

Achievers



JOURNEYS TO SUCCESS

Life Begins At Eighty

Samir Manji's Amica follows the Four Seasons model to create five-star retirement residences

\$5.95

Thirty years have passed since Samir Manji arrived in Canada. At the age of four, he surely had no idea what eventually he would create. Now, looking across generations, he says, "I lost all of my grandparents by the time I was twenty-one years old. I wish I had been able to offer them what we have in Amica."

Manji has created Amica Mature Lifestyles Inc., a company that develops residences for affluent, independent seniors. These are residences that, in Manji's words, "mirror what Four Seasons Hotels have done, positioning Amica at the five-star level."

Amica has a Latin root: *amicus*--friend. And that is what most Amica residents find. Arthur Sager, who lives at Somerset House in Victoria, speaks of "a lovely social life, because of the type of people this place attracts, people who have lived interesting lives."

Certainly Mr. Sager fits that category, after four decades with the United Nations in Africa, France and Italy. So do Wesley and Alva Cox, who call Somerset House

the "Palace on Dallas" (it stands on Dallas Road, overlooking the strait of Juan de Fuca).

"Mrs. Cox's career, after raising a trio of kids," her husband writes, "was counselling the president of the University of California. My formal training in social management found me building hospitals and schools all over the continent. But my major career was writing and producing TV shows, a few cowboy movies, and 'how to' books. We both admire [Amica's] style. You seem damned close to achieving as good as it gets."

Accolades like these turn up regularly on the desk of Samir A. Manji, Chairman, President and Chief Executive Officer of Amica Mature Lifestyles. Manji was born in Karachi (With a twin sister, Shaila, now senior vice-president, purchasing and corporate operations, for Amica). Manji's parents had moved briefly to Pakistan from Kenya, but when Samir and Shaila were four years old, the family emigrated to Vancouver. In 1981, Manji senior bought a chain of Toronto apartment buildings from Nelson Skalbania, moved the family

to Ontario, and went on to assemble a portfolio of apartments and hotels. Following high school in Mississauga, Samir entered the University of Waterloo. After becoming a chartered accountant, he worked with KPMG, and then joined his father's business.

In the mid-1990s, Samir Manji returned to Vancouver, and established a company which, he says, "attempted to serve a broad range of seniors' residential needs, from apartments to nursing homes. Then, five years ago, we decided rather than trying to be good at all these things, we would create a niche for ourselves."

There are twelve Amica residences in Canada, seven in British Columbia, five in Ontario. Three more are under construction and there are others on architects' drawing boards. While currently clustered in the Vancouver, Victoria and Toronto areas, the company is looking toward other North American urban centres, including Seattle.

Parallel to Amica's goal to develop five-star accommodation is its business model, which also follows Four Seasons.

Life Begins

With **Amica's** newest location in West Vancouver, Samir Manji follows the Four Seasons model to create five-star retirement residences.





Eighty

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**Samir
Manji**



Rob Huppee working with an Amica resident on the M POWER program.

Huppee, Olympic-style weightlifter, snowboarder, martial arts practitioner, and in his less athletic moments, cook, reader, and guitarist. The good-natured Huppee, manager of Amica's Wellness and Vitality Program, carries a string of degrees and certificates-B.Sc., RDN, CSCS and CFC, signifying that he is a McGill graduate, a registered dietician/nutritionist, a certified strength and conditioning specialist, and a certified fitness consultant. For several years, he was associated with the Jewish General Hospital in Montreal and the McGill University Sports Medicine Clinic

There are as many as three Wellness and Vitality Coordinators at each Amica residence, all with backgrounds in therapeutic recreation, gerontology or other relevant programs, and all given additional training by Huppee. In Vancouver, Amica has a cooperative relationship with Simon Fraser University, which has pioneered outstanding courses in kinesiology and gerontology. Amica has developed its trademark M POWER program, and each residence has a work-out room fully equipped with strength conditioning equipment, from Keiser pneumatic machines and recumbent cross-trainers to ballet bars, free weights and medicine balls. Newer residences, including Amica at West Vancouver, have indoor pools, for aquafit exercise.

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"We're seeing it more and more," says Huppee. "Only a little exercise is needed to produce big changes." Although new residents initially may need some coaxing to join exercise classes, "once they get hooked, they're tenacious."

On one wall of Huppee's office is a picture of 83-year-old Michael Henderso who carves paddles and regularly canoes in Georgian Bay's Algonquin Park. And, says Huppee, "I had a hundred-year-old

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Ownership of new developments is held by private investors and developers, with Amica holding a minority share or providing mezzanine financing.

Amica gives each residence its branded identity, and receives a long-term management contract. The two most recent contracts have been for fifty years. Amica residences are architecturally unique, although individual in special ways, to suit the wishes of their occupants. Accommodations range from studio suites to two-bedroom penthouses, but all enjoy the same amenities, including 24-hour staffing and security, concierge, beauty salon, pub, theatre and games rooms, dining room, private dining room (for family and other celebrations),

library, greenhouse, arts and crafts activities, an excursion bus, housekeeping and laundry services, postal and banking services, computer and Internet access, individual heating and air conditioning controls, smoke/heat detectors, in-suite emergency response systems, cablevision, kitchenettes, underground parking, regular visits by health professionals, and Wellness and Vitality Centres.

Wellness and Vitality have become the dominant theme of Amica. Manji articulates the corporate vision as "to be the best in the world at delivering superior wellness and vitality within exceptional independent living retirement communities."

Part of the responsibility for this lands on the muscular shoulders of Rob

woman in one class. She could do it all. Working with older people, you can make a profound change in their lives."

Nutrition is also central to Amica's Wellness and Vitality Program. "A lot of older people," says Huppee, "have poor nutritional status. Here, they get a nutritionally sound diet. More calcium, more fibre. We do a nutrient analysis of our cycle menus, and we build menus that have healthy heart options: low fat, low sodium, portion controlled meals that are appropriate also for diabetics. We address special needs."

While nutrition is paramount, Amica also strives for excellence in cuisine. Each residence has an Executive Chef, and typical menus may include mesclun salad with strawberry vinaigrette, spinach and mandarin salad, New York steak with sauteed mushrooms, baked trout stuffed with shrimp, grilled chicken breast with sweet pepper sauce, shrimp sauteed with garlic and herbs in tomato sauce, and such classics as peach crumble, vanilla mousse and lemon meringue pie. Alternative choices are always available. In the morning, residents enjoy a leisurely Continental breakfast, and there are snacks through the day.

Residents may invite friends to join them for lunch or dinner, and that is how Dave and Elaine Ellis were drawn to Amica. After raising four children in a four-bedroom, two-storey house and after Dave's long career with the mortgage department of London Life in Edmonton, Calgary and Toronto, they began looking for a new home and a new lifestyle. On a trip to Victoria, they were invited to dinner by a friend living at Somerset House. They found they could stay in a guest suite, and they were impressed.

Back in Ontario, they saw the beginning of development at Amica at Swan Lake in Markham, and decided this was for them. "We'd come up, have a cup of tea, and watch construction," says Dave. On April 7, 2001, they became charter residents.

Elaine and Dave have been together since high school days in Edmonton, and "we're very happy here," says Dave. "We

have a two-bedroom, two-bathroom suite. Sometimes old neighbors come for lunch, and some say, 'Oh, we could never afford all this.' But I tell them they've got a house worth maybe \$500,000. Sell it, invest the proceeds, and the interest and your pension will easily cover your rent."

The average age of an Amica resident is 80 to 82. The majority live independently, playing golf (going to the theatre and musical events, traveling on bus excursions, attending lectures. "I've lived a richer cultural life since coming here than ever before," says Arthur Sager. "You'll



"You seem close," says one Amica couple, "to achieving as good as **it** gets."

never find a retirement community where people laugh as much."

Residences constructed by Amica dedicate approximately twenty percent of their space for persons requiring assistance. These self-contained suites are staffed by a Director of Care (a registered nurse), licensed practical nurses, and trained attendants. There is also a respite program, providing temporary accommodation and care for persons recently released from hospital or requiring care while their adult children are absent.

Newer developments have connected condominiums for younger seniors, who may use Amica services on an a la carte basis.

"Our most important asset," says Manji, "isn't buildings, it's our people. We have more than five hundred and fifty people deeply committed to Amica, many recruited from the hospitality industry. They understand the importance of guest satisfaction." Sager agrees. "It is," he says, "like living in a very fine hotel."

Among the key people surrounding Manji, besides his twin, are Chief Operating Officer Colin Halliwell, who joined Amica after seventeen years in senior management with London Drugs; Chief Financial Officer Renzo Barazzuol, formerly with Koala Beverages; Carol Brown, Senior Vice-president, Human Resources and Community Operations; Susan Gerard, Vice-president, Community Marketing; and Roy Oostergo, Vice-president, Business Development.

Business development has been vigorous. Amica is listed on the TSX Exchange (trading symbol: ACC) and over the past year, its share price has increased by more than 150 percent.

The future is even more promising. "Over the next twenty-five years," says Manji, "the general population is expected to grow by twenty-eight percent. But the number of persons aged seventy-five and over will increase by one hundred and six percent."

Amica maintains offices in Vancouver and Toronto, and Manji travels back and forth regularly. When not on the job or in the air, he devotes his time to "my lovely wife, Sheena, and three beautiful children, two daughters and a son."

Manji visits all of the Amica residences frequently. On his desk are letters thanking his staff for birthday and anniversary celebrations, holiday dinners and special events, even a bouquet of flowers delivered to a resident to mark her first year at Amica. "What is important," says Manji, "are the lives you touch, the impact you have."

Once people said "life begins at forty." At Amica, life may begin at eighty. Or, H.G. Wells may have had it exactly right, when he wrote "life begins perpetually."