

This column highlights promotions, transfers, hirings, awards won and other key personnel moves within the suburban real estate community. Send a brief biographical summary—including the towns of residence and employment and a black and white photo if desired—to: *Movers and Shakers*, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, 48150. Our fax number is (313) 591-7279.

Facione honored



Cheryl Facione, a Realtor with Coldwell Banker Preferred in Plymouth, has been selected to join the International President's Circle—an honor bestowed only to producers in the top 4 percent of more than 55,000 associates throughout the company.

Facione, a Livonia resident, has more than 30 years sales experience. She has attained the professional designations of Graduate Realtors Institute and Certified Residential Specialist.

Berry joins REMAX

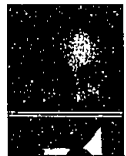


Norcen Berry, a Redford resident, has joined RE/MAX Executive Properties in Farmington Hills as a sales associate.

The eight-year veteran will continue to serve the residential needs of western Wayne and Oakland counties.

Berry serves on the education committee for the Western Wayne Oakland County Association of Realtors. She's also a part-time professional singer.

Ciolino appointed



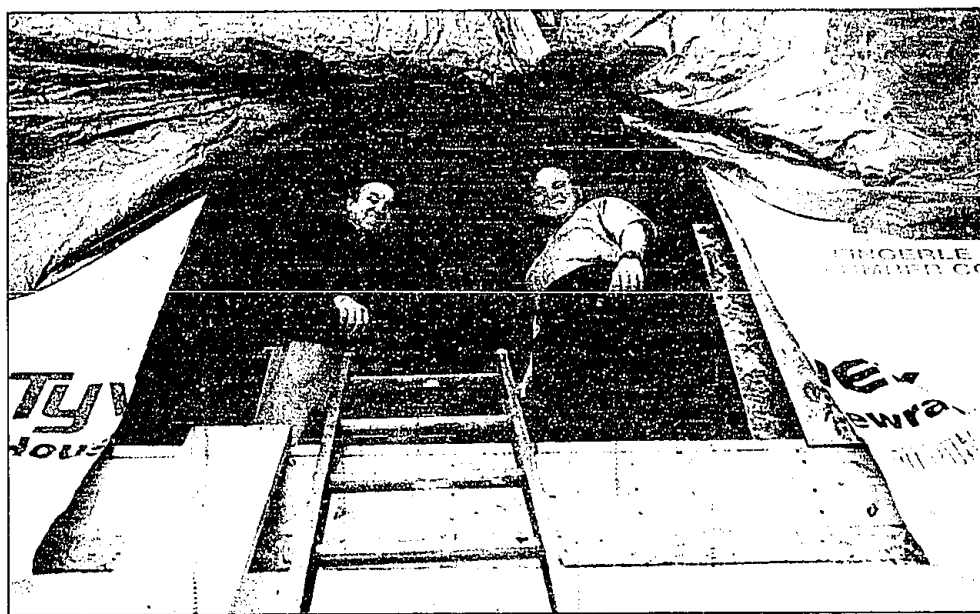
Joseph Ciolino, CPA, has been appointed chief financial officer at INRECON, formerly Quality Construction, in Birmingham.

Ciolino, an Eastern Michigan University graduate, will be responsible for all accounting, finance, human resource and information systems.

For nearly 50 years, INRECON has provided reconstruction and restoration services in response to losses caused by fire, wind, water or natural disasters.

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STAFF PHOTO BY BILL DRENNER

Remodeling team: Ray and Jeffrey Stella were designated as being among the best in the nation at their work by *Remodeling* magazine.

Top remodelers pitch sound advice

BY DOUG FUNKIE
STAFF WRITER

Thinking about some remodeling work around the homestead?

Before you hire a contractor, listen to Ray and Jeffrey Stella, father and son, respectively, who recently were named among the best in the country by *Remodeling* magazine.

The Stellas, based in Plymouth, were specifically cited for business savvy.

"If you want quality workmanship, on-time completion, good communication, don't buy on price alone," Jeffrey said. "Buy on references and rapport with the contractor."

But by the same token, don't be afraid to talk money.

"Establish a budget right away," Ray said. "We can design you a kitchen for \$10,000 but it won't be the one seen in our showroom. We need a plan. That's our road map."

Ray, whose father built garages and did masonry work, started his own business in 1958. Jeffrey is a Certified Kitchen Designer. They did 38 jobs with a gross volume of about \$900,000. The two have an office manager and recently hired a production foreman. Ray's wife, Kathie, helps with the books.

Walter W. Stoepelwerth, a consultant, publisher of estimation manuals and columnist for *Remodeling*, was involved in the process of selecting premier contractors for the magazine's Big 50 this year.

"I met Ray Stella about 15 years

ago in Chicago," Stoepelwerth said. "I've always been impressed with the way he's endured with time. He's an honest, sharp, hard-working guy."

"In the remodeling business, there's more than a 50-percent fatality rate every year," Stoepelwerth said. "Those are staffed by competent, hard-working tradesmen incompetent at business. The Stellas learned the business and practice it."

"You need to become computerized, put a lead man on a job who runs it from start to finish," Stoepelwerth said. "Specialize. Don't try to be all things to all people. Remember, you're running a business. You have to charge money."

The Stellas attribute much of their success to longstanding relationships built with subcontractors and suppliers.

"On average, people have been with us 10 years," Ray said. "They have a whole lot to do with keeping a project going."

Larry Waldsmith, a Livonia designer, has been on call for more than two decades.

Then there's attention to detail and communication with the customer.

"We not only sell the job, we personally produce it and take responsibility to see the job through from start to finish," Jeffrey said.

"Just about 100 percent of the time, they're there," Ray said of homeowners while work's in progress. "It's business as usual for the family and kids. It's not like a new home where nobody moves in until it's totally

done. Job site maintenance is important as far as cleanliness goes," Ray said. "Communication is another key word. We tell them what to expect, what's going to happen tomorrow."

People who remodel rather than move have reached a comfort level they don't want to give up, the Stellas said.

"There's no guarantee if they move into that four bedroom house they will get the same schools, the same feeling of neighborhood," Ray said.

And folks seem to be staying put longer.

In the mid 1980s, people lived in a house six, seven, eight years," Stoepelwerth said. "Now, the average American family stays 11.4 years."

Most renovations have a reasonable payback, according to a 1994-95 cost/value report prepared by *Remodeling* magazine.

A 20-square-foot major kitchen remodel here with mid-priced new cabinets, countertop, oven, cooktop, microwave, dishwasher, disposer, 3-by-5 island and floor averaged \$18,510 with an 84-percent recoup at sale.

Updating a 6-by-9 bathroom here with a new tub, toilet, vanity, lighting, floor and tile averaged just under \$7,000 with a payback of 85 percent.

But there are degrees of remodeling, too. A cabinet refacing rather than replacing can save big money. And the Stellas agree that it doesn't make sense to spend \$20,000 remodeling a kitchen in a house that has a

market value of \$60,000.

"There's no reason to go buy a Cadillac if you're on a Chevrolet budget," Jeffrey added.

Following are several check points buyers should consider before committing to a remodeling.

■ Make sure the contractor is licensed, insured and bonded. Check those documents, and, if you feel the need, get phone numbers to call and verify.

■ Ask for and contact references.

■ Be specific in the contract about materials to be used in the project. Think about including a completion clause in which a contractor pays penalties for unreasonable delays once work begins.

■ Make sure the contractor—not you—acquires all permits.

■ Obtain a waiver of lien from the contractor after work is done so subcontractors and suppliers won't later harass you for unpaid bills.

The potential for growth is staggering. A lot of money is spent on renovations now.

"Remodeling this year will be \$122 billion," Stoepelwerth said. "In 1967, it was \$13.7 billion. Houses built after World War II are getting to the stage where they have to be remodeled. The average American house is 26 years old."

His advice if you're in the market?

"Don't get 15 bids. Get a couple of people in ... and see if you're comfortable. Get references. Check the references. Don't buy a remodeling project on price."

Club members have a right to due process

REAL ESTATE
QUERIES



ROBERT M. MEISNER

Q: I am a member of a private country club who wishes to expel a member because of vulgar and demeaning language which was used in the presence of certain members. The other parties, however, do not wish to bring their name to the forefront. The club intends to have a hearing regarding the expulsion of the member, but there will not be any witnesses. The country club thinks that if they disclose the names of the complainants, they will be intimidated by the member who is sought to be expelled. I am concerned about the due process considerations and am wondering if you have any comments since this is, in a sense, in the form of an association about which you may have knowledge.

A: The rights of members in country clubs is something that is not normally considered in the jurisprudence.

Generally, when a private club holds a hearing to determine whether to expel a member, the elements of fair procedure include an opportunity for the member to confront and cross-examine the accusers and to examine and refute the evidence. Such was the decision in a recent case heard in California. The appeals court held that the person that was expelled was not afforded an fair hearing because he was not allowed to confront the two original complaining witnesses in that their identities were concealed from him. That case also found the board's consideration in closed session of unnoted and undocumented matters regarding the person expelled had clearly deprived him of a procedurally fair hearing. He argued that the decision of the board should have been reviewed under the business judgment rule, but the court correctly stated that the business judgment rule is not applied when considering to uphold the actions of a private association and the issue of due process.

Q: I recently sold my home and am thinking about buying a condominium. I saw you mention in your column the Michigan Condomini-

um Statute. Where can I get information on this?

A: You can get a copy of the Condominium Statute by either contacting your local state legislator who will be more than happy to provide you with a copy of it or going to the library. While the Condominium Statute may be "interesting" reading, I strongly recommend that you consult with a knowledgeable attorney in condominium law before entering into a purchase agreement in connection with a condominium project. Knowing the law, of course, will help you work with your attorney, but is not a substitute for good and sound legal advice.

Robert M. Meisner is an Oakland County area attorney concentrating his practice in areas of condominium, real estate, corporate law and litigation. You are invited to submit topics which you would like to see discussed in this column by writing Robert M. Meisner, 30200 Telegraph Road, Suite 467, Bingham Farms, MI 48025. This column provides general information and should not be construed as legal opinion.

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