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Jack Conway passes at 88 - Legacy spans generations of home buyers and sellers

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When Jack Conway would tell the story of how he decided to get into real estate, he summed it up as "simple mathematics" - in 1954, he was earning a salary of \$119.50 a week as a sportswriter, but as a young father, had expenses of \$129 a week. When his boss turned down his request for a \$10 raise, the gregarious Conway turned his talents to real estate sales.

As he remembered it, he earned his first commission check at 6 p.m. on his first day as a salesman for the Martin Cerel Company in Natick, and soon decided that "if I was going to work this hard, I may as well go to work for myself." Two years later, he opened his own company in a storefront in Hingham Sq.

At the time of his death on July 23th, at age 88, the company he began in that small office had grown to 40 offices and 600 sales agents, and is one of the largest independent real estate companies in Mass.

Through his five decades in the real estate business, Conway was a pioneer in several areas. He was among the first to hire women in what had been a traditionally male-dominated industry and expanded his company to include a mortgage brokerage and training academy.

A master networker, Conway was widely known for his near photographic memory of names and faces. Often, he would open the door to the conference room at his firm's headquarters to introduce himself to customers, and more often than not, found a common acquaintance.

Conway famously did not use voicemail or e-mail, preferring instead to talk face-to-face or over the telephone. He wrote a company newsletter as often as three times a week, including vignettes about his visits to his offices in what he called "Conway Country," conversations with new agents, or summaries of articles he'd read. When a social-media trainer pointed out that his writings could be considered a blog, he laughed about what he termed his "traditional" approach to doing business. "Personally, I don't know the difference between a Blackberry and a blueberry," he said, "but my agents do."

Although decades removed from the deadlines of the news business, Conway remained a writer at heart. He authored numerous books about his travels across the country and the world, and collected his essays about the real estate business into several volumes that are used to train agents and managers.

He was the Mass. Association of Realtors president in 1970 and 1971 and earned the group's Realtor of the Year Award in 1971. He was also the former president of RELO. In 2006 Conway was honored by the National Association of Realtors and the Cape Cod and Islands Board of Realtors with the Realtor Emeritus Award. Conway is a past chair of the Plymouth County Development Council and South Shore Chamber of Commerce, and served on the board of trustees of South Shore Hospital.

In addition to his work in the real estate business, Conway emphasized the importance of charitable endeavors. MainSpring Coalition for the Homeless named its Middleboro family shelter "The Conway House" in honor of the generous support of Conway and his wife, Patricia, Brockton Area Multi-Services' Conway Children's Advocacy Center for abused children also is named in their honor.

Conway was the founder of the Ambassadors of Holy Cross, a group that supports the mission work of the Congregation of Holy Cross in the poorest areas of Peru.

Born and raised in Boston, he graduated from Boston College High School and attended the University of Notre Dame. He was a Navy veteran of World War II, and fondly recalled covering the boxing exploits of Brockton native Rocky Marciano as a reporter for the former Boston Record-American.

Conway is survived by his wife, Patricia (Carroll) Conway of Scituate, a son, Jack Conway Jr. of Florida, and two daughters, Barbara Conway and Carol Bulman, both of Scituate. He was the grandfather of six and great-grandfather of four.

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