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SCHIFF'S

INSURANCE OBSERVER

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The New Name is 'Securian Financial Group'

Rebranding Minnesota Mutual

As life-insurance companies have transformed themselves into purveyors of financial services, they have often felt the need to transform their images, as well. On February 15, Minnesota Life—it was known as Minnesota Mutual until it became a mutual-holding company in 1998—ushered in a new era in its corporate history by officially rebranding itself as a member of the Securian Financial Group. Atop the snow-dusted roof of the company's twenty-one story headquarters at 400 Robert Street in downtown St. Paul, a company employee dressed as "Securian Man" (the figure in the company's logo) braved the thirteen-degree wind chill wearing a skintight, mango-colored outfit befitting a superhero. He held a golden torch above his head and, in a moment of high drama, pulled aside a large tarpaulin on the south side of the building, unveiling seven-foot tall letters that spelled out S-E-C-U-R-I-A-N. A press release was enthusiastic about the unveiling, calling it a "watershed event in the history of the company."

Minnesota Life is not the "Quiet Company," but it has been kind of quiet. Although it built its headquarters in 1982, for some reason it never put its name on the building (which *The St. Paul Pioneer Press* described, harshly, as a "grim corporate fortress that gives the appearance of being entirely removed from the life of the city"). Now, however, the company's new identity is emblazoned across the top of the grey granite edifice in 140-pound Lexan-and-aluminum letters faced with perforated vinyl. Each letter contains 100 feet of tubular neon, which will illuminate the Securian name at night. The company estimates that its new name will be seen by commuters 500,000 times a day.

The Securian Financial Group was founded in 1880 as The Bankers Association of Minnesota. In 1901, it converted from an assessment company into a mutual legal-reserve company. It now has more than $24 billion of assets, and the life-insurance company's surplus is about $1.5 billion.

It's not surprising that Minnesota Mutual would want a new identity, but why "Securian," and why a logo that looks like FTD's (Florists Transworld Delivery)?

Securian has said that it engaged in a "lengthy consumer testing process" before choosing its new name and brand in 1998. "The name Securian aligns with our mission of providing financial security, and the name is broad enough to cover a variety of products and financial services markets," said Mark Hier, second vice president, Communications and Research, in 2001. He also said that Securian was "distinctive in our marketplace" and "easy to pronounce."

Are the new name and logo improvements on the old? For that matter, are they really distinctive, or merely reminiscent of other names and logos? (And what should we make of a company that dresses up an employee in a costume similar to the one worn by comic-hero The Flash?)

Securian's brand—a running figure carrying a torch—looks like that of many other companies. As for the name "Securian," well, one could easily get it confused with Providian, Radian, Unitrin, GuideOne, Thrivent, AEGON, or Assurant.

At one time, insurance companies chose names that used words like American, Continental, National, United, Lincoln, Washington, Benefit, Guaranty, and Security. Many companies' names sounded similar. Over time, some names were modernized—but they still sound similar: AmerUs, Ameritas, AmeriChoice, WellChoice, WellPoint, Wellmark, AIG, CNA, EMC,

The Flash

Securian Man

FCCI, HCC, ING, IPC, PMA, RLI.

These days, a moniker like Minnesota Mutual could be something unusual—memorable.

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'A Vast Wasteland'

PRESENTING THE ANNUAL

SCHIFF'S INSURANCE CONFERENCE

Tuesday, April 12, 2005
8:30 am - 5:30 pm
New York City

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9:00 a.m. **David Schiff,** editor of ***Schiff's Insurance Observer,*** will tell you what he's riled up about these days. Throughout the conference he will, as always, interrogate the speakers and force them to answer brazen questions.

9:30 a.m. In June 1994, *Schiff's* wrote an admiring profile of **Christopher Davis,** portfolio manager of the ***Davis Funds***, which had $300 million under management. (Chris is the only money manager we've ever profiled.) We picked a winner. The Davis Funds now manage $40 billion, and the firm's primary fund has outperformed the S&P 500 during every meaningful period since its inception in 1969. Chris will tell us about the Davis's sixty-year history of investing in the insurance business, and share his thoughts on the mutual-fund industry, shareholder activism, and more.

10:40 a.m. Two years after receiving his Ph.D. in economics from Harvard, 27-year-old **James Stone** became the youngest insurance commissioner (Massachusetts) in history. Four years later, in 1979, Jimmy Carter appointed him as chairman of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission. When his term ended in 1983, he moved back to Boston and founded ***The Plymouth Rock Company,*** a privately-held insurance holding company that now writes well over $1 billion in premiums—quite profitably. Jim will share his perspective on auto insurance, regulation, public policy, and being an entrepreneur in the insurance business.

11:20 a.m. **William Koenig** is Senior Vice President and Chief Actuary of "the quiet company," ***Northwestern Mutual***. Bill will give us his perspective about reserving—especially when it involves universal-life products with secondary guarantees. His comments, which will not be quiet, should leave some members of the insurance industry feeling worried.

Noon Lunch: Decent food; fine conversation.

1:00 p.m. **Andrew Kaufman,** a founding partner of ***Kaufman Borgeest & Ryan LLP,*** is one of the leading attorneys specializing in the defense of health-care providers and hospitals. He's tried more than sixty cases to verdict, and is the past president of the New York State Medical Malpractice Defense Bar, and past Vice Chairman of the American Bar Association Section on Law and Medicine. Andy will give you a view from the battlefield, tell you his thoughts on tort reform, and explain why he's not for caps on pain and suffering.

continued on next page.

‘A Vast Wasteland’

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SCHIFF’S

INSURANCE CONFERENCE

Tuesday, April 12, 2005
8:30 am - 5:30 pm
New York City

1:45 p.m. Property insurers’ combined ratios are five to eight points higher than they should be, says **Robert Dowdell,** CEO of ***Marshall & Swift/Boeckh (M&S/B),*** which is doing something to remedy that. M&S/B, long known as a building-cost provider in claims and underwriting, has become a corporate Sherlock Holmes that uses logic and statistical analysis on the massive amounts of data it processes to improve carriers’ underwriting results. “The data has an important story to tell,” says Bob, who will tell us an important story about risk differentiation, pricing, database analytics, and much more.

2:45 p.m. Warren Buffett talked to just one securities analyst: **Alice Schroeder** of ***Morgan Stanley***. In 2003, Alice, then *Institutional Investor*’s top-ranked P/C analyst, made an unusual career move—she left the day-to-day world of Wall Street to write a book about Buffett’s life and philosophies. Alice, who is to Buffett what Boswell was to Johnson, won’t be finished with her tome (which we predict will be a bestseller) for a couple of years. In the meantime, she’ll tell you what’s been on her mind.

3:45 p.m. **David Schiff** will have his say on the great insurance issues of the day, and discuss where he sees value and solvency (or the lack thereof).

4:45 p.m. Attendees will socialize with their fellow insurance mavens and observers, discussing the day’s events and making deals over cocktails while taking in the view from the top of the New York Athletic Club.

6:00 p.m. There will be an additional reception and dinner for those who want more of a good thing. The venue is the Coffee House, a convivial, somewhat worn-at-the-edges private club devoted to “agreeable, civilized conversation.” Attendance is limited to 36 people.