



FLORIDA WEEKLY PHOTO

Randy Dusharm with one of the Utilacarts he manufactures in Cape Coral.

breaking as that seems at the time, and it's an emotional process, you feel good when they come back and tell you they're glad they didn't break their budgets."

That attitude means she won't get rich quickly, especially representing working-class people, which is her niche.

But, strange as it may seem, she isn't worried about getting rich.

Born in Miami and raised mostly in Lee County, at 38 Sherri is a veteran of the U.S. Army, a graduate of Edison College, a woman who spent 15 years working as a legal assistant for a real estate attorney, and a mother and wife — which is her biggest concern.

"I'm lucky to be able to do this, because it means more time with my family," she explains.

Part of the reason she left an established career to earn her Realtor's license — which she accepted on Dec. 29, 2006, probably the worst possible time, economically speaking — is to give her more time to spend with her son, Chance, volunteering in his kindergarten classroom and picking him up from school most days of the week.

She also works part-time jobs around her primary business when she has to, and worries about layoffs at the county, where her husband, Randy Simes, is a building plans examiner.

"At first, I thought this would be a piece of cake," she recalls. She went to work for Century 21 right off the bat, and she made a first big sale, but then it got tough. Century 21 offered what she felt was a poor commission split (it should be at least 70 percent, she says), so she moved to Exit, which went out of business, and then to Access Realty.

In effect, she has now been her own boss for about 14 months. In five years, Sherri says, she aims to be a broker with a staff — to be somebody else's boss, and to teach them to do it right.

"Now, even though I'm versed in real estate, and I have a lot of knowledge, it's scary," she explains. "But I'm going to hang in there. This year is turning out to be a better year, since buyers are just now starting to look around to see what they can get.

"As a buyer, you can get a good awesome deal, now. As a seller, I wouldn't encourage you to sell quickly."

There's an honest opinion from an honest — and independent — real estate agent, down market or not.

## Randy Dusharm, Owner, The Cape Coral Cart Company (www.Utilacart.com)

At 49, Randy Dusharm still rises only 5 feet 3 inches off the ground — physically, that is. But the finish-carpenter, a Vermont Yankee born and raised, has plans to grow his life into the stratosphere, at least economically.

Being a pragmatist, he hasn't just planned or dreamed, either. He's executed, too, right in his living room in the Yacht Basin section of the Cape.

Now, he hunkers over a sewing machine (he has two in the living room) stitching the rugged canvas, or moves to his garage to bend the strong aluminum tubing he uses in his invention, the Utilacart. Last week, he sold his first, for about \$180, to a lady in Toronto, whose husband in Orlando saw the new website and suggested she order it for her parents, in Brandenton, where Randy shipped it.

Now he figures he's \$20,000 of investment and six months of time into the operation, for which he has recruited help from a marketing planner, a patent attorney, a web designer, and his next door neighbor, Gary Gittler, also known as Captain Canvas.

"This thing might really take off," he says. "I'm looking for a bigger space, a commercial space — the city of Cape Coral gives you a year to figure it out, which I think is generous of them. I'd like to do 50 or 60 a week."

Here's how it happened.

"My wife, JoAnn, and I moved here in November of 2006, and I did a couple of jobs through a contractor, but work dried up. So I went to the beach. It amazes me how many

people are there lugging stuff to beach.

"I see people using dollies, strapping stuff on that. Or you go out on a pier, and these guys are pulling suitcases with little wheels, and the top cut off. Then you see those wire baskets with two wheels. My first intro with those was, my grandparents used to use them. Whoever makes those things, you got to tip your hat to them."

Aesthetically, of course, the basket invention is a crime, unlike the Utilacart, which is colorful and even stylish in a variety of bright canvas hues.

"So last April we went on a cruise, and Roseanne, a friend of mine, said, 'Well, what are you gonna do for work?'"

"And I had the idea. I can remember telling her, 'When I get back, I'm going to build a beach cart.'"

He's been making carts since August, he says, building up an inventory, although he just began to market them in recent days.

He now has a couple of hundred carts ready to go, but there are some questions the new entrepreneur can't answer.

"How many can I produce in a week or a day? I don't know the answers. This is one of those garage deals, where you figure it out in the garage and go from there. Once we start to grow, I can upgrade on the tooling and increase the productivity."

The cart is a strong, light (12 pound) invention with substantial wheels that can probably be used in a lot of ways, and in a variety of conditions. He and his neighbor designed it, but Captain Canvas bowed out of the operation after a handshake deal.

The two friends agreed that if the business takes off and the product is successfully patented, and if Randy sells it, he'll give his neighbor a share of the proceeds.

"It's a gentleman's agreement, that's the way we left it," Randy says.

Which is how he sold his house in an expensive section of Burlington, Vt., too — by taking the promise of a man who wanted it on a handshake, and waiting for a few weeks while other potential buyers came and went.

"Our lawyer said we couldn't do that, but I knew we were right, so we did it," he says.

Randy is inspired in part, he admits, by another couple of entrepreneurs from his hometown — Ben and Jerry, Burlington boys who turned designer ice cream into great wealth.

Which brings up a story with a moral, one not lost on a smart carpenter from Vermont.

"I know a guy names Jim Barrett up there, he's a friend of mine, owns Barrett Trucking. He said that years ago, when the Barretts milled the lake for ice and Ben and Jerry first started in business, they said, 'Hey, you supply us the ice and we'll give you 10 percent, from the ice cream.'"

Randy pauses, and offers a *carpe diem* grin.

"The Barretts declined, didn't want to do it. I can picture Jim Barrett — he's Lebanese — throwing up his hands, and saying, 'I can't believe I said, No, I can't BELIEVE I said, No.'"

But it's hard to picture Randy Dusharm throwing up his hands, and saying anything other than, Yes. ■

**“Taking charge of your thinking”**  
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**Kari Mashos is an international speaker and practitioner and teacher of Christian Science healing, from Cape Neddick, ME. It was Mashos' study of the Bible and Science and Health which helped her through the feelings of abandonment by her father and the psychological effects of abuse. Mashos was an opera singer for several years before devoting herself full-time to the practice and teaching of Christian Science healing. Mashos is a member of the Christian Science Board of Lectureship.**

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