HALL of FAME

35 of the insurance industry’s most visionary leaders

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IBA’s Hall of Fame brings together 35 of the insurance world’s most recognizable individuals, all of whom have made their mark on the industry.

WHILE THE term ‘hall of fame’ usually brings to mind sports stars, Insurance Business America is bringing the coveted recognition to the insurance industry. The 35 inductees on the following pages represent IBA’s inaugural class of leaders, pioneers and role models who have set the benchmark for the rest of the industry to follow. These Hall of Famers – all of whom boast at least 35 years of insurance experience – are at the forefront of the industry, inspiring those around them with their wealth of knowledge and accomplishments, and consistently proving themselves to be the best the American insurance industry has to offer.
“When I first moved to California, I had no idea what I wanted to do, so I decided to try insurance or banking,” says Susan Preston, founder and president of Professional Program Insurance Brokerage [PPIB]. “These industries seemed to have opportunities to move up. Luckily, CSE Insurance Company gave me a job 38 years ago.”

For her first two months on the job, Preston fielded questions about homeowner’s and auto insurance for CSE before moving on to Blodgett & Associates, where she learned commercial insurance. When the firm needed someone to service churches, Preston took on that role (her main qualification was being a minister’s daughter), thus becoming the firm’s first-ever female broker/agent and subsequently vice president of sales. In 1993, Preston parted ways with Blodgett & Associates so she could establish PPIB. “Unusual programs were always my interest long before it became the fashionable choice it is today,” she says. “I took my tattoo, beauty and tanning clients and left the ‘vanilla’ business. Twenty-four years later, many clients are still with PPIB.”

Preston recognizes the endless potential in the insurance industry – after all, she has been able to reinvent herself many times over the course of her career. “There is no need to get stuck in a rut doing the same things year after year,” she says. “PPIB has programs for circuses, pyrotechnics, dispensaries, cryotherapy, e-cig products liability and body piercing, just to name a few. I have come a long way from insuring churches. If the insurance industry could get the message to young people that there are many exciting ways to go, prospective employees would be knocking at our doors.”