

John H. Bryan
Executive Council of Chicago Metropolis 2020



John H. Bryan is retired chairman and chief executive officer of Sara Lee Corporation. Bryan became president and a director of the company in 1974 and chairman of the board in 1976. He served as chief executive officer from 1975 to 2000 and as chairman of the board until his retirement in 2001.

Bryan is a member of the board of directors of General Motors Corporation and Goldman Sachs Group Inc. He is the past vice chairman and a member of the Business Council. He served as co-chairman of the World Economic Forum's annual meeting in 1994, 1997 and 2000.

Active in the arts, Bryan is past chairman of the board of trustees and a life trustee of The Art Institute of Chicago. He led a \$100 million fund-raising campaign to renovate Chicago's Orchestra Hall and Lyric Opera House. Chicago's Mayor Richard M. Daley appointed Bryan the chairman of a private development project to build the \$475 million Millennium Park on Chicago's lakefront. Nationally, he is past chairman and a member of the National Trust Council of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. He is also the past chairman of the Business Committee for the Arts, a national organization dedicated to the support of the arts.

Bryan has long promoted the advancement of women in business; in particular, he is a past chairman of Catalyst, a national organization that seeks improvement for working women. He is a past chairman of the Business Advisory Council of the Chicago Urban League, as well as a past chairman of the United Way/Crusade of Mercy Campaign in Chicago.

Among a variety of civic interests in the Chicago area, Bryan is a life trustee of the University of Chicago and a life trustee of Rush-Presbyterian-St. Luke's Medical Center. He is a member and past chairman of the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, a past chairman of the board of directors of World Business Chicago, a member and past president of The Economic Club of Chicago and a member of the Commercial Club of Chicago.

His awards include the Order of Lincoln Medallion – the state of Illinois' highest honor for individual achievement – and the Marshall Field History Maker Award for Distinction in Corporate Leadership and Innovation from the Chicago Historical Society. He has received Holland's Order of Orange Nassau, conferred by Queen Beatrix; France's Officier de la Legion d'Honneur; and also was appointed a Knight of the Order of Arts and Letters by France's Ministry of Culture and French Language. In 2002, he was appointed Commendatore all'Ordine della Repubblica Italiana by the President of the Italian Republic, one of Italy's highest distinctions available to a foreign citizen. Also, in 2002, he received the Humanitarian/Life Achievement Award from the National Urban League. In recognition of his outstanding patronage of the arts, in 1998 he accepted the National Medal of Arts from President Clinton on behalf of Sara Lee Corporation, and received the 2000 Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney Award from Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture. In 1995 the Chicago Cultural Center Foundation named a block of East Washington Street after him.

In business, he received the Man of the Year Award from the Harvard Business School Club of Chicago. He was named Executive of the Year in 1997 by the French-American Chamber of Commerce, and in 1992 by *Crain's Chicago Business*. He is a laureate of the Mississippi Business Hall of Fame; and, in 2000, he was inducted in the National Junior Achievement Hall of Fame.

A native of Mississippi, Bryan is a graduate of Rhodes College in Memphis, where he received a bachelor's degree in economics and business administration. He holds honorary degrees from Northwestern University, Roosevelt University and Columbia College, all in the Chicago area; from Millsaps College in Jackson, Mississippi; and from Rhodes College.