

Christian Publishing Pioneer Passes

Industry leaders have paid tribute to longtime Christian publisher and CBA founding member Robert L. Kregel, who died Sunday (June 24) after a brief illness. Regarded as a pioneering giant in the Christian product industry, the former president of Grand Rapids, Kregel Inc. was 92.

After his father died in 1939, Kregel took over the family's used book business at age 20 and expanded the company into a publishing house and bookstore chain. In 1949, he began publishing classic reprints under the Kregel Publications name. Kregel Inc. now includes Kregel Publications, its Spanish imprint, Editorial Portavoz, and two Kregel Parable Christian Stores in the Grand Rapids area.

Kregel, who served a two-year term as CBA's president from 1960-1962, attended the association's first meeting at Chicago's LaSalle Hotel in 1950.

Kregel was "very supportive of the association forming with its dual purpose of getting the Word of God to as many people as possible and bringing the industry together to encourage cooperation (in order) to achieve excellence in business and ministry," CBA Executive Director Curtis Risky told *Christian Retailing*.

During Kregel's term as CBA president, the association embarked on its first international outreach, funding the establishment of Christian stores in other countries and partnering with Evangelical Literature Outreach to train bookstore owners and staff abroad, Risky said.

Kregel would be remembered as "one of the strong shoulders that CBA and the Christian retail industry stand on today," Risky added. "His unconditional love for others, ethical

standards and commitment to the Lord through his work and evangelism exemplify what this industry is all about. His legacy continues today as the mantle passes to his children to keep up the good work.”

Kregel received a Gold Medallion Lifetime Achievement Award from the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association (ECPA) in 1989 at the end of his three-year term of service on the association’s board.

Kregel was “one of the pioneering giants in the industry who devoted his life to communicating effectively about Christ at a time when distribution was far less than it is today, and there was little money in it,” ECPA President Mark Kuyper told *Christian Retailing*. “He was a dedicated man who built a solid business and ran it with Christian conviction and care.”

Kregel President Jim Kregel said that his father was passionate about the Christian publishing industry. “My dad loved connecting people with books,” he said. “He loved books, and he loved sharing them with others. My dad’s great legacy is how he saw the best in others and tried to help them.”

A memorial service was held Thursday at Calvary Church in Grand Rapids, Mich. Kregel is survived by five children, 14 grandchildren and 26 great-grandchildren. His wife of 63 years, Betty, died five months ago.