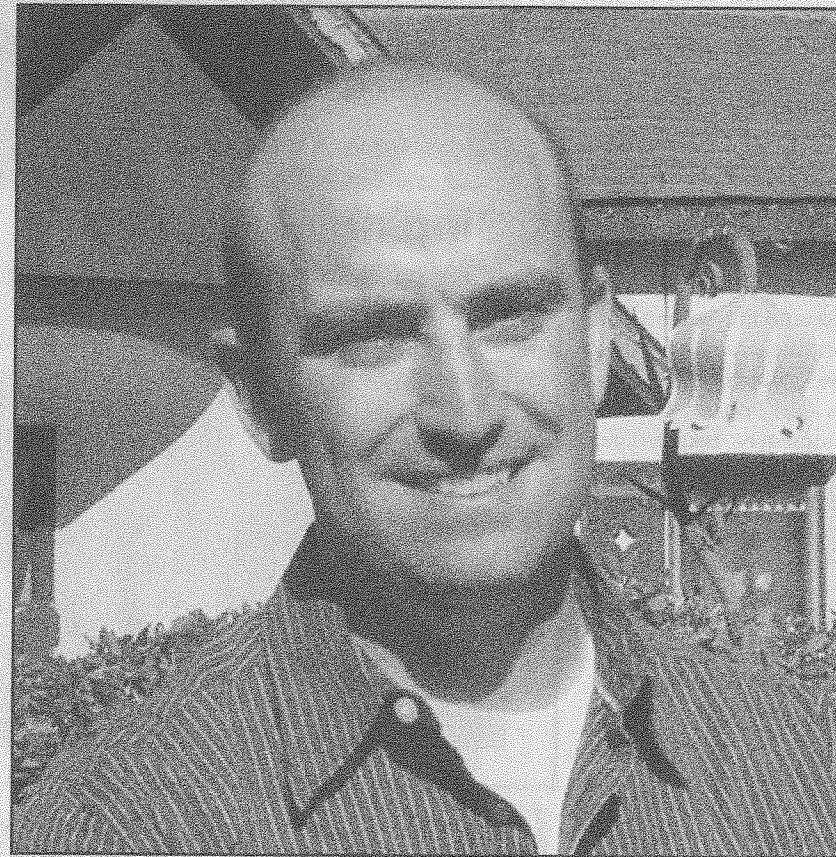
For two years he worked for a construction company in the project field.

"California was fun and the weather great," Ballweg said.

Both Ballweg and his wife enjoy running, and with beautiful weather 365 days a year, running and biking became easier. Ballweg increased his running to include triathlons. He became a member of the LA Tri Club, giving him ample opportunity for group training as well as clinics, race rewards programs and being part of a team.

Competing at the top of their divisional groups gave Ballweg the yearning to compete in the Iron Man. Ballweg's training and enthusiasm took him to the Wisconsin Iron Man competition in 2005.

"The training for Ironman is intense and can consume your life if you let it. Most days involved getting up early and going to the gym for a workout or swim, and then coming home after work for a second run or bike. Luckily my wife was understanding and enjoyed doing some of the workouts with me. Ironman training forces someone to be organized and manage their time very care-



Sam Ballweg loved the East Coast and West Coast but the plan was always to return home to run the family business.
(Photo by Dee Wasylik)

fully. It was a good time of life for me to do it because we did not have kids yet and I did not have nearly the work responsibility that I do now. We still go down to the Ironman every year to cheer on the competitors, and I always get goose bumps watching people finish. I would love to do one again someday if my schedule and body would allow it," Ballweg said.

The plan was always to return to Waunakee to work with his father, Ken Ballweg, and he and Annie did so 10 years ago.

Endres Manufacturing's history goes back four generations when Lawrence Endres Sr. founded the company in 1936. By the time he was 6, Larry Jr. was already helping his father. When Larry returned from WWII, the housing

boom was on and marked the beginning of Endres' structural steel business.

"Many people think we produce steel. We buy the steel from the mill and we cut, weld, bend, drill and punch and that's all done here," Ballweg said. "If a building is in Dane County, chances are our steel is in it," Ballweg said.

Piers, docks and marine boat rail systems are important Endres industrial products.

In 1968, the business moved to its present location. Not wanting the obvious look of a steel manufacturer to be the first thing people saw as they entered Waunakee, Larry Endres introduced the Bavarian theme to the property reflecting his German heritage, which the family has continued

both inside and out.

Ken Ballweg joined the Endres family when he married Larry's daughter Diane in 1974. Ken Ballweg has been president since 1990 while Diane Ballweg became president of the EMC Foundation in 1996. The Foundation provides financial support to local organizations and nonprofits. Endres Manufacturing is also a proud member of US Green Building Council helping building projects obtain the LEED certification.

The fifth generation includes Michael, age 6, and twins, Brandon and Brooke, age 3.

When Ballweg returned 10 years ago, he began the process of learning the whole business. In January of this year, Ballweg became president and his father, Ken took the title of CEO.

"I'm using all my skills," Ballweg said.

From managing individual projects to HR issues to employee matters, Ballweg is at the helm. Ballweg continues the tradition of knowing all of the 50 plus employees and their families.

Ballweg also continues the tradition of giving back to the community. For the past nine years, Waunakee's version of Oktoberfest, Wauktoberfest, has welcomed those who enjoy good beer and good times. Those good times include Bavarian themed music, food, contests, races, Texas Hold'em tournament and fun for the kids.

Four main charities benefit from the event: Waunakee Community Foundation Waunakee Rotary Club, Waunakee Lions and Knights of Columbus as well as some smaller groups.

"While this is not a big fund raiser for these groups, it continues to be a fun weekend to celebrate the great community of Waunakee and spend time with friends and neighbors," Ballweg said.