

Rise and fall: Bader fights to regain post in firm he founded

By DALE BUSS
of The Journal staff

Alfred Bader walks to the center of his office on the sixth floor of the Astor Hotel and bends down toward a huge, foot-thick, paper-wrapped cylinder sitting on the floor. He groans as he begins to push on the thing, finally unrolling it into the next room. Soon the 5-foot-wide ribbon proves to be at least 30 feet long — and it isn't even completely unwound.

It's a graph dominated by a jagged, upward-leaping pencil line that tracked the geometric gains in monthly sales of Aldrich Chemical Co. during the 23 years after Bader founded the company in 1951.

"We never had a year when sales or earnings went down," Bader boasts quietly as he fusses with some of the yellowed Scotch tape that is holding the chart together.

Bader never has stopped touting his company. But now, at 68 years old, the brilliant research chemist,

expert art collector, independently wealthy entrepreneur and charming eccentric is in a battle for his own place in business history. And it's the fight of his life.

Bader is trying to restore himself to his former position as chairman emeritus of Sigma-Aldrich Corp. and to reverse an ugly episode nearly a year ago in which the

**"This is
tremendously
important — it's like
my child has been
taken away."**

Alfred Bader

company's chief executive, Thomas Cori, summoned Bader to a meeting in London — and then abruptly fired him.

Since then, Bader — perhaps best known locally for his re-

cent \$8 million purchase of a Rembrandt painting — has been preoccupied with proving himself right and Cori wrong.

"He's a megalomaniac who has fired lots of people," Bader says, suggesting that Cori feels he has something to prove because his parents both are Nobel Prize-winning chemists. "He didn't think I would fight."

Cori won't discuss Bader. "This thing has been beaten around



ALFRED BADER

enough," he said on the phone from company headquarters in St. Louis.

JUST UNDER THE SURFACE

According to Bader, the Milwaukee area's economy has a stake in this struggle. The company's seven plants and two distribution centers in southeastern Wisconsin employ about 700 people. Bader asserts that any substantial Wisconsin-friendly influence has disappeared from the company with his departure, warning that the out-of-state management will tilt resources in favor of Missouri plants.

Executives of Sigma-Aldrich, which is the world's foremost supplier of chemicals used in scientific research, pooh-pooh that notion. They cite the high productivity of their facilities in the state and a planned expansion at the Teutonia

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