

Ray talks to Mike Hill



BY RAY HANKAMER
rhankamer@gmail.com



Mike Hill

- **RN:** Mike, you and I have known each other a long time, going back to your days with a large international firm. How long were you there? How did you operate your commercial real estate business specialty, and why did you eventually leave to go on your own?
- Yes, Ray, you and I HAVE known each other for a long time and I wanted to say I do appreciate being included among your other outstanding individuals' interviews in our real estate community.
- **MH:** I started in 1971 with Coldwell Banker Commercial, which became CB Commercial and finally became CB Richard Ellis. I was part of that wonderful organization for 32 years, started my independent practice Michael Hill Properties in 2002, now 14 years ago. I have always specialized in sales, leasing and investment sales of industrial buildings and land.
- **RN:** Before you went with the big firm, what baby steps did you take to first get into industrial brokerage? Are you primarily a tenant or landlord rep?
- **MH:** In the Navy where I, a green Ensign, was assigned as a Department Head (Supply Officer) on a small destroyer deployed in Viet Nam. I found out that I could (had to) learn fast. I loved the challenge! Once I came back from the Service, I looked for another challenge and it came with a friend, Rod Barry (who I'm sure you know), telling me about this new firm from the west coast, Coldwell Banker starting up a new commercial brokerage operation in Houston so I signed up. Over the following 30+ years I learned about myself, what my marketable skills were, what my weaknesses were and how to get them to fly in formation. I do not specialize in Tenant Rep or Landlord Rep. I don't think an effective industrial broker can, with the market "cycles" of supply and demand ... when the opportunities change dramatically.
- **RN:** Would you say you are a specialist in a given area of Houston (Texas), or does your business flow come mainly from relationships that you have cultivated over the years and you work on projects just about anywhere?
- **MH:** My work is totally "Client Driven" which means that I will work on anything my Client asks me to do. This takes me at times into: office, retail, farm & ranch, church, school etc. and many times outside Houston, outside the state and abroad too. My "wheelhouse" is greater Houston industrial, but I want my clients to think of and call me with any project they have related to real estate.
- **RN:** I know that you have several younger brokers for whom you serve as an informal but valued mentor. Can you tell our RED News readers some of the regular questions which are asked of you by them and how you respond?
- **MH:** My greatest reward in my career, I think, is the relationships I have had with my many trainees and the current young people I am mentoring. My extended family: Brendan Lynch, Jeff Everist, Billy Gold, Jim Stark at CB and others like Conrad Bernard at Boyd and David Toone at PinPoint Commercial. These guys were all incredibly capable and it was my privilege to be able to spend time with them. I get asked all sorts of questions about handling money, difficult marriage, difficult children, fighting "burnout" in their work, considering unexpected recruitments by other firms. I am mentoring 5 young folks now (with other firms).
- **RN:** One of the most difficult things for a young commercial broker is how to make a living over the years it takes to gain the expertise to qualify as an "expert" and to attract listings and clients. What pathway to "expert" would you recommend to those just starting out?
- **MH:** Starting out in our business is tougher today than it was for me because there is so much more talented competition. Three things: work HARD, work SMART and be ORGANIZED is the formula for my success. You simply have to put in the time (5 years for me to feel like I knew what I was doing), you have to develop a "sense" for the deal and follow your "gut" in how to proceed. I'm convinced that our subconscious is constantly at work behind the scenes and to the degree that you "have your antenna up" and listen, you will get direction. Also, you must somehow differentiate yourself from everyone else.
- **RN:** I also know that you spend a lot of your leisure time 'out in the country' ...can you tell us about that and what your loves are after commercial real estate?
- **MH:** Again, Ray, I am probably the "luckiest" guy you know because I have had the wonderful good fortune to have found our place in Hempstead, TX, just one hour from Houston. Marji and I built this farm 10 years ago for the express purpose of getting our 4 grandkids out of the city to learn a "country" experience. . . We have taught them (three boys and a girl) how to fish, how to hunt, how to "muck" horse stalls, how to ride a horse, how to tie up a horse so he won't get away, how to drive (4 wheelers before and now cars), how to cut firewood, etc., etc.. We so enjoy just the two of us taking just the four grandchildren out there, shooting pool in the honkytonks, eating at the country cafes, building fires when it's cold and learning the stars at night. It just doesn't get any better than this. One of my most recent hobbies is long range rifle shooting. I have built a range at our place and just recently introduced my three grandsons to this. Interestingly ALL of them can shoot better i can, and I have had some practice. My 14 year old can hit a dime at 50 yards and a quarter at 100 yards with a good .22 rifle. I can't even see that far