

# The Express

Today's News Today

## Local News

### An Exciting Time

#### Poorman sells investments worth \$6 million

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POSTED: June 4, 2009

LOCK HAVEN - The largest, combined real estate transaction in Clinton County's history, in the range of \$6 million, took place Monday, according to Stephen P. Poorman, former owner of Realtylease Corp.

Former owner? Yes, that is correct.

The Rainier Group L.P., a family partnership that includes Sean and Dana Krieger of State College, has purchased the majority of Poorman's business investments. Although details are being kept confidential, including the exact amount of money and total number of properties involved, it would appear they bought the properties lock, stock and barrel. They consider it an opportunity to take over established investments without losing the brains behind the business's success, they said. "The beauty of it is, he'll still be here," Sean Krieger said of Poorman, "and we'll get to tap his knowledge and guidance."

The Rainiers' new properties reportedly include four major buildings in the city's downtown that Poorman restored and placed on the National Register of Historic Places, half a dozen Dollar General stores, including the one on Main Street, warehouses, medical buildings, restaurants ... The properties, with rental units numbering in the hundreds, are in Lock Haven, Williamsport and Ridgway, as well as in California and Masontown near Pittsburgh.

"Steve just kept showing us how well-balanced this investment is," Sean said. The purchase includes Poorman's interest in a variety of business partnerships: Florida Properties, Rapmitco Properties, Freyman Properties, California Properties, Poorman Realty Corp. and other business entities. Poorman said he was the majority partner in most of these concerns. Also, the management company that dealt with all these properties is now owned by Sean and Dana and the other members of Rainier Group, Sean's brother and sister-in-law, Kevin and Janice Krieger of Seattle.

The transaction is a "significant change-over," Poorman said. But, he likened it to a changing of the guard, since the Rainiers plan to run their new business investments, as well as their old ones in Clinton and Centre counties, from Poorman's former Realtylease offices in the Heffner Building at 143-147 E. Main St. They also intend to keep the company name and all the employees. Poorman will continue his consulting business and is keeping his own office in the suite, he said. "I'll be divested of everything except real estate in Florida," he said. He also retains his home on Hampton Street and his large, new cottage in the Mackeyville area near Fishing Creek.

Steve and his wife, Pamela, enjoy spending five months of the year in Pompano Beach near Fort Lauderdale, Fla., Poorman said, where they've had a residence for 13 years. Business concerns kept him here for at least part of this past winter, he said, but his time may not be so strained now that he is "downsizing," as he put it. Although he will retain his various buildings and his office in the Fort Lauderdale area, he said, there are no plans to pack up and move there permanently. He has conducted business projects all over the country and in India, he said, but everything has been based right here. "We're certainly not leaving Lock Haven," he said. "We've found it's the place to be."

#### TIMING AND THE ECONOMY

With a sense of economic doom hanging over the country, why would anyone want to invest in real estate right now?



**WENDY STIVER/THE EXPRESS**  
Businessman and musician Stephen P. Poorman, left, of Lock Haven has sold the majority of his investment properties, including the former Woolworth's building on Main Street, to Sean and Dana Krieger of State College and other Krieger relatives. The roughly \$6 million transaction took place Monday.

According to Poorman, overall trends have little to do with the realty business in this area. "Clinton County has some isolation from the national economy," he said. "You'll find one big spike in value over the past 20 years, but the rest is 'flat-line.' If you look at our neighbors, especially State College, the values are all over the board. "I don't know what causes that anomaly. We don't make a lot of gains, but we don't take a lot of losses, either," he added with a grin.

Sean said he does foresee gains, particularly with the natural gas business heating up and Lock Haven University serving more students. "We want to buy properties and hold them for the long term," he said. "We're not flipping."

"If you think about it," Poorman said, "in Lock Haven we have all this development when every place else is regressing. I've never seen anything as positive as we see now, with the Shaner development and the university."

## BUILDING THE BUSINESS

A Castanea native, Poorman has been in the real estate business for 38 years, buying his first property, the Brown Apartment Building at 21 Henderson St., while a 20-year-old senior at Elizabethtown College. (He also earned a master of arts degree from Norwich University.) "I was a working kid from age 8 or 9, selling door-to-door, and I saved my money," he recalled with laughter. "In my high school years, I was fortunate enough to sign a contract with Hammond Organ Co. They sent me around the country for four years to do concerts, so I had a career." The late Charlie Ryan, then-publisher of The Express, helped him open his first music store, The Big Red Note, next to The Express at 9 W. Main St., he recalled. He had the business open for just six months before the 1972 flood hit and he had to start all over again. But after five years, he had eight Big Red Note stores, and by the time he sold the chain, that number was up to 17. He bought buildings and warehouses for the company and around 1977 moved the local emporium to his building at 147 E. Main St., which he named for its original owner, Mayor Heffner. After selling the chain, he went into consulting and now gives business advice to physicians and corporations throughout the country. He also became one of Dollar General's larger landlords and converted the former Woolworth's building at 16 E. Main St. so it could house one of the stores. It also is home to a Subway, That's the Scoop and Grieco's Dry Cleaning. This project was the one he believes impacted Lock Haven the most. "That property was literally falling apart, the floors were falling, the roofs had to be replaced - and we lost Woolworth's," he said. "The building sat there for I don't know how long. I took it on and the first thing I did was unheard of - we filled in the basement with stone... and poured a four-inch concrete slab across the whole building. We installed the new roof and within 90 days it was filled with tenants. We've never had a change in tenant in that building. "Had I not done that, it would have been another parking lot or who knows what," he said. "A downtown needs an anchor, or two or three. We had no anchor then. The project also created jobs, because that's a dry cleaning plant in the back."

Poorman said he's always enjoyed taking on historic buildings that need work. "That's unusual in the real estate business," he said. "Most people don't want to take the time or the trouble." He restored the Simon Building on downtown Main Street and named it for Amelia Simon, Lock Haven's first businesswoman. The Lock Haven Market House on East Church Street was condemned when he bought it, he said. Following his restoration, it now houses Fox's Restaurant. He named The Grafius House on East Water Street, next to Cannon Park and once home to The Locks Restaurant, for Jacob Grafius, said to be Lock Haven's first retailer. His historic restorations in Williamsport include Government Place, and his project covering half a block in Ridgway earned a state award last year as Most Prominent Restoration. "Restorations have to be a labor of love because they're ... difficult," Poorman said with a smile. "Everything you run into is a challenge to be surmounted." Still, he stated, he has sold all of his business holdings over the last year, including real estate, surgery centers, management companies and other investments. These include the former Fish GMAC real estate agency in the city which is now Kissinger, Bigatel and Brower. Few people knew Poorman was even associated with the agency. "Deborah Shirey was the person who really was Fish," he said of the late Realtor and agency manager. "I've always thought Lock Haven had a neat history, much more so than many other places, and much more interesting architecture," Poorman said. "That's why I fought to keep the Opera House standing ... Hopefully, we can keep a couple of these places on the map."

## LARGE SHOES TO FILL

The Kriegers also seem to have an eye for historic architecture. Even when they lived in Seattle, Dana said, she admired historic buildings. Moving to the East Coast, where edifices are older, has heightened her interest. "I love the old brick buildings," she said. "They have character, history, a sense of depth... I like what Steve has done with his buildings, restoring them to their splendor." "You always must compare dollars with community worth in this business," Sean said. He expects he will be tapping into Poorman's knowledge and experience to help determine that worth, he added. "I agreed to support them after the acquisition and I've had a great time so far," Poorman said. "I'm excited about it personally." Dana said she and her husband are excited, as well. "We've hit the ground running," she said.

The parents of four daughters, ages six to 12, the Kriegers didn't make the purchase lightly, Sean said. A manufacturing engineer, he works in an applied research lab at Penn State. Dana has worked in business

administration for two Centre County non-profits, Tides, a children's grief support program, and the Suzuki program of music lessons for kids, while managing the couple's properties. She plans to concentrate on family and the properties from now on, she said. The process leading up to the big transaction started two years ago, Sean said, in a conversation over coffee with Poorman. "It truly was an interview," he said of that first meeting. "I didn't know if he was keeping a straight poker face or not as we talked, but we really hit it off friendship-wise and I knew we could learn a lot from this man." There was little communication between them, though, for a year and a half. "Really, I got cold feet," Sean said. "I thought, 'This is too good to be true. He'll even stay on and help us grow the properties.'" After all that time, Poorman called the Kriegers and told them he intended to put the real estate on the market if they turned the deal down. This time, they accepted.

"The goal was to sell everything at one time," Poorman said. "I selected 37 potential buyers, interviewed eight, narrowed it down to two, and I know I made the best selection. I've very confident in that. "Business deals have to be win-win," he added. Now, as he hands over the reins of his real estate empire, Poorman can look forward to spending some time at his new cottage, as well as uninterrupted winters in the Sunshine State. And, there's certainly one thing that hasn't changed over the past 38 years - organ music still puts a light in Steve Poorman's eye. Now, he said, he should have time to give more local concerts.

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