

Richard Weiner is an author, lecturer and public relations consultant. His 23 books include *Webster's New World Dictionary of Media and Communications*, which is in several thousand libraries. He and his wife, Florence (also an author) have lived since 2002 in a house at 5775 N. Bay Rd., Miami Beach, Florida.

Richard Weiner, Inc., a public relations firm in New York, specialized in marketing communications, notably the introduction of the Cabbage Patch Kids.

He was an adjunct professor at Fordham University Graduate School of Business, in New York, where he taught the nation's first public relations course for MBAs. His awards include the Gold Anvil for lifetime achievement from the Public Relations Society of America, the highest award to an individual in the PR field. His articles have appeared in *The New York Times Magazine* and many other publications.

Richard Weiner was born on May 10, 1927, in Brooklyn, New York. His father, George, owned a printing business, Weiner Press, in lower Manhattan. His mother, Sally, was a housewife. His brother, Melvin (four years younger), received a PhD from the University of Kansas and was a clinical psychologist.

Richard Weiner grew up in the Sheepshead Bay section of Brooklyn. He graduated from James Madison High School in Brooklyn in 1943, at the age of 16. He started at the University of Wisconsin in Madison in September, 1943. World War II ended in 1945, when he was 18, so he was never in military service.

In September 1945, after completing six semesters of premedical courses, he was admitted to the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine. He dropped out of medical school after the first year. He lived in Madison for a total of ten years, from 1943 to 1953. He was a researcher in the University of Wisconsin Primate Laboratory, headed by Harry Harlow, a renowned psychologist, and published a paper, with Harlow, on his work with a rhesus monkey in the *Journal of General Psychology*.

He received a BS degree in 1949 and MS degree in 1950. His major subject was genetics and he published an article, based on his research with fruit flies (*Drosophila*), in *Science*.

In high school, his favorite teacher was Deborah Tannenbaum, who encouraged him to write. He was editor of *The Highwayman*, the magazine at the school. At the University of Wisconsin, he took only one journalism course, scientific newswriting. He was active at the *UW Daily Cardinal*, including movie reviewer and science columnist.

In 1952, he produced and narrated a weekly half-hour program, *The Sound of Science*, on radio station WISC, the ABC affiliate in Madison. One of the programs was a description of a childbirth, as it took place, the first such broadcast. Other programs also were unusual and Weiner dreamed of becoming another Edward R Murrow. He went to New York and was interviewed at the ABC, CBS, Mutual, and NBC radio networks, but did not receive any job offers. One of the interviewers suggested that he contact Alan Livingston at Capitol Records. In 1953, Capitol released a record, *Birth of a Baby*.

Producing the radio program involved working with scientists at the University of Wisconsin and science-oriented associations, headquartered in Madison. Weiner partnered with Morton (Mort) Levine, who had been editor-in-chief of the *Daily*

Cardinal, to form Weiner-Morton & Associates, the first public relations firm in Madison. Clients included the Wisconsin Medical Association, Wisconsin Optometric Association, Wisconsin Motor Carriers Association, and the Schwartz Hotel, a summer resort in Elkhart Lake, Wisconsin. Initially, offices were in the apartment of Mort Levine and his wife, Elaine, and then the company opened an office at 22 North Carroll St., across from the state capital.

In 1953, Mort Levine moved to California, where he became a weekly newspaper publisher, and Weiner returned to New York. He lived in his parent's home in Lawrence, Long Island, just outside of New York City. Within a few weeks after returning to New York, he started work at Ruder & Finn, a public relations firm located in a townhouse at 32 E. 68 St. in Manhattan. The founders were Bill Ruder and David Finn. His salary was \$100/week.

During the next few years, the PR firm grew considerably and Weiner became a Sr. VP and partner. The accounts were divided into three groups and Weiner supervised the group that consisted mostly of consumer products companies, including American Safety Razor Company, ChannelMaster (TV antennas), Polaroid and the Venetian Blind Institute. The Public Relations Society of America awarded him the Silver Anvil for campaigns in behalf of Johnson & Johnson and the Handwriting Foundation. During the 1964 World's Fair in New York, Weiner represented two companies, Parker Pen and Clairol, which were adjacent. Of his many clients, the one that he was closest to was Clairol, which credited public relations as helping change its image from a hair dye used in beauty salons to the top-selling hair coloring.

On December 9, 1956, Richard (Dick) Weiner married Florence (Chick) Chaiken. From 1956 to 2002, they lived in apartments on the West side of Manhattan, except for three years when they lived in a house in Dobbs Ferry in Westchester County.

His first book, *Professional's Guide to Public Relations Services*, was published by Prentice Hall in 1968. Extremely laudatory reviews included *Advertising Age* ("the encyclopedia of public relations") and five more editions were published, first by Prentice Hall and then by Amacom. His second book, *Professional's Guide to Publicity*, had three editions, and was used as a textbook in more than 100 colleges. He also wrote media reference books, including *News Bureaus of the U.S.*, *Syndicated Columnists*, *Investment Newsletters* and *College Alumni Publications*.

His major book was *Webster's New World Dictionary of Media and Communications*, published by Macmillan in hardcover (1990) and paperback (1996). It was designated by *Library Journal* as a Reference Book of the Year and is in libraries in the U.S., Canada, U.K. (British Library in London), Denmark (Royal Library in Copenhagen), China, Japan and other countries. His other book about media jargon, *The Skinny About Best Boys, Dollies, Green Rooms, Leads, and other Media Lingo*, was published in 2006 by Random House.

In 1968, he resigned from Ruder & Finn (now called Ruder Finn) to start a public relations firm, Richard Weiner, Inc., in one room at 122 E. 42 Street in New York, with no employees. The company grew considerably and became renowned for product publicity, which now is called marketing communications. A specialty was healthcare, with such clients as Bristol-Myers, Ciba-Geigy, Gracie Square Hospital, Johnson & Johnson, Nova Pharmaceutical, Sandoz Pharmaceuticals, Squibb and Wyeth.

For many years, the company was located on two floors at 888 Seventh Ave., a building owned by Arlen Realty, which also was a client. Projects included the opening of many shopping centers and residential communities, including Aventura in Miami. Aventura has grown to become a separate city. Real estate clients also included Bayshore Gardens (near Sarasota, Florida), Gulf American (builder of Port Charlotte and other communities) and Palm Coast (in Florida).

Other clients included Atari, Belgian Endive Board, Blue Mountain Arts (greeting cards), Celanese Corp., Christian Brothers (wines), Consolidated Cigar, Continental Grain Co., Earth Shoe (the flat shoe that became popular among college students), General Foods, Gold Star Electronics (a Korean company, now known as LG, maker of TV sets, phones and other products), Harlequin Books, Hasbro, Hermès, Johnson & Johnson (ob tampons), Luce Press Clippings, Marriott, Mattel, Mizuno (sporting goods), National Enquirer, Pepsi-Cola, Ridge Tool, SCM (Smith-Corona typewriters), Schaeffer Beer, Smirnoff, Subaru and Volvo.. A client for many years, Colonial Penn, in Philadelphia, was the first company associated with the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) and Weiner was active in promoting AARP.

Nonprofit clients included the American Film Institute, Cigar Association of America, Lexington School for the Deaf and the Paper, Stationery & Tablet Manufacturers Association.

In 1982, the firm launched the Cabbage Patch Kids (in behalf of Coleco). Weiner was credited by *Newsweek*, *Advertising Age* and other media for this public relations phenomenon. One of the most unusual campaigns was in behalf of the Marshall Islands, which was a U.S. possession in the South Pacific. Weiner helped the Marshallese to

obtain their independence. In behalf of Sandoz Pharmaceuticals, Weiner conducted a program, called Medical Journalism, which included many writing and design workshops for physicians who edited state and county medical journals.

By 1985, Richard Weiner, Inc. was one of America's 15 largest public relation firms. Surprisingly, it had only one office, in New York, with 90 employees.

In 1986, Richard Weiner, Inc. was acquired by the BBDO advertising agency. BBDO then merged with DDB (Doyle Dane Bernbach) and Needham Harper to form the Omnicom Group, a publicly owned company. BBDO owned Doremus (a financial relations firm) and Needham Harper owned Porter Novelli, a public relations firm based in Washington DC. Omnicom merged the three PR firms. Though Weiner was the largest of the three firms, the merged company was called Porter Novelli. Dick Weiner resigned in 1988 but maintained an office in the company until he moved to Florida in 2002. He was public relations consultant to the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian for seven years.

Dick Weiner conducted over 100 workshops for the Public Relations Society of America and other groups, including the National Institutes of Health. He taught a three-credit course in public relations at Fordham University Graduate School of Business Administration in New York, which was the nation's first such course for MBAs. He also taught at New York Institute of Technology. He was one of the first public relations counselors to be accredited by PRSA.

Awards include the Gold Anvil in 1990 (highest honor to an individual from the Public Relations Society of America), John Hill Award (NYC chapter of PRSA) and eight PRSA Silver Anvils.

For many years, Weiner wrote a monthly column about language in *Public Relations Tactics*, the publication of the Public Relations Society of America. His articles appeared in *Communication World*, *Public Relations Quarterly*, *Writer's Digest* and other magazines. During one of William Safire's vacations, Weiner wrote a language column in *The New York Times Magazine*.

Weiner was active in the civil rights movement and was on the Board of Directors of the Medical Committee for Human Rights, which evolved to Physicians for Social Responsibility. Mr. and Mrs. Weiner were active in the antiwar movement during the Vietnam war. One of her books was *Peace Is You and Me*. Richard Weiner was on President Nixon's White House Enemies List, which he referred to as his "badge of honor." Florence Weiner's other books are in the healthcare field, including two written in Association with the Rusk Institute of Rehabilitation in New York

He was on the board of directors of the American Academy on Physician and Patient, Medicare Rights Center and Shake-A-Leg Miami, an organization that provides sailing instruction and other services for children and adults with disabilities.

Richard and Florence Weiner have two daughters, Jessica Lampert (born in 1958, married to Alan Lampert, lives in Stoughton, Mass.) and Stephanie Weiner (born in 1961, married to Joe Iosbaker, lives in Chicago). Jessica has two daughters, Valerie and Samantha. Stephanie has two sons, Nat and Tre. Valerie is married to Robert Lake and they had two sons. In summary, Richard Weiner has two daughters, four grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

During the last few years, he has been writing a book about gossip, based on research in the social sciences. It was stimulated by his interest in Walter Winchell and other

gossip columnists. He has maintained two sites devoted to gossip —
www.thegossipbook.com and www.facebook.com/thegossipbook. He also has sent out
considerable gossip on Twitter (@RichardWeiner2).