

MONEY

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PLAYING THE AMERICAN MARKET TO WIN

NOT many people can say they have made a return of 150% since they drew down their pension plan. Robert Toland, 75, has done just that, however. The pensioner retired when he sold his wine and spirit merchant business five years ago. Since then, he has become an active trader and invested €28,000 from his pension fund into the stock market. His returns have turned that sum into €70,000.

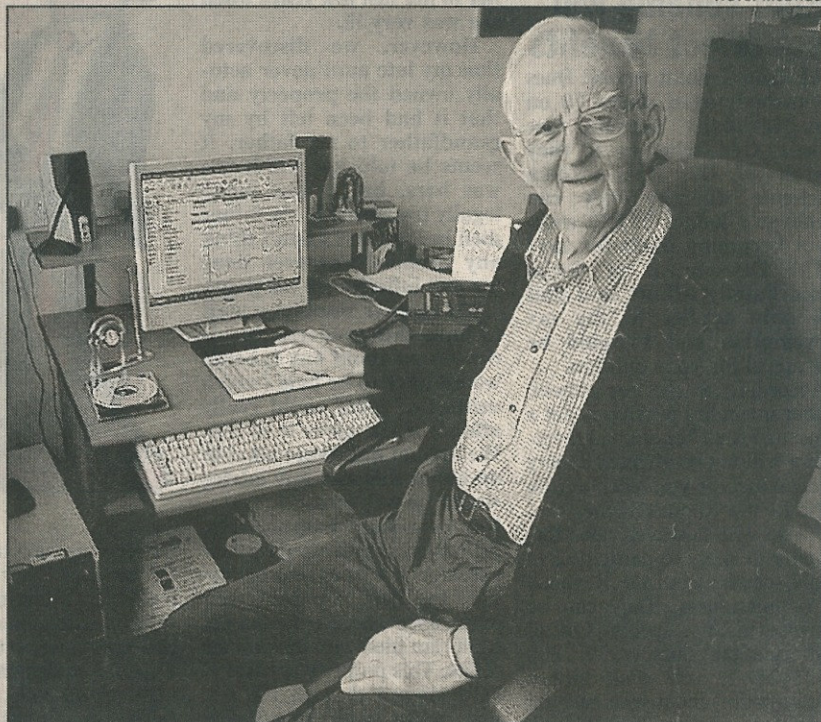
"I always had an interest in the stock market but the most I ever did was dabble in it. As soon as I retired, I decided it was something that I wanted to explore more," he said.

Toland decided to enrol in The Investment Club Network (TICN) which teaches its members about shares, bonds, options, commodities, securities and derivatives. It holds regular seminars and also provides members with software that allows them access to up-to-the-minute reports.

"I was fascinated by the information I received, which focused largely on the American market and how to invest in a structured and safe manner by picking solid stocks."

Toland does not focus on any particular sector and rarely holds more than three or four stocks in his portfolio. He chooses stocks based on the company's balance sheet, its fundamentals and management team. He does this by researching, monitoring and tracking companies. He studies their earnings, price-earnings ratios, annual highs and lows, debt and cash flow, where their place is in the market and the volume of shares traded each day.

Toland trades solely in American stocks



Trevor McBride

Proactive retirement: Toland has turned €28,000 into €70,000 in the past five years

because he finds the country's brokers to be less expensive than those in Ireland and he is not liable for any stamp duty. He says that American brokers charge the equivalent of €9 to €11 for every transaction regardless of the amount traded. Many British brokers, on the other hand, charge about €17.

When you take into account the value of sterling compared to the dollar, it's easy to see why he opts for the American route.

"It's hassle free. Whenever I make a trade I receive an e-mail from my broker immediately, so it's fast and efficient."

Toland is so impressed with his new hobby that he has recommended TICN to many of his friends. "I enjoy the fun of it," he said. "Being in an organisation also makes a big difference because of the information and support you receive."

Fiona McGoran