

# IT'S A SIGN OF THE TIMES

By STEPHANIE WADDELL

**G**regory Signs and Engraving Limited is engraving a niche for itself around the continent. The family-run business is hoping to drum up more business in the United States over the next few years.

"We have signs across Canada and the U.S.," said Gregory Kaminsky, who opened the full-time operation in 1983. "I want to try to see if we can go further south."

With signs in places like Trump Tower and Bloomingdale's, Kaminsky, his wife, Regina and son, Boris have worked hard to help the business continue to grow from the time it opened as a part-time business in 1981. Gregory was working for the CIBC and doing engraving and sign work from his basement as a hobby.

"I started making small signs," he said. While Gregory worked from the basement and approached potential customers, Regina served as part-time receptionist, piano teacher and full-time mother to her son and daughter.

"Slowly there was more and more work so one day I decided I would like to try it full-time," Gregory said.

He proposed the idea to Regina who was a little skeptical of such a big risk for the family of four, but decided to help out with Gregory's new endeavor.

"I knew we wouldn't fail because I saw the determination," Regina said. She gave up teaching piano lessons to help set up shop full-time in 1983.

While Gregory worked on drumming up business and purchasing new equipment to enhance their services, Regina worked on all the administration of the new office.

"She's helped me a lot," Gregory said. "She's been here since day one."

As the company became a familiar name around Toronto, customers asked for more complicated work. He decided to move to a larger 3,500 square foot space where he could keep up to date with new production equipment and technology.

"The first computer we had was one of the first on the market," he said. "Some of our customers were scared of computers."

Many worried the computer programs that helped produce the signs and engraving couldn't do the same professional job as Gregory did manually.

However as computer technology became common place in more and more businesses and customers realized they could get a professional job done with a computer, Gregory Signs and Engraving Limited continued to grow.

"It just goes to show you that times have really changed," Gregory said. Regina and Gregory hired more staff, and in 1988 moved the company to its present 10,000 square foot home in Downsview.

However when the recession hit in the early 1990s the Kaminsky's saw their sales drop dramatically. They were determined to keep the business going.

"There'd be days with no phone calls," Regina said. "You just had to manage every penny."

With the little sales they got and money management skills they learned, Gregory Signs and Engraving Limited made it out of the recession.

"They say if you made it through the recession you know you're a success," Regina said.

As the recession came to a close, their two children were coming to an age where they could work with Gregory and Regina.



Gregory Kaminsky, left, his wife Regina and their son Boris have worked hard to build their sign business. Their signs can currently be found at Trump Tower and Bloomingdale's in the United States.

Photo by Spike Love

"We always tried to make sure they worked through the holidays," Gregory said.

Although their daughter didn't join the business, their 21-year-old son, Boris has worked at marketing the company, which has 18 employees, for three years.

"It's an interesting business," he said. "I get to deal with a lot of different people."

After graduating high school he wanted to learn more about the business world and attended Seneca for a year, then decided to try York University's business course.

"It really wasn't for me," Boris said. Although school might not have been the best way for him to learn business, it seems his experience at Gregory Signs and Engraving Limited is teaching him all he needs to know.

"He's still young," Regina said. "He can develop things."

Boris is kept busy maintaining the company's Web site at [www.gregorysigns.com](http://www.gregorysigns.com) and marketing the business to potential clients.

It's also a great way to see his family, he said. Although Boris lives with Gregory and Regina, he doesn't spend as much time with them as he would like and this job has helped bridge that gap.

"With my son involved, work is a lot easier," Gregory said.

The family and employees credit the business's success to the personal service they offer customers.

"We have good quality and good service," Gregory said.

In larger companies, customers aren't able to get in touch with the

president of the company. While in smaller companies, customers might not be able to get all the services they need, Gregory Signs and Engraving Limited is large enough that it provides professional services, but small enough that customers can still easily get in touch with Gregory.

"We've come a long way," said Polina Privits, who's worked in various departments of the company for seven years.

At the end of the day, the Kaminsky's prefer to leave their work at the office and have a policy not to discuss it at home.

"Sometimes it's hard (not to discuss work at home), but it's what we have to do," Gregory said.

For more information on Gregory Signs and Engraving Limited call 667-0876 or visit their Web site at [www.gregorysigns.com](http://www.gregorysigns.com).

## THE ONTARIO ASSOCIATION OF ARCHITECTS



BERNARD M. RASCH

The Ontario Association of Architects (OAAA) is pleased to announce its 2000 President, Bernard M. Rasch B. Arch., FPOAA, NSAA, ARIBA, FRAC.

Mr. Rasch has served on OAAA Council since 1996, most recently as Senior Vice President and Treasurer. During his career, Mr. Rasch has served the OAAA in a broad range of volunteer roles, including a previous term as President in 1987. He is a fellow of the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada, and has been active in leadership roles with committees and business groups such as the Toronto Board of Trade, the Board of Management of the Guild Inn, the Design Exchange, the North York Chamber of Commerce, the Rotary Club and the Leaside Business Park Association.

Mr. Rasch is the President of Rasch Architects Limited in Toronto. He received his Bachelor of Architecture from the University of Manitoba in 1968.

The Ontario Association of Architects is a self-governing profession under the Architects Act. Membership includes 2,600 architects and more than 1,400 associates. As well, part of its regulatory mandate, the Association provides a wide range of services to its members and the public.



**SIMPLY ORGANIZED  
EFFECTIVE ENVIRONMENTS**

**LORIE E. ROWSELL**

Email: [lorierowsell@sprint.ca](mailto:lorierowsell@sprint.ca)  
Phone: 416/461-4122

