

(l to r): Eve Lazarus,
Chuck Phillips, Alan Russell
and Mike Krafczyk



SO LONG, CHUCK

The Vancouver agency world sends off ad legend Chuck Phillips

BY EVE LAZARUS

On Sept. 30, a few dozen of the who's who of Vancouver's ad and marketing industry gathered at Primo's Mexican Grill to bid adieu to Chuck Phillips, the former president and CEO of Lanyon Phillips Communications, at one time one of the hottest agencies in town.

Among the crowd were former clients Jim Lightbody of BC Lotteries and Mike Krafczyk from BC Hydro, along with Dick Hadden of Cossette; Alan Russell, formerly of DDB; Bill Downie of Publicis; and Hagan Ainsworth of MacLaren McCann.

After 22 years in Canada, Phillips, that irascible, madly quotable, talented ad man is retiring to a beach house in Malibu and he's leaving the industry a lot richer for having been here.

Over the 13 years I've covered this industry, Phillips has threatened to sue me, called me a jackass in a letter to the editor (got it all on tape Chuck) and gave me some of the best quotes ever. In 2003, when TBWA moved into LPC's vacated Arthur Erickson-designed offices, he said "It's like the Clampetts moving into Beverly Hills." When former partner Peter Lanyon briefly joined DDB Group, Phillips told me "It's like Will Shakespeare joined the Hells Angels." And later, when Lanyon went to SGCI in Halifax, Phillips said "He's like the cat. You throw him out the window and he lands on all his paws."

David Martin, former LPC managing director and creative director and now partner at Hyphen Communications, recalls his first meeting with Phillips: "I remember thinking he really is the brash American and he speaks his mind... By the time we got to our fifth meeting I thought that I really like this guy," says Martin. "Here's a person who has built some of the most important brands that are around today and I'm not sure he gets the credit that he deserves."

Phillips certainly has a colourful resumé. Born and raised in Los Angeles, Phillips was the first employee of the newly merged L.A. ad agency Chiat\Day. He helped launch Apple Computers in 1984 and was the founding

president of Chiat\Day Toronto in 1987. He's also an ex-Navy SEAL, notes DDB chief Frank Palmer. "He always liked to have his back against the wall... I would show up at a restaurant early knowing full well that it would drive him crazy if I had my back against the wall because he thought Tony Soprano was going to come up and shoot him or something."

When Phillips moved to Vancouver in 1992, the plan was to open an agency with Dick Hadden, his former creative director at Chiat\Day who had moved to Vancouver to head up Cossette (the plan fell through). "Vancouver looked like a pretty easy market from the standpoint of there wasn't much going on here, but the potential was awesome for somebody to come in and do advertising," says Phillips. Hadden, he adds, told him Vancouver was the

"Gulag of Canadian advertising."

"I've never forgotten that line," says Phillips. "A bunch of people proved him wrong—PJ the Rethink guys—and so did we."

For a time, Phillips, Lanyon and Tim Kelly had a client list that boasted Telus, the Investor's Group, BC Hydro, BC Hot House, the Grizzlies, National Money Mart, Brookside Foods and Boston Pizza. "I'd never been in a better place and I worked at Chiat\Day, which was the best agency in history," says Phillips. Then LPC merged with BBDO, Telus pulled

out, others reined in their budgets and the agency eventually disappeared into TBWA and DDB—its sister Omnicom-owned companies. Phillips spent the next few years marshalling at the swank University of BC golf course, playing golf and dishing out advice on advertising to anyone who'd drop by.

His biggest legacy, perhaps, is the next generation of leaders—people like Rethink's Chris Staples. "Chuck has always been an amazing mentor to us," says Staples. "When we started out he came over with a bottle of Booker's Bourbon and told us only to open it when we felt like we'd finally made it." They opened it in 2003, the same day *Marketing* named them Agency of the Year.

"I don't think there is a person in this city in any senior creative position that doesn't owe some debt or respect to Chuck," says Martin. "He touched everybody."

