

REAL ESTATE
EXECUTIVE

Puget Sound Edition

Rick Miner

The Captain of Waterfront Lifestyles



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By Lyle Myers

Disney has Mickey Mouse, MGM has its lion, and now the real estate world proudly floats Rick Miner's rubber ducky among these legendary icons.

When it comes to creative marketing that is tremendously successful, Rick Miner of Coldwell Banker Bain is *top duck* in the pond. Easily one of the most recognizable and memorable images in real estate anywhere, his colorful rubber ducky and www.duckin.com have become legendary. As the numbers show, his quacky icon generates business—a lot of business.

PHOTO BY KOENIG PHOTOGRAPHY.



Rick, seen here in his floating real estate office on Lake Union, loves answering his many e-mails sent from out of state buyers who find him on his www.duckin.com Web site.

PUGET SOUND REAL ESTATE EXECUTIVE

Rick grew up in Hollywood, where his father began making films during the early '50s. Allen Miner's first award-winning film was a movie he produced in 1954 called *The Naked Sea*. The maritime theme continued when he worked with Ernest Hemingway during the making of *The Old Man And The Sea*. In addition to making movies, Rick's father directed many television shows, including *Route 66*, *Perry Mason*, and *Wagon Train*, where he cast Bette Davis in her first television guest-starring role.

Rick spent his childhood playing on Hollywood back lots, going to Laguna Beach with Bette Davis and her family, fishing with Lee Marvin, and generally living what for most of us would be a fantasy life. Of course, to him it all seemed normal. Now he realizes that growing up surrounded by famous people who were larger than life helped him to develop an understanding of people's personalities. It also taught him how to get along with everyone, even those with fame, money and power.

After college, Rick began his career as a professional filmmaker. It is easy to see that Rick's fascination and love of water may be in his genes. His first film was *For Love of Sailing*, which was followed by another sailing film he made for Warren Miller Productions.

After 20 years as a successful producer/director/writer on various TV shows, the writers' strike of 1988 put him out of work and prompted a change. "I decided that I wanted to be in charge of my destiny, not be at the mercy of a union," says Rick. "So I left my sunny L.A. home of 45 years in search of another lifestyle." Although now a long way from the bright lights of Hollywood, Rick is still a voting member of the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts & Sciences.

During the search for that lifestyle change, Rick found himself taking in the spectacular panoramic views from the Space Needle Restaurant while meeting with the executive producer of an upcoming water sports TV series. The series proved to be a perfect match of talent, opportunity and location.

They named the show *Get Wet*, and as writer, director and producer of the show, Rick got to be his own boss. Traveling worldwide, he covered every water sport and boating event imaginable, having the time of his life.

When not traveling, Rick made his home in a condo overlooking Lake Union. During the two years the show was produced, he managed to fall in love not once but twice: first with Seattle and then with his wife and business partner, Joyce. Just like a 1950s Hollywood mov-


ie, they met on an elevator. "When the elevator reached our condos, I'd go one way and she'd go the other way. Pretty soon we were going the same way," he laughs.


When *Get Wet* ran its course, Rick opted to pursue a career in real estate. "Over the years I had bought and sold enough homes to realize that I liked working on the deals, so I got my license and dove in, so to speak," says Rick.

From the very beginning of his newfound career, Rick never thought of himself as a traditional sales person. Transferring his accumulative creative film making skills to selling real estate made perfect sense. "I decided, 'Well, I've still got all of my professional video equipment, I still have my editing talents and abilities—why don't I do something different from everyone else?'" That something different would become known as *Video Open House*, a highly produced series of short videos that featured Rick's unique listings.

Although Rick spent a lot of money making these videos, he realized that two of the most important things agents can learn early on are to be creative and to invest in themselves. By the time he had produced and marketed his third video, he was firmly established as "Seattle's Creative Lifestyle Specialist." "I learned quickly that the real estate business is hard work, but I was very used to the stresses and long hours as a TV producer. I used to work eight days a week, now in real estate I only work seven, so I've gained a day," Rick says with a wink.

Just about the time he had established himself with Coldwell Banker Bain as one of their top 10 producers, the World Wide Web came into play, and Rick was one of the first agents to create and produce his own Web site. "I have always excelled at visual communications, so leading the real estate flock onto the Web was natural," Rick explains. "The Web is perfect for me. I can produce, direct, edit and write my own 24-hour-a-day Web show."

Now bring in the duck.  Everybody wants to know where the cute little rubber ducky came from. It all started when Rick was photographing a floating home he was listing. "I wanted to shoot it with water all around, and I couldn't do it without getting into the lake," he begins. He bought a water-resistant camera, jumped into the lake and got his water shot. But, with the home's brown exterior surrounded by the dark Pacific Northwest water, it was boring and unattractive. "I thought, 'Something's missing here,' and began thinking of possible props," continues Rick. That's when he had his first stroke of genius. "I don't quite know what made me think of using a rubber duck, but the next day I jumped in the lake again for Take 2. With the sunny duck in the picture, the waterfront home sold quicker than a quack," laughs Rick.

"A couple of weeks later I'm saying to Joyce, 'Hey, there's something really great about this duck. I'm going to do a website with it!'" In true Rick Miner fashion he started planning and sketching and it all began to come together. Rick's second stroke of genius came when he designed webbed feet as the W's for the URL www.duckin.com. 

About this time, Joyce, who was working in the retail jewelry indus-



PHOTO BY KOENIG PHOTOGRAPHY.

Rick a real ducky of a guy has lots of titles and lots of awards, but as Rick would say...Kelly, Joyce and I have a *duckin* great time with our clients and I am more than happy being known as Seattle's Quackiest Creative Lifestyle Specialist.

try, felt ready for a career switch. "I was stuck inside all day. He was having all the fun taking buyers out in our boat to view the waterfront homes for sale, and after 25 years in the jewelry business, I was up for a change," she says. She got her license and with their complementing personalities (she loves working with buyers, he's great with the sellers) they became Seattle's golden quacky couple.

Over the years Rick and Joyce, along with their equally talented and licensed assistant, Kelly Hachtel, have continued to bask in the yellow glow of success. They each drive a yellow car adorned with the duckin.com logo, they cruise in a small yellow boat, and their open houses include an eight-foot inflatable duck. Still memorable is Rick and Joyce's 30-foot boat, which they decorated with 1,500 yellow balloons to win first prize in the 2000 Seattle Yacht Club opening day parade. It all adds up to an unforgettable image that people of every lifestyle just love. "Some people think I only do floating homes, but actually they only form 15 percent of my business. I sell residential real estate in all price ranges, but I have to admit, showing waterfront homes by boat, or going to a listing meeting not by land but by sea, is sure a great way to go to work," says Rick.

Since its inception as the company's mascot, the little rubber duck has become a powerful marketing tool. "I like to call it 'Stickiness,' because once you say it, see it, or use it, it is hard to forget. That was planned because, like me, most people can't remember a name," explains Rick. He feels that he has created a theme-based brand that fits naturally with his personality and sense of humor. Rick does all of the photography, and in-houseboat Webmaster Kelly enhances each photo so that the Web site will really shine. "I know that our look, feel, and visual artistry are why we meet many new clients online," says Rick. "We make friends first in order to learn our clients' lifestyle needs; then we can really work together to find them a new nest." Duckin.com is more than a real estate Website. It's a show that entertains, informs,



motivates, and is fun to use. Harnessing the power of the duck has proven to be very successful for all of Rick's clients.

As their business flourished, life couldn't have been going much better for the successful Miners when, on October 26, 2001, Joyce was suddenly diagnosed with acute leukemia. To complicate matters, her doctors found she had the Philadelphia chromosome, which caused her chromosomes to act in a way that would prevent chemotherapy from bringing about long-term remission. A stem cell transplant would be her only medical hope for beating the cancer.

The Miners were devastated, but not sunk. In true quacky yellow optimism, they put their heads down and prepared for the fight ahead. With all of the testing, the hospital stays, and the treatments that are part of the recovery process, they worried about keeping their business afloat. "Thank goodness we established a reputation and a well-known, friendly brand. This kept the phones ringing and our web quacking in 2002," says Rick in reflection.

While Joyce and Rick were fighting cancer, Kelly, a six-year veteran of the Duckin crew, kept their real estate business afloat. She ran the houseboat-based office, held Broker's opens, kept the Web site up to date, and did whatever else it took to support Rick and Joyce. Her hard work and dedication paid off when not only did Coldwell Banker award them with its prestigious International President's Premier Award for 2002, the Duckin team held on to their three-year reign as Coldwell



Lyn Moore was at home in Tulsa, OK, surfing the Web when she came upon Rick Miner's Web site www.duckin.com. One trip out to Seattle and with Rick's help, she and her husband found their dream waterfront property in Seattle.

Banker Bain's top Seattle sales associate, and remained among the top five in the company! "This accomplishment was one of the major miracles for us in 2002," says Rick.

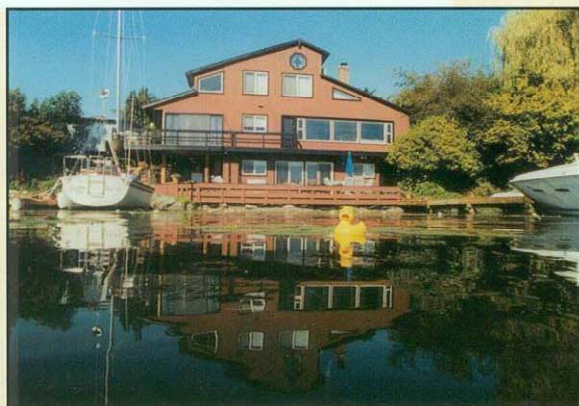
The biggest miracle came one year after Joyce's bone marrow stem cell transplant, where she received a clean bill of health. Not only had the leukemia gone into remission, the stem-cell transplant was a success. The Miners attribute Joyce's amazing recovery to the wonderful work of The Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, where she now donates some of her time. Joyce also offers her time counseling other cancer patients through the Leukemia Lymphoma Society. "Giving back to the people at the center for all the support and love they gave to me is what my life is all about for now," says Joyce.

It's easy to imagine that the little yellow duck with its unflappable, positive expression became symbolic of the determined optimism that the Miners and their network of loved ones displayed while finding their way to a happy ending. Life is back to a more normal pace in the Miner household, although neither Rick nor Joyce take anything for granted these days.

Rick and Joyce Miner are successful because they created a memorable brand that is "sticky," they are easy to find (who can forget duckin.com), and they make real estate fun while providing exceptional service and professionalism...*truly an unbeatable package!* Additionally, pairing their highly effective rubber duck with an internationally known name like Coldwell Banker guarantees that clients will get recognizable and extraordinary marketing talents that far exceed the rest of the flock. Put it all together and one word floats to the top—Winner! ■

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