
Chapter Thirteen

Saving the Day

Steve Lewis, also recruited me to help out on Campbell Soup Foodservice, another prize account at RBL&W. Advertising for the institutional business-to-business side of the giant food manufacturer was a privilege for the agency. Steve helped win the account for the agency roster because of a friendship he had with the head of that division at Campbell Soup.

Steve had pulled me in a little late, however. The first day I worked on that account, Jack Kelly, the Marketing Director for The Campbell Foodservice Division, came to visit Steve Lewis at the agency personally. Steve figured it would be a good time for me to meet the client. I sat in the meeting as Jack announced that he had decided to conduct an agency review. (Which is mostly a euphemism for firing the incumbent agency). He candidly said that he felt that RBL&W's chances were slim of retaining the business.

Several frantic trips from Raleigh, North Carolina to Camden, New Jersey and several goodwill meetings later, it was final. Campbell Soup Foodservice appreciated the effort but had selected a new agency to manage its account. I was on this account for about 90 days. During that 90 days I was the account guy that supervised the production of an ad for a frozen soup targeting restaurants owners and managers that got the highest readership score in *Nations Restaurant News*, a leading foodservice trade magazine. (As measured by one of their periodic readership studies. It was a modest victory for me.)

Thanks (in part) to Steve Lewis, I went from BMOC (Big Man On Campus) to L-O-S-E-R.

I heard later from someone, who met Jack Kelly at a tradeshow, that if RBL&W had put me on the account sooner he would never have launched the agency review and RBL&W would still have the business. I was flattered. So I had to be satisfied with the notion that I would have saved the day if only

Steve Lewis had pushed the panic button sooner.

Meanwhile Steve Lewis gets out without a scratch, right? Nope. It turned out that Steve was an agency partner but not a large enough partner. The Lion's share of the agency belonged to Howard Rockett. Howard can be very persuasive. He persuaded Steve to leave the agency. He did, only to turn up as President of another agency in Raleigh. Steve took his settlement and bought a piece of another agency. Some business huh?