

Brown Sells Millions With A Smile

by JERRY ADAMS
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WINSTON-SALEM—His smile is quick and his hand-clasp firm. As you turn to leave his office, the question flies through your mind: Did I just buy an insurance policy?

The answer, this time, was no. Royall R. Brown just smiles a lot.

He had come into the office to a waiting phone call, punched the button his secretary directed him to, and blurted, "Hello, Good Looking," only to find out that the customer he expected to be on the line wasn't there and he was flirting with the operator.

The moment is to be shared, so when the customer does get on the line Brown asks, "Did you hear that? I just called the operator Good Looking."

He laughs. The customer laughs. Brown's secretary, who is obviously used to all this, laughs, too. Then Brown gets down to business.

When Brown does get down to business, he does a lot of it. He has been, for example, a member of the insurance industry's Million-Dollar Roundtable for the last 30 years consecutively—since the days that a million dollars worth of anything was worth a lot more than it is today.

Upon citing that statistic, Brown adds, "You'd think I'd have had enough sense to quit."

But Brown, who will get no closer to telling his age than "around 60," isn't about to quit.

"I'll try to produce more next year than I did last," he says when asked about the future.

"It's fun."

Brown has been in the insurance business in Winston-Salem for 45 years, since he came to town in 1931 fresh out of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

He has a brother who has also prospered at the same calling in Nashville, Tenn. He says their motivation for going into the insurance business was the tragedy of losing their father when Brown was two years old. There was no insurance.

"My mother went back to college and got her degree and educated four boys," says Brown. But their large farm near Blacksburg, Va. was very nearly lost.

"I think that was what started my brother in this direction," he says. The same was true for him. "Definitely," says Brown, "it's amazing how insurance can stabilize an individual's economy."

Two Big Transactions

Brown broke into the insurance business when Northwestern Mutual Life offered him its Winston-Salem territory during the depths of the Depression.

Those were lean years, and Brown remembers a dual transaction during that time that he calls "one of the watersheds, one of those things that occur in a man's life."

He had left an insurance proposal with Bowman Gray, the legendary leader of R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co., a man known as part of the vanguard of the professional managers of American industry. Upon running into him in the Reynolds Building elevator one day, Brown says, Gray asked if he remembered the proposal he'd left some time before. Well, yes, Brown said, he remembered.

Gray bought half of it that year, suggesting to Brown that the proposal be shown to his brother Gordon, then just out of Yale Law School and beginning a practice in New York.

So Brown took the proposal to the man who has since owned and sold the Winston-Salem



ROYALL BROWN

newspapers, sits on the board of Media General Inc. of Richmond, is chairman of Summit Communications Inc. of Washington, and has been appointed by the President to a committee which oversees the country's spy activities.

Gordon Gray looked at the insurance premium his brother had agreed to pay, looked up at Brown, and said, "I don't make that much money in a year." But Gordon Gray bought some insurance, too, and Brown says that if those two sales had not been made, he might not have made it through that Depression year.

Since then, Brown has gone on to sell so much insurance that, except for NML, he doesn't even keep track. "I only total production in one company," he says, "and I have 15."

"I couldn't come within \$25 million of how much I've done over the years. I did \$22 million one year. That is the best I've ever done..."

Through his long career, Brown has seen many changes in insurance, but not so much technological change as in other industries. In Brown's opinion, it is the customers who have developed.

"People are more intelligent buyers," he says. They know about estate planning, investment management...

"Back when I went into the business, it was a selling business."

Legal Ramifications

As an example, Brown cites a recent need to know the legal ramifications of a certain plan. Stacked on his desk and lined along a bookshelf in his office are tape cassettes, instructional guides, and Brown says he spends 30 minutes to an hour each day listening to them, learning.

"I go the the CLU institute at least every other year." The there are Million-Dollar Roundtable seminars, NML seminars and a constant flow of information necessary to keep up with the buyers.

Even with all that learning, Brown admits there are some things he doesn't understand. Like precisely what it is his son-in-law, a successful vice president with Citibank in New York, does.

He is in the international division, and Brown confesses that all of that arcane dealing—marks and guilders and yen and all, off-shore corporations—is beyond him.

Closer to home, Brown is a basic community leader. In Winston-Salem, he has been on every board but parole.

Framed documents on the walls of his office on the Wachovia Building's 23rd floor attest to the variety of positions he has held. He has been in the YMCA, Red Cross, National Volume Leader for NML, a member of the Assemblymen's Council of the Presbyterian Church, U.S., president of the Greater Winston-Salem Chamber of Commerce and, yes, an admiral in North Carolina's "Navy."

He says of his stint with the Chamber, "Did you know that up to then the town had no through streets?"

As one might expect, Brown is a booster. The day of the interview he sported a Carolina blue suit. He drives a Carolina blue car, and just got back from an Alaska-Hawaii-Taipai-Hong Kong-Tokyo trip with his wife and, of all people, other old Carolina grads. Of the three-week trip, he says with a smile, "I found out who my wife is."

His son, Royall Jr., "is the only one in the family who didn't go to Carolina, including my wife." The errant son was interested in the School of Design at N.C. State University but has since mended his ways, gone into business with his father and "did over two million last year. He's a natural."

Speaking of his service in all those community projects, Brown says, "You know, you go through all of that. You've got to give something if you're going to get something in return."

In the same earnest tone, he adds, "You know, with a little ambition and a little determination, you can go as far as you want in this country."

The insurance business is just now taking off, Brown thinks, because "people are just getting educated to what insurance can do. It's been a matter of time, yes, but also companies are requiring a higher level of person."

"They're not just throwing them out there with a rate book the way it was with me."

Since he hit the streets with a rate book 45 years ago, Brown has never drawn a salary. He has worked the territory on commission.

"I'm an independent," he says.

He has always been his own boss, he says, and that means that "every morning, when you wake up, you're free."

Jefferson Standard Sales Set Record

GREENSBORO—Jefferson Standard Life Insurance Co. has reported new life insurance sales totaling \$315,511,000 for the first six months this year, the largest six-month sales volume in company history.

The first-half sales figure represents a gain of \$66,239,000, or 26.7% over volume for the corresponding period last year, according to Seth C. Macon, senior vice president—agency. It was the first time the company's sales have gone over \$300 million in a six-month period, Macon said.

Ordinary life insurance in force with Jefferson Standard was reported at an all-time high of \$4,696,061,000 June 30, a record gain of \$161,794,000 for the preceding six months, and nearly double the increase for the first six months of 1975.

That figure does not include approximately \$258,793,000 of Servicemen's Group Life Insurance reinsured by the company.