

Edward H. Rensi

A.S. – Excelsior College – 1983

B.S. in Business Education – Ohio State University -- 1985

Who developed Chicken McNuggets in 1983?

Who founded the Ronald McDonald house?

Who rose from grill man at a Columbus, Ohio McDonald's in 1966

to President and CEO of McDonald's USA in only eighteen years?

Who personally served the 50 billionth McDonald's hamburger?

Who was honored by President Reagan with the President's Volunteer

Award for his extensive charitable work?

Who was named Italian-American Man of the Year in Chicago in 1995?

Whose Team Rensi Motorsports team is currently a leading contender

for the NASCAR championship?

The answer to all of these questions, and plenty more, is Ed Rensi. Ed grew up in eastern Ohio, surrounded by steel mills, coal mines, and persistent poverty. His father had just a 3rd Grade education, and he pushed Ed hard to get into college and work toward landing a steady job, like being a school teacher, so Ed wouldn't end up like him and have to struggle day after day as a manual laborer with limited employment options.

Ed listened to his dad and enrolled at Ohio State after he finished high school, but found he simply wasn't prepared for college. He got married early, dropped out of school, and applied for the first job he saw, answering a "Help Wanted" sign in the McDonald's restaurant right across the street from the Ohio State campus. The manager there told him the job paid \$.85 an hour, and Ed took a few minutes to calculate how many hours he would have to work each week to pay for food and rent and the medical care for his newly-pregnant wife, Anne, and their child that would soon be born: 100 hours a week. It was 1966, and Ed Rensi worked a hundred hours a week to make the \$85.00 he and his family needed to survive. Talk about determination.

But Ed wasn't going to stay on the grill for very long. Within a year, he had been promoted to manager of that McDonald's, and then he moved quickly up the McDonald's corporate ladder, rung by fast-food rung. For the next seven years, he held almost every position possible in the restaurant and franchise field offices in Columbus, and then in Washington, DC, before he was appointed District Manager in Philadelphia in 1972.

After that, Ed's career really accelerated: Regional Manager, Regional Vice President, a transfer to the company's home office in Oak Brook, Illinois, where he moved up a major step to Vice President of Operations and Training. In that job, Ed was responsible for personnel and product development, but his operations expertise was so extensive that he could rattle off product procedures, cooking and holding times, quality guidelines, and even the Operations and Training Manual page numbers for all of the above, and encouraged the people around him to do the same.

That kind of knowledge, commitment, and dedication did not go unnoticed: in 1980, he became Executive Vice President and COO, then was appointed Senior Executive Vice President two years later. As Ed progressed inside the corporation, though, the movers and shakers at McDonald's decided to establish Ed Rensi as an educational example. They encouraged him not only to enroll at Excelsior College and earn an Associate's Degree, but also to provide a model and link to a reputable distance-learning college that could evaluate the training their employees were receiving and help to move many more of them toward degrees. "A goal of McDonald's has always been to give everyone at the cash register the opportunity to be President," Ed explained. "Training provides skills needed to be an effective manager, and it's a key part of the McDonald's culture. Excelsior College helped me get where I am today."

Ed finished his degree at Excelsior in 1983, and re-enrolled shortly after that at Ohio State and received a Bachelor's degree in 1985. In between the degrees, he also reached the top of the corporate ladder – Ed Rensi was

promoted to President and CEO in 1984, and he held that job until he retired in 1997. During his 13 years as President of McDonald's, the corporation doubled its annual sales in the United States to 16 billion dollars, increased its restaurants in this country from 6,000 to 12,000, and made McDonald's the most recognized brand in the world.

In retirement, Ed hasn't slowed down. When he worked in the Philadelphia region in the 1970s, Ed was instrumental in developing the first Ronald McDonald House, which serves as a temporary residence for families of children who suffer from serious illnesses, and he remains a member of the International Advisory Board for the Ronald McDonald House Program. Ed, along with his brother, Sam, also fulfilled another lifelong dream and started Team Rensi Motorsports, which is a major force in NASCAR racing today. He also serves on the boards of directors of Snap-on Tools, Jafra Cosmetics, and the International Speedway Corporation. In addition, Rensi is chairman of the Philadelphia-based Urban Youth Racing League, dedicated to the education of inner-city youth, and in 2004, Ed traveled to Albany to accept one of Excelsior College's highest awards, the distinguished Alumni Achievement Award.

One thing Ed Rensi has never forgotten is where he began, though. At the peak of his success with McDonald's, he had business cards printed that identified him as "Chief Hamburger Griller, French Fryer, Shakemaker, and Cheerleader," and he told everyone who worked for him that, "Our business is to operate great restaurants, for the benefit of the customer. It's so important for us to get to those places where the real work gets done, where the unheralded heroes of the organization really are. I feel privileged and honored to shake the hands of these people in the restaurants who are so dedicated and care so much." It's pretty clear that Ed Rensi has always cared quite a bit as well.