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Tales on the Road Guided Him to Law

By LAWRENCE VAN GELDER

WHEN Steven Mitchell Sack of Oceanside was a small boy, he often took to the road with his father, Bernard, who was a commission salesman in the women's apparel industry.

"I used to hear these stories," Mr. Sack recalled. "A guy would work 20 years for a company, build up a territory, introduce accounts to the company, and then one day the company would tell him: 'From now on these accounts will be ours and if you don't like it, we're going to fire you.'"

Such stories outraged Mr. Sack's sense of justice, but there was nothing he could do. But things are different now. Mr. Sack, a graduate of Oceanside High School and the State University at Stony Brook, has become a lawyer — primarily practicing contract law with an emphasis on sales-related problems. And, with Howard Jay Steinberg, his one-time roommate at Boston College Law School, he is the co-author of the newly published "The Salesperson's Legal Guide" (Prentice-Hall, \$12.95).

Among the topics covered in the book

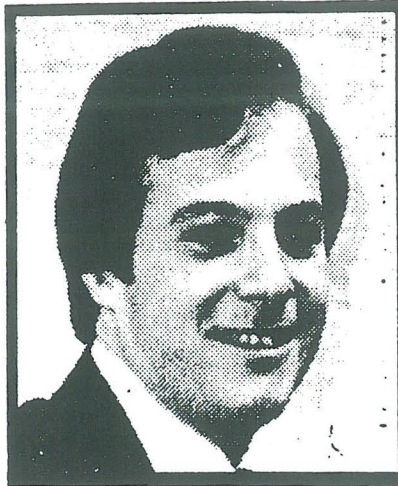
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are employment contracts, commissions and territorial rights, the duties of a salesman, breaches of contract, disputes with the company, protecting the salesman from exploitation and tax tips for the salesman.

Mr. Sack is not one of those people who wait a lifetime before achieving their goals. He is 27 years old, and he entered law school five years ago.

"Right away I started to give my father advice," he said. "I'd tell him he should have a written contract and what he should have in the written contract. It's like I opened up a new world for him. We sued two manufacturers in the first two years of law school and successfully settled both of those cases out of court, because he had something in writing and because the company didn't want to turn over its books and records to my father for inspection.

"And then word got around. Other salesmen started calling me and asking me for advice. Since I wasn't admitted [to the bar], I did not give them legal advice. My father I can give advice — I guided him. But I decided to write a book informing people in sales of their legal rights and remedies."



Steven Mitchell Sack

While holding down a summertime legal job in Philadelphia in 1978, Mr. Sack spent his evenings interviewing salespeople at trade shows in town. "I'd say, 'Listen, I'm going to write a book for you. Tell me what problems you frequently encounter.'"

"I came back to law school in the fall and I got my roommate and I said to him, 'We're going to write this book. I don't care if everyone thinks I'm crazy. I know we're going to do a service for people.'"

Although Mr. Sack was in his final year of law school and employed in a Boston law firm that specialized in salesmen's cases, he said he was able to carry out the necessary research for the book because a professor accepted it as independent study worthy of school credits.

Since the book came out, "reaction has been wonderful," Mr. Sack said. He said salesmen's organizations had been distributing it to members; he had been asked to make speeches before salesmen's groups; and, in addition to conducting his legal practice, he is planning to do more writing, including another book.

"I love the law," Mr. Sack said, "and I think the law is wonderful. If you can use the law to help people, this is really where it's at. My idea of helping people is to disseminate useful and practical legal information so they can be knowledgeable about their rights and remedies. These people in sales have been exploited for generations, and it's about time they fought back."

Among the satisfied readers, Mr. Sack reported, is his father. "He's absolutely delighted."