

On the sunny side..

The news that Marketplace Magazine is closing brings back many memories.

Jim Pannell had a little shop in the south end of Kincardine and asked me drop in to meet the editor of his new publication, Charles Whipp, who had worked for daily newspapers in Regina and London and had owned the Petrolia weekly for a number of years. I asked Jim if Charlie was a little long in the tooth to handle the job. (That was 38 years ago and Charlie was 65, which sounds pretty young to me today.)

Jim's faith in Charlie was well-founded as he proved to be an excellent writer and editor. Charlie and I became good friends.

Jim and I go back about 50 years, to shortly after I started the Kincardine Independent. When I first met him, he was selling newspaper promotions across North America. Jim and his partner, Mac Dort, would go into a town and buy the centre spread of the local weekly newspaper for eight weeks. Then they would sell an eight-week advertising program to the local merchants.

Then it was off to the next town.

Selling advertising wasn't Jim's only gig. In his younger years, he was a hairdresser to the stars in Hollywood and made an appearance in one segment of a television series. That didn't last long – he said he could make more money cutting hair.

He sold suits to farmers on the prairies. He and another salesman would rent a storefront in a small town. One of them would collar a farmer on the street and guide him into the store where he was sold a new outfit.

He won a bus shelter contract in the GTA and did very well, for he could sell. I never met a salesman who could outsell Jimmy. He was a pro.



Charlie Whipp.

But Jim was tired of being on the road. He opened a leather shop at the mall in Kincardine in the late seventies; that did not go well. Then he launched the Inflation Fighter in the early eighties. He asked me to set type and do the layout for the publication and after it went to press he took The Independent staff out for dinner and drinks. He was generous.

That obviously wasn't what Jim was looking for and he closed it after a year or so and came up with idea of the Marketplace Magazine. And he did it right. Daughter Deb handled production, wife Linda looked after the office, Charlie Whipp the writing and Jim the



Jim Pannell, the man behind Marketplace is surrounded by some of the most important people to him; his granddaughters. Standing at the back is Lily, while Ella gets grandpa's lap and from left is Kylee, Kate James and Jessica. This photo was from the 25th Anniversary issue - February 2014.

selling. It was soon a profitable 56-page monthly publication.

In reality, we were competitors, fighting for the same advertising dollars. But for some reason we were always friends. We were the only independent publishers in the area and often compared notes.

He usually stopped into the office each month after Marketplace went to press and demanded that I go next door for a drink or two.

One afternoon, 25 years or so ago, Jim walked in, slammed an almost empty bottle on the counter and said, "I'm dying. I want you to write my obituary."

Jim was accompanied by his long-time friend Jim Reid, former CTV investigative reporter. The three of us had to go next door to discuss the obituary and the aneurism that was threatening Jim's life.

Jim survived the operation and did a lot of living until he died about nine years ago. His wife, Linda, has since joined him on the sunny side.

Family, friends, fishing and golfing were Jim's passions. He was at home on the lake. One afternoon, he dropped into the office and said, "We're going fishing." It was a hot, windy August day and the lake had six-foot swell. As we went farther and farther out, I realized we were the only ones on the lake. Jim enjoyed the trip; I was glad when we returned to shore.

Things were getting tough in the publishing business by the time Jim died. Internet advertising has led to the death of many publications in the past decade. Newspapers and publications like Marketplace that survive are much smaller today because of the lack of advertising revenue. It is also difficult to find a printer today because most of the presses have been shut down.

Deb has done well to keep publishing the magazine as long as she has.

What would a healthy Jim do today? I believe the same as Deb – close the doors.

Jim always looked on the sunny side. He would have looked for something else to sell.

Anyway, I still miss talking to Jim and Charlie...



The very first issue, February 1, 1989.

by Eric Howald