

120-year old Victorian dump in the east end of the city," said Lazarus. "It really was disgusting. But 'when I walked in my eyes saw a vision. I saw the place renovated. I looked past all the mess and junk and said wow, I can do something with this."

So he bought his first home and took advantage of government grants available at the time. He bought the house, in 1979, for \$18,000 and received a \$3,000 grant towards this purchase price. It cost him \$12,000 to renovate, and he received a \$10,000 grant towards this cost of renovations. Lazarus sold the house for \$62,000 a year later.

And what began as one man's venture into home ownership became a turning point for the run-down neighbourhood and Lazarus himself. Intrigued by his undertaking and the end result - a now beautiful, renovated 120-year-old Victorian home in a still dumpy neighbourhood - a local home and garden magazine featured Lazarus and his home on the front page. He says six months after the article came out the area began to be populated by young professionals snapping up the old houses and renovating. Also, as a result of the article, Lazarus was approached by professionals in the process of renovating the old Hamilton library who wanted assistance with space and colour coordination, something he's always had an eye for, and he agreed to help. This was the beginning of a lot of space and colour coordination projects he got involved with on the side as he continued to buy, renovate and sell houses.

After selling his restaurant in Hamilton he moved to Toronto and bought an established restaurant



uptown, which he owned and operated for 15 years. By this time in his life, a lot of his friends were agents and there was a real estate brokerage in the same plaza as his restaurant, so he became friendly with this crowd who frequented his establishment. He was still buying and selling properties in Toronto, but with the restaurant taking up the majority of his time his interest switched to flipping houses that needed more cosmetic help and some renovations. He many times contemplated a real estate career but never took the plunge for various reasons, including a baby on the way and running a highly profitable business.

By 1998, the neighbourhood demographics surrounding his restaurant had completely changed and he decided the time was right to sell and pursue the real estate career he'd been contemplating for so long. He came out of the deal with his investment and enough money to get himself started in real estate. He researched different companies for a month and decided to join Coldwell Banker Terrequity Realty after attending a company seminar, which, after all that research, he found in a two-line word

advertisement in the Toronto Star. He chose the company because they sponsor education courses and have an extremely high level of agent training.

Lazarus received his license in December 1998. Although he was pursuing a path he wanted to take, he says switching careers at 43 years of age was no easy gamble.

"To tell you the truth, I was scared to death," he said. For six months his daily routine consisted of attending school, studying, and eating and sleeping when he got the chance. He says the biggest challenge through the whole process was getting his mind set in a routine of going to school again and studying hard, along with learning how to use modern computers.

His entire family, including his young daughter, were highly supportive and helpful through the whole process, which he says greatly encouraged him. Now that he is excelling at his new career, he says life has never been better. "I've never been so happy. I've got no regrets. It was finally the right fit for me."

Lazarus started his career by targeting first-time homebuyers, and