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**E. Lewis Rudd**

**CEO/Co-Founder, Ezell's Famous Chicken**

Lewis Rudd is President and Co-Founder of Ezell’s Famous Chicken. After waiting six years for initial funding, the family opened the first Ezell’s Famous Chicken store on February 3, 1984 in Seattle's Central District. Since opening, Ezell’s was featured in Esquire Magazine as the Most Life-Changing Fried Chicken in America and has made many famous fans including Oprah Winfrey, Rev. Jesse Jackson, Quincy Jones, Norm from “Cheers”, Danny Glover, George Foreman and the Seattle Seahawks. Ezell's Famous Chicken has grown to 16 fast casual locations with over 325 employees, and built a brand that is recognized nationally.

Rudd grew up in Marshall, Texas in a large family of ten siblings, with strong values. His first restaurant experience was as a teenager working three years for a local chicken chain, which sparked inspiration for Ezell’s Famous Chicken. Later Rudd joined the military as a mechanic, which provided him with leadership skills that would become extremely valuable as a business owner. After the military, he continued to work in the field of mechanics for Weyerhaeuser Company for three years. An entrepreneur at heart, Rudd also owned and operated a photography studio as well as a talent agency developing and managing local talent.

In 1984, the dream of owning his own restaurant business became a reality. Rudd and his family saw their mission as simple: Provide fresh and high quality chicken and good homemade side dishes, served with fast and courteous service. Ezell’s makes their signature dishes from scratch, daily at each location. The family-owned and operated company had nine of the ten siblings working at Ezell’s over the years, three of the family founders are still active in day to day operations.

With Rudd’s leadership, Ezell’s evolved from fast food to fast casual dining, added a catering division, mobile food trucks, delivery, and continues to implement technology in key areas of the business. Ezell’s Famous Chicken is now a household name in Seattle and developed a loyal following throughout the Pacific Northwest.

Rudd is very active in the Seattle community supporting many organizations. Since 1985, Ezell’s annually feeds attendees of the Martin Luther King Jr. marches in Seattle for free. The list of other organizations and causes Ezell’s has supported is long, including cancer research and Odessa Brown Children’s Clinic. Rudd volunteers to provide motivational speeches to schools, and has supported high school incentive programs to increase GPAs. Ezell’s supports the Seahawks & Mariners annual fundraising golf tournaments. As Vice President of Tabor 100, Rudd served on the Board. He also served on the Board of Trustees for the Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce. Rudd is on the University of Washington MBA board. He currently serves as Vice President on the board for the Alopecia Support Group.

Rudd is the father of two daughters, a granddaughter and grandson. He spends most of his free time with his wife of 38 years and enjoys cycling, roller skating, and golfing.