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Hamilton's king of carpets still going strong at Alexanian

July 14, 2007

MEREDITH MACLEOD
THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR
(Jul 14, 2007)

Ask octogenarian Guy Magakian why he hasn't retired yet, and he's likely to turn the question around.

"Why should I?" the 82-year-old responds.

That's hard logic to argue. He loves his job, and his employer of 50 years, Alexanian Carpet & Flooring, loves having him around.

He's been sales leader in the company many times. He wears a large, diamond-encrusted ring as part of Alexanian's Million Dollar Club. He's had many chances to head out on his own but turned them down.

"I'm happy here. They helped me when I came to Canada. I felt I still owed the company."

He's laid carpet in thousands of Hamilton buildings, including the courthouse, police headquarters, hospitals. He figures if the yardage of carpet he's laid and sold was rolled out, it would cover the ocean all the way back to his native Greece.

Magakian has done it all at the Hamilton-bred carpet retailer. He started shortly after arriving from Athens. He had already been turned down for a job at Windsor's Chrysler plant because of his lack of English and figured he would have to return to Greece with his wife, six-year-old daughter and six-month-old son. But when he met old friends in Hamilton, they told him about this family-owned carpet and rug business.

He went to talk to the manager, who offered him work for two months. He started June 17, 1957. "That two months is not over yet," Magakian says with his ever-present smile.

He didn't know anything about carpet then but learned quickly. He started off on pickup and delivery then helped with installations. He

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Kaz Novak, the Hamilton Spectator

Guy Magakian has been working at Alexanian Carpet & Floo ...

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then became an installer and, within a year, became a crew chief. All the while, Magakian took English classes. He worked on the installation side for 23 years. He says his knees still feel those years of installing.

Magakian became service foreman before heading to the sales side, where he's been for 25 years. Back when he started, Alexanian had two stores -- what is now its head office on Main Street West and one in Ottawa. There are now 16 stores, and the third generation of the Alexanian clan is running the business.

"They are good people, and this is a dependable company. This is a very good family. I feel like family here," says Magakian.

It's been a family business for the Magakians, too. His late wife, Anna, who passed away in 1991, worked in the repair department. Magakian's son Gary is now the manager at the Mountain store.

His daughter Kathy is retired, from Stelco. Her dad isn't following her anytime soon. Magakian says his doctor tells him to keep working. He's in great shape and looks about 20 years younger than his age. "The doctor says that all kinds of guys just melt away when they retire. That's not going to happen to me."

Indeed. Magakian loves going to work. In fact, he works six days a week and says he doesn't know what to do with himself on the seventh. He took a vacation once to Cuba. He wanted to come home on Day 2.

"There wasn't enough to do," he says. "In the morning, I can't wait to come to work. Sometimes the weekends are too long for me."

A couple of years ago, Magakian told The Spectator his goal was to reach a half-century of working at Alexanian and then he might slow down. He doesn't seem ready to do it.

That's just fine with store's general manager, Richard Alexanian - who wasn't born when Magakian started at the company. He says he grew up hearing about Magakian over the dinner table from his father, Aram.

"Dad was very proud of Guy, the way he conducted business, his work ethic and his level of service," Richard says. "His work ethic is second to none, and he really cares about his customers."

Adds Albert Alexanian, company treasurer and son of founder Aris: "He's an absolutely wonderful man. He knows everything in the flooring biz, and there is so much to know these days. He's kept up with everything and is an expert in installation, care and new products. When I'm out in the community, somebody always asks me about Guy."

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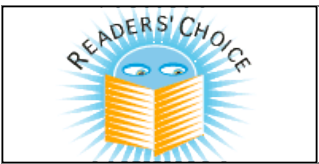



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