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45th anniversary as largest comm'l./investment/economic dev. weekly newspaper in the world

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The New England Real Estate Journal is planning its 45th anniversary issue this fall. Founded in 1963 it is recognized as the largest commercial/investment/economic development weekly newspaper in the world.

The first issue, dated January 17, 1963 (coincidentally the founder's twenty-seventh birthday) contained 12 pages and \$900 in advertising revenue. I interviewed the owners of the Boston Wharf Co. in South Boston and sold them a \$20 ad. Carleton Hunneman bought a \$50 ad just to help me get started and then it took me another year to land them as regulars. I spent two months putting the first issue together (no previous publishing experience - I had spent 6 years as a radio disc jockey) and it was midnight of press night when I pasted in the final headline. I had two partners and neither one of them knew beans about publishing either. I guess you could say that it was the quintessential example of LEARN BY DOING. A subscription was \$12 a year and I recall like it was yesterday walking into a Realtor's office on exclusive Charles St. and selling the first sub.

Her name was Minerva Gordon. She introduced me to her brother, Lenny Abramson who owned the largest investment property realty firm in the area, and he soon became my biggest advertiser. Young Fred Meyer bought the first weekly ad - one inch for two dollars. The way I looked at it was that it added up to \$104.00 a year. That pretty much paid a week's salary for one worker - and we had only 4 full-timers.

At the end of the first year the newspaper was broke, but we were learning.

I wore out a lot of shoe leather and visited every town from the tip of Rhode Island to Presque Isle, Maine and walked away with ads. Three things happened that kept the paper in business.

One: I met Robert Lewis, a veteran newspaper salesman who could sell refrigerators to Eskimos. He schooled me.

Two: My two partners disappeared believing that the paper would fail. Three: I pitched a successful Realtor in Webster, Mass. (Where the hell is that?).

His name was Herman Becker. He bought nothing, but cleverly turned the tables on me by selling me a sales course on 33 1/3 RPM records. It was Earl Nightingale's THE STRANGEST SECRET. He said it cost \$120. Did I have any money? I had \$2 in my pocket. He said if I promised to listen to the course, he knew I would be able to pay the balance - so he took my money and the rest is history. After three years, 156 issues, the newspaper began making a profit. Someone later informed me that only one in ten publications become successful, and that the ones that do take one to three years to reach that goal.

I seemed to have met at least a few people in each state that were willing to spend their valuable time teaching me the commercial real estate ropes. I'd ask questions, then shut up and listened to their answers.

Of course there were many more, but as I recall these were the first. Jim Raleigh and Ralph Greeny in R.I. Sam Tamposi and Angie Kopka in N.H. Norm Gosline and Gene Martin in Maine. Joe Bove and the Pomerleau family in Vermont. Easton Smith and Bill Farley in Conn. And, in Mass., well too many to mention. But maybe I'll credit one because he was so special and inspired me not to give up.

Remember Andy Hickey, the head of the Greater Boston Real Estate Board? If you can see this Andy, thanks for all the help and encouragement. The rest of this story, along with reprints of 180 front pages, will appear in our special 45th anniversary issue - and if you were around during the first three years, 1963-1965 and recall me knocking on your door and would like to reminisce with me, drop me an email and I'll include it. rollster@vermontel.net.

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