

## ISLAND BUSINESS UP CLOSE

# Firm remains faithful to tenets of founder

The Allen C. Benton Agency marked a milestone during the summer when it moved from its decades-old Port Richmond home into more expansive, recently renovated headquarters at 653 Forest Ave., West Brighton.

The refurbished corner building — impressive with its new-looking facade and bright, window-generous, contemporary office space — stands as tribute to a family business, which has served our community since 1948.

"We show up every day and work hard, but ultimately it's the Lord's blessing that has brought us this far," said Donald P. Benton, who owns and operates the full-service insurance firm with his brothers, Robert P. Benton and Allen C. Benton Jr. A fourth brother, David, assists with book-keeping tasks on a part-time basis.

The 54-year-old enterprise, initiated by the late Allen C. Benton Sr., has remained resolutely faithful to the tenets of the founder, his sons affirm.

All the brothers, Allen said, continue to be guided by their father's "training, work ethic and integrity."

Although the business has grown from a one-man operation into a larger outfit with a crew of 16, the core objective has continued unchanged.

"The range of services and products has increased over the years," Robert said, "but the purpose of insurance still remains the same: To put the client back to where he or she was prior to suffering a loss. And, on the liability side, insurance protects individuals and businesses in the event of a lawsuit."

The Benton Agency's clients range from individuals and families to small and



BARTON HOROWITZ

large businesses, Robert noted.

"The advantage we have, as both brokers and agents, is we can access most (insurance) companies and programs to obtain the best combination of product and pricing for our clients," he said.

"Responsiveness to client needs — in personal service — may be the single most important factor in our firm's success," Allen added.

By offering financial services, the firm has further embraced the needs of today's consumer, providing not only life insurance, but annuities, group-health coverage, income tax preparation and more.

## WORKS WITH OTHERS

"We can work with other professionals in estate planning," Allen explained. "Basically, we handle the life insurance aspect of that procedure."

While most of the their clients are on Staten Island, the Bentsons are additionally licensed in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Florida, New Hampshire and Connecticut.

Allen, Robert and Donald, each of whom joined the family business during the 1970s, recall their entry into



STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE/JAN SOMMA

Owners of the Allen C. Benton Agency in West Brighton, all brothers, are Donald, left, Allen and Robert Benton.

the enterprise as a most natural occurrence.

"It's called being born and raised in it," Donald reflected. All three are graduates of the former College of Insurance, Manhattan, now part of St. John's University.

In addition, spending each day together has proven fruitful for the siblings and their enterprise.

"In our situation, working with family has been a blessing to each of us because of our belief in God, and our relationship as friends and brothers," Robert said. "The ingredients of our common

faith and friendship have allowed us to capitalize on one another's strengths."

## THE BEGINNING

The late family patriarch began his venture in 1948 with the purchase of Hess Realty and Insurance, a firm situated on Forest Ave., near Broadway in West Brighton. Changing the company's name to The Allen C. Benton Agency, he remained in that location until moving in 1961 to 1229 Forest Ave, also in West Brighton. The company remained there until relocating to its

present site in June.

"He actually did sell real estate for a number of years, in addition to being in the insurance business," Robert said of his father.

The brothers' grandfather, Ole Benton, had been a builder on Staten Island, and his ties to the construction trade complemented his son's real estate business.

Ties to past generations are not taken for granted by the Bentsons. The brothers, in essence, celebrate their family and business heritage on a daily basis. Seated upon a table in the vestibule of the

firm's main entrance, beneath a photograph of Allen C. Benton Sr., is a vintage Royal typewriter and a heavily worn assortment of rubber stamps. A plaque adorning the table reads:

*"We will not forget where we have been. More importantly, we will not forget who got us here."*

*Thank you!"*

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