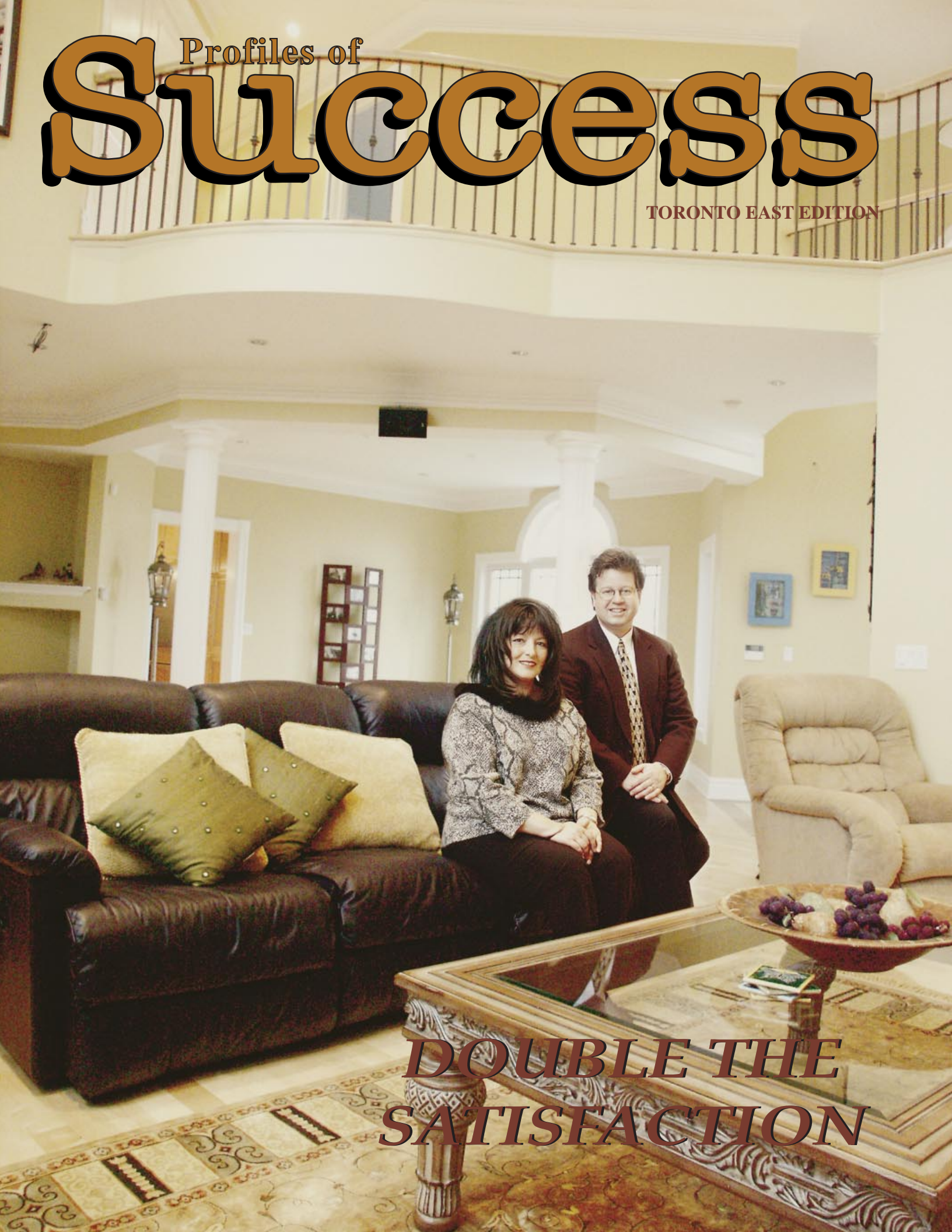


Profiles of **SUCCESS**

TORONTO EAST EDITION



***DOUBLE THE
SATISFACTION***

The Double Advantage

Number One Sales Team Give their Customers
Double the Satisfaction

By Josie Newman

Steven Ferreira and Pina Santacroce, partners known as *The Double Advantage* at Case Realty Inc. Coldwell Banker, not only give a lot of bang for their customers' buck but they also cover twice as much territory.

Although based at the Bayview/Sheppard office of Case Realty Inc. Coldwell Banker, Steven and Pina have clients located between Whitby and Mississauga. Their slogan, as well as their title, is *The Double Advantage* – the catchy phrase even adorns Steven's license plates.

As well as being business partners, Pina and Steven live next door to each other. They are each married and each have two daughters. Steven's wife Sonia is Pina's best friend.

Steven got his real estate license in 1984, while Pina got hers in 1985. They met in the late 1980s while working at the Victoria Park/Sheppard Robert Case Realty office, the predecessor to the company they now work for. They soon discovered they had the same traits and goals – a passion for the business, strong negotiating and people skills coupled with hard work and a desire to do a top-notch, professional job for each client who employs them. They're practically the same age, too, having been born just one month apart.

Pina became a real-estate agent after purchasing her first house in the early '80s. "I realized I could do the same job. My parents were good role models to me, too – they ran a variety store the whole time I was growing up. That's a job which requires a lot of people skills," she says.

Steven got his real estate license after careful consideration of a comment his mother made about the suitability of his personality to real estate. Prior to that, Steven had studied business administration in college.



by Tracey Dudgeon

Steven's parents both worked in banking – real estate and banking were constantly talked about at the dinner table. Before Pina met Steven at Robert Case Realty in 1989, she had worked for Century 21. Steven started his career at Robert Case Realty in 1984.

Pina and Steven list and sell everything from condos, townhouses and detached houses in all price ranges throughout the length and breadth of Metro Toronto. Case Realty Inc. Coldwell Banker has eight office locations and employs 300 agents. It's the largest Coldwell Banker office in Toronto and the second largest office in Canada. "With the wide territory that we cover, working from Bayview

and Sheppard is the ideal location because it's pretty well smack in the middle," says Pina.

Steven says they beat the competition because their clients have double the person-power when they use he and Pina, and clients appreciate the fact either one of them is available anytime. "In today's business environment, the word loyalty has taken on new meaning. One can no longer assume that just because you've done business with someone once, you'll automatically get their next order," Steven reflects. "Today it's all about building professional relationships, working with your customers to keep them informed and providing creative solutions to any situation that may arise. That takes a lot of time and input."

Customers like dealing with *The Double Advantage* because they operate by The Golden Rule. "It's an old cliché",

but the philosophy 'treat people as you'd like to be treated' was instilled into me by my parents at a very early age," says Steven. "This kind of treatment is reflected by the fact that 70 per cent of our business is repeat or referrals from past clients. We feel that repeat business

from past clientele, their family and friends is the best way to measure success, and we appreciate the incredible continued support that they have given us over the years." They're now dealing with second-generation clients, or the children of some of their original clients.

"We love the competition in the real estate business – we find it a healthy environment to work in and it keeps us

on the cutting edge," says Steven. "We actually recommend our clients interview other realtors; after all, there's nothing like making an informed decision when selling or buying a home. Amongst our peers, we've built a reputation of honesty, dedication and availability."

Media exposure has helped promote Steven and Pina's reputation, too. They appeared regularly on a real estate show aired on local cable TV for several years. "There's nothing like being stopped in a store and asked, 'Didn't I see you on TV?'" says Steven. They are listed in the Coldwell Banker Affiliates of Canada referral directory, as well as Resale Homes magazine. They also take out ads in local newspapers and do mass mailings to a large potential market in the Rouge Valley in the east end of Metro Toronto. Steven and Pina send out personalized mailings to former clients.

"What's helped us more than anything else is a high-end real estate program known as *Top Producer®*" says Steven. "It's become a technical assistant, a silent partner, to us." The program does everything from keep track of active listings and solds, to keeping files and pertinent information up-to-date.

What motivates Steven and Pina to work so hard and do a thorough, professional job? "I think it's because we really love what we do," says Pina. "It's nice to get up in the morning and go to a job you really enjoy. We both love working with people, don't mind working odd hours, and find the real estate business a lot of fun."

Pina says selling real estate involves many skills that may not be apparent to some – she says she's dealing with people's lives, money and emotions when she represents the buying or selling of their home. "You often have to wear a lot of hats – you play the roles of confidante, counsellor and friend to your clients," she says.

Pina's empathetic skills were sharpened most recently when she underwent chemotherapy for breast cancer. She feels it's made her stronger and more positive about the good things she has and more enthusiastic about life.

"Having cancer has made me more appreciative of my family and friends. I believe that family comes first and real estate second," she reflects. "I have such an



Photo by Tracey Dudgeon

understanding husband and kids. I couldn't be in this business if it weren't for them."

Pina and her husband Mario have a 21-year-old daughter, Teresa, who's a dental assistant working in oral surgery and a 19-year-old daughter, Marianna, who's studying interior design.

In her down time, Pina likes nothing better than spending time with her family and friends, cooking, entertaining, reading a good book, and travelling to warm places. Pina was born in Geneva, Switzerland and raised in Toronto; she can speak fluent Italian, and can understand French and Spanish. She's currently taking Spanish lessons.

Steven, too, puts family before work and enjoys family getaways. Steven and his wife Sonia have two daughters; Candice, 10, and Jacklyn, 6. He likes being involved in his daughters' daily lives, helping them with their homework or attending their piano and dance classes. During his down time, Steven likes to play guitar, listen to blues music, especially that from the 1920s and 1930s, and learn the most up-to-date computer technology. He enjoys beautifying his home and property; he recently transformed his backyard into a Mediterranean oasis and is currently finishing his basement.

Steven and Pina both belong to the Ontario Real Estate Association (OREA), the Canadian Real Estate Association (CREA), the Toronto Real Estate Board and the National Association of Realtors. In 2001, *The*

Double Advantage received the *Ultimate Service Award*, an award given to agents who maintain a minimum 90 per cent customer satisfaction rating. Pina and Steven have also won the *Diamond Society Designation* for 2001 – this is for agents who have earned a minimum of \$100,000. In 1998, they received the *Coldwell Banker Sales Performer Award* for consistent performance over a five-year period. In fact, *The Double Advantage* is the number one sales team in their company. Pina has achieved the designation of



Photo by Tracey Dudgeon

Certified Corporate Property Specialist – this means she is the agent whom corporate clients would be referred to if they're moving from, say Calgary, and are looking for a house.

What does the future hold for this dynamic duo? "We see ourselves doing the same thing in five or ten years, but operating at a higher income level," is Steven's reply. "After all, how can you improve on what's already so fantastic!"

"Thanks to Pat & Claudia Bevilacqua (Bevi Carpentry Ltd.) for allowing us the use of your beautiful custom built home for our photographic session."



Steven Ferreira
Pina Santacroe

THE DOUBLE ADVANTAGE

416 - 250 - 9000

1 - 877 - DBLE ADV

www.doubleadvantage.com

doubleadvantage@rogers.com