



Profiles

Port Colborne agents Bill Becskereki and Sherry Hoover enjoy a successful 34-year partnership

By Connie Adair - Aug 31, 2021

Bill Becskereki, an agent with Royal LePage BNRC Realty in Port Colborne, Ont., read a book about how to hire an assistant. It said don't keep an assistant more than five years. That was about 34 years ago and he and his licensed assistant Sherry Hoover have worked together since.

Port Colborne born-and-raised Becskereki has been in real estate for 47 years. "I was a Kinsman and two members who were brokers kept bugging me to sell real estate." So after 15 years at another job, he quit and studied to get his real estate licence. "I had car payments, a mortgage and two young kids. I took out a second mortgage on the house."

While he waited for his real estate exam results, he supervised his son and other Boy Scouts on the beach. He watched the boats go by. He bought a boat and then, motivated and out of necessity, he says he had to dig in and work hard selling real estate to pay off his debts. "After one year I had a handle on it. I was working seven days a week. I still am."

He says he buys what he wants to buy and is willing to work for it. In fact, it even motivates him to work harder. But it goes without saying that he loves the job.

Right from the start, the workaholic has never door knocked, instead calling the people he knew from the many organizations and committees he was involved with and everyone else he had met over the years.

While he was working at Century 21 with three partners, he noticed Hoover hard at work at a jewellery store. He tried to lure her into real estate.

However Hoover says she's a loyal person and told him she wouldn't quit unless something happened with the jewellery business. The store closed about a year later and Hoover got her licence and joined Century 21.

Becskereki, however, was restless and left to open his own office with a Countrywide Real Estate franchise, later to become a Prudential franchise, about 1990. "I ran my own office until 2004, at which time my wife retired from doing the books. I called Royal LePage at that time and said, 'Do you want an office in Port Colborne? It's the only place you don't have one.' They said 'yes' and bought me out. It's the best move I ever made."

The secret to the longevity of his and Hoover's relationship? They are both hard working, loyal and believe in honesty and integrity, says Hoover. If they can't agree on something, she says they agree to disagree. "We negotiate and get around everything."

Hoover says an open line of communication is also important.

Prior to the pandemic, they would meet every day for coffee or breakfast and break up the day's tasks. Now they speak on the phone daily and text often.

They get along well – the challenges are not each other, it's the technology. Becskereki says, "They don't make computers for an 81-year-old brain."

Hoover says, "We struggle through... There's ever-changing tech in the industry, new systems and constant learning curves."

At first she did mostly paperwork and advertising, but over the years has become more of a partner than an assistant, "doing both jobs and keeping me in line," Becskereki says.

A constant over the years has been their commitment to print advertising. "It's expensive but being in a small town, it's important to keep our faces out there," although Hoover says a lot of their business is now word of mouth and past clients.

They continue to send out thousands of calendars each year. Becskereki says that pulls in at least a couple of clients. He says one man called and told him he had received his calendar for 30 years, so he thought he'd call Becskereki because he wanted to sell his house.

During his time at Century 21, Becskereki won numerous awards, including top Century 21 Canada lister in 1979. He says his desk is also piled high Royal LePage awards.

He's the recipient of the Lifetime Award of Excellence (a certain level of production over a period of at least five consecutive years).

The Legacy Award for the longest contributor to the Niagara Real Estate Board, which was determined by the agent voting, is his most recent award. "They call me the grandfather of real estate," he says.

"People often ask, 'What's your secret?'" His reply: "Work your butt off." Don't wait for someone to come to you or sit and wait for something to happen, he says.

With so many years in the business, Becskereki says he has done everything. Most recently, he branched out into selling multi-unit residential buildings. He found out who bought a large parcel of land and went straight to the company president. The president said they needed an agent.

He also uses his chat contacts, putting his pocket listings on his chat groups. Three people called regarding a \$2.5-million listing. "It sold for \$2.37 million...for a 50/50 split."

To say he's a go-getter is an understatement. His daily routine: he gets up at 4 a.m. "for the first time" and sits on the balcony and checks messages.

He has a decaf coffee and a cigarette, then goes back to bed. He rises again at around 8 a.m. and works on the computer all day (tackling the never decreasing foot-high pile of paperwork) or goes on appointments.

Nothing seems to stop him. Three years ago, he had a mild heart attack and needed a stent. "The heart doctor told me to quit smoking and I said no. All of my friends that quit 40 years ago are long gone."

The doctor asked how long he had been smoking. Sixty-three years, he answered.

After the stent procedure, the doctor advised him not to work for six weeks. "I said okay. It was a Friday night when I got out of the hospital. I went home, put on my suit and the wife and I went to the Royal LePage awards dinner. The next day I was at the office at 9 a.m. and I haven't stopped since."

He also rarely takes days off, answering his texts while on vacation.

To unwind, he and his son play the slots and he takes his wife to the outlet mall. Which may be an excuse: Hoover says he loves to buy shirts.

Becskereki and wife Carol have been married 58 years and have two boys, Mark, 54, and Tim, 48. Their granddaughter Stevi Lynn (named after singer Stevie Nicks) is 28. None are in real estate.

Welland-born Hoover got her forestry degree after high school, worked until the Ministry of Natural Resources privatized then worked at the jewellery store. At age 40 she went back to school and earned her Bachelor of Religious Education while selling real estate.

She married her high school sweetheart in 1984. "My husband Howard had a brief career in real estate in the late '80s but decided it was not for him. He is an ordained minister...and a television actor. We have a son and daughter and two young grandchildren."

Hoover says she loves the job because it has given her the flexibility to attend her kids' concerts and sporting events. Real estate is her love and passion.

"Loyalty is what has kept us together. Bill is a workhorse. He works 20 hours a day. I've always admired his work ethic."

Soon-to-be 82 Becskereki and 60-year-old Hoover have no plans to retire or part ways any time soon.