

miami and the beaches edition

BROKER ★ AGENT


magazine

broker/agent of the month

**JEFF
TOMLINSON**

TOMLINSON
REALTY GROUP





Jeff & Kaitlin Tomlinson at home selling the waterfront properties they love.



broker/agent
of the month

by Carol Hixson

by Mitchell Zachs of Magical Photos

JEFF TOMLINSON

Native Son Opens Own Office

There's a saying "If you want something done right, give it to a busy person." Jeff Tomlinson is the very embodiment of that saying—opening two new offices, hiring a select group of agents, remodeling his own waterfront home—AND personally hosting 52 or more open houses a year of luxury waterfront properties!

Jeff's busy schedule keeps him in the top 1% of agents nationwide. Over the past nineteen years, Jeff has sold over \$400 million in gross sales.

Yet Jeff asserts his forte is in his personal touch: "I'm hosting an open house every weekend. I keep a database on everything a client could want—from fine dining, to boating choices, to architects and contractors, handymen and decorators. I even sing to my clients at my closing dinners!"

In fact, Jeff and his wife and partner, Kaitlin, are renowned for their gourmet closing dinners, earning Jeff nicknames like "Jeff Ze Chef" and "The Singing REALTOR", even winning awards for his singing. Hearing Jeff talk about planning one of his famous closing dinners, you can tell he delights in planning every detail:

"I like to show my appreciation to my clients, most of whom have become my friends. It's a magical evening, whether by limousine, boat or plane, anything may happen. I may even fly my customers to the Bahamas for a sunset dinner, or take them on a cruise!"

Jeff, a native son of Keystone Point since 1959 and currently a resident of San Souci Estates, adds that his success is also due to his insider's knowledge of his key sales area: "Nearly all my sales come from Sans Souci Estates, Keystone Point, Bay Harbor, Eastern Shores or Highland and Aventura lake-fronts."

"I grew up here, and I've sold real estate here for nineteen years. I even make copyrighted relief maps of each neighborhood that show every lot, every restaurant, every school and park." Jeff adds: "People give them out when they have guests, to show them accurately how to get around, what landmarks to look for, what the distance to airports and shopping areas are."

Jeff gives an example of one of his client relationships: "I sold him and his wife five homes over nineteen years. I started with their first home when he was still an intern, then moved them as



John and Jeff—legends in their respective fields.

use it today, to give clients an aerial view of the neighborhood and to shoot pictures of a home for advertising purposes. You can even find aerial photos I shot on my website!"

Also in his early years, Jeff took a side job doing custom design interior work, primarily in cabinetry, on high-end luxury condos and single family dwellings. "You have no idea how that side job has paid off when I'm showing and assessing custom homes!" exclaims Jeff.

When the airline industry deregulated in the mid-eighties, Jeff found himself in need of a job for the first time in his life. "I knew sales and I knew northeast Dade County," says Jeff, "so I decided to go into real estate."

"I started with Rose and Rose Realty in North Miami Beach in 1985. I became top producer in 1987 and stayed top producer there until I joined Rickenback and Associates in Aventura in 1992. I became one of two top producers there the following year and stayed on top until I incorporated my own agency in March of this year." Jeff adds that he is proud to call the presidents of his former companies among his closest friends. In a business known for company-hopping, Jeff says he left each company "with respect, going personally in advance to each owner. Today, they are happy to refer business to me, as I am to them. That's the best endorsement you can ask for," says Jeff.

"I got my Real Estate Broker's license in 1996," Jeff and Kaitlin (a registered appraiser since the early nineties) married in 1992. Kaitlin also became a licensed REALTOR® in 1996, making it a family business.

After incorporation, "I did 6 million in sales the first 30 days in luxury waterfront homes in North East Miami, up to Aventura" explains Jeff. "My new office is located at 12000 Biscayne Boulevard, Suite 506 in North Miami, conveniently on the same floor with my legal counsel, title company and accounting firm. My mortgage brokers give wholesale rates that are passed on to my clients—as well as savings in closing costs from my title company!"

his family and practice grew. I just sold him his retirement home. He told me "Jeff, your personal involvement helped me make the right investment at every turn and I've made excellent profits on each sale". Over the years he referred dozens of clients to me."

"My ability to list and sell a home in record time at record highs and my personal service are what sets me apart," asserts Jeff. "I advertise constantly and aggressively. The advertising, plus my personal contacts with investors, brings in customers the seller would never otherwise see. I'll spend up to 1% of the listing price in advertising if I need to. That's why I've never had a listing expire unsold in over twelve years."

Jeff goes on to add: "Many times I can bring in a cash buyer, who'll establish a new high for the neighborhood. Then the appraisers can keep up with this skyrocketing market. Clients never lose in a waterfront investment. I sold one home four times since 2000," Jeff says: "In less than five years it tripled in value, with no improvements or renovations."

A sponge for information, Jeff says he's learned from every job in his career: "My Father was an inventor. He held many patents for equipment designed to improve productivity in the poultry business. He also was a pilot for his own business commuting. While I was still a school kid, we'd travel all over the country to conventions. That's where I really learned the art of salesmanship. Whatever the type of customer, I learned to satisfy their needs."

Jeff also gives credit to his mother, (Miss Texas in 1947), for instilling family values of integrity and responsibility: "She was a tower of support. She raised four boys, often by herself because my Father traveled so much for business."

After a college background in business and marketing, Jeff returned briefly to the family business after his Father had a stroke. Then Jeff went into the Airline business with two major carriers, working his way up from ramp agent to Station Manager and Marketing Director. "Along the way, I got my pilot's license," says Jeff. "I still





The Top Production Team of Tomlinson Realty Group

Jeff has hired a select handful of agents for Tomlinson Realty Group. "I was able to hand pick my agents, some of whom I worked with and trained previously. Experience is what Tomlinson Realty Group is all about," says Jeff.

Jeff has a network of contacts from Key West to Jacksonville where they mutually refer clients, as well as throughout the country. Jeff also serves clients from Asia, South America and Europe. Tomlinson Realty Group also has multi-lingual agents to serve their growing international client base.

"Another advantage to being local" says Jeff, "is that my younger brother, John, along with his partner, Mike Thomas, owns Spinnaker Marina and TNT Custom Marine in North Miami. A lot of his clients fall in love with the area and want homes here and a lot of my clients want advice on buying and rigging boats. We're Each Other's Best Source of Referrals! Even in a gated, waterfront community, there are going to be some non-waterfront lots. They're going to need space to dock their boats."

Jeff is a proud big brother: "John is the Number One Offshore Catamaran Racer. He's represented top brands to the winner's title. He holds the world's speed record of 202 mph and has been National World Champion ten times. John has appeared on "The Today Show" with Matt Lauer driving his boat and is currently Colin Farrell's stunt double on the "Miami Vice" movie set.

"John lives across the street from me. We share a lot of celebrity clients: television and film actors, producers and sports celebrities, such as local Dolphin players." Jeff and Kaitlin are avid Dolphin Fans, even flying with the team on their jet to an away game.

"Customers understand the appreciation in value of waterfront property. In the nineties, property values increased 2 to 3% a year. In 2000, that became 25% a year. In the last twelve months alone, there was a 40% jump in waterfront luxury properties," adds Jeff. "That has a ripple effect on properties near the waterfront. People may not be able to afford their dream

waterfront home now, but they want to get close, because surrounding homes are climbing in value as well."

Beyond residential resale, Jeff also sells commercial real estate, land, investments and a personal favorite, restaurants. "For them, I'll advertise in *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal* and other commercial and business journals."

Jeff prides himself on being an innovator in advertising and marketing: "I was the first to do live home tours on television in the eighties. I've been in the forefront of advertising in full-page glossy ads in the local upscale magazines and movie theater advertising. I want to be in the lead, to give my clients the edge in whatever trend is coming."

Jeff and Kaitlin are devout churchgoers, serving as deacons in their local church. Jeff recalls one sermon that especially changed his life: "The minister said that God gives us the earth we walk on, the air we breathe, the home we live in, the people we love, our food and everything that sustains us. Yet He only asks for a small percentage in return for rewards that are tenfold." Jeff adds: "We think of our business as a stewardship also."

In addition to their church tithing, Jeff and Kaitlin have seen the devastation hurricanes can bring, and support The Red Cross, Samaritan's Purse and Tsunami Relief funds. Jeff has also personally designed a storm information kit, which he gives his clients and neighbors. Jeff and Kaitlin also volunteer in their homeowner's association. Jeff is an active member of the Chamber of Commerce and the local chapter of the Air Force Association, volunteering for events and supporting the Aerospace Education Foundation.

Like the rest of their family, Jeff and Kaitlin love water sports, from skiing, to fishing to surfing and scuba diving. Jeff says they also love snow skiing, taking a winter break on the slopes in Park City, Utah each year.

For now, Jeff can't wait to be working in his new office: "Everything is state-of-the-art from high-resolution laser printers to our new website, which will even have aerial tours that I've shot." Jeff delights in living and working in the niche where he grew up and sees nothing but continued growth for waterfront sales "You can't add any more residential property on the water! There's nowhere left to build!" ★

Jeff Tomlinson

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