

A sanguine life

BY DONNA DANIELLI

It was love of horses that first drew Costas Demetrious to Halton, and it's a business based on horses that keeps him here. "I always liked the area next to Mohawk (Raceway), because I had always come out to the races with my father," explains the soft-spoken owner of Nassagaweya Veterinarian Laboratory Services. "I watch horses, that's my relaxation. Horses are the real athletes."

It's been a long, well travelled journey for the forty seven year old businessman. Born in Greece, he moved to Toronto with his family when he was eight years old. "My dad was working as an auto mechanic, and he was looking for his grandfather." The grandfather was eventually located in New Zealand, but by that time the family was firmly settled in Canada. Costas went on to study computer sciences at Ryerson College and Guelph University, before beginning what would be a long and fruitful career with Beckman Instruments. "They took me right out of school," he recalls. "I graduated in computer technology and started with Beckman from day one. I started out as a field service engineer."

That work soon took Costas all around the country, installing, maintaining and teaching the use of complicated laboratory equipment. "The bartender at the airport used to watch everyday as I'd catch a different flight," he jokes. "I'd been doing applications and service work for Beckman all over Canada. Then they sent me to Saudi Arabia in the mid-eighties. I really liked it over there. The people are quite nice and the hospitals are very well done, they're like hotels." Costas and wife Nancy remained in Saudi Arabia with their children, Steven and Elizabeth, until the mid nineties, before deciding that it was time for Nancy and the children to return home. Costas remained in Saudi Arabia another two years, before coming home himself. "I stayed there during the war and I sent them home. We had had enough...it was time to come home." The war had a unique impact on Costas: his building was so close to where the scud missiles were launched that he had better video footage of it than the major news stations! His home recordings of the launches were telecast on CNN and later on CTV News in Canada.

The family quickly settled into the home in Brookville they had built in 1989, but had only been able to summer in until that point. "I started the lab as a part time job for Nancy over the garage," says Costas, who never dreamed that the demand for service would increase so dramatically. "I was able to turn the blood results in hours instead of the next day and really keep the costs down for trainers. We went up to 400 samples a month, that was too much."

Costas and Nancy looked no further than Campbellville when setting up their new office, capable of processing 500 samples per day. "It's a nice little business here, we do very well here," declares Costas. "Being next to the racetrack really helps. This area is about horses."

He is especially pleased with the vast array of equipment at his disposal. "We have the best equipment there is," he says proudly. He has recently expanded his technology to allow for the analysis of blood from more than just horses. "These machines are high tech and we have multi species software," Costas explains. "There are a lot of small animal hospitals and I think we can really grow in that area." Improvements in technology are particularly handy in the delivering of test results, as Costas often finds himself faxing or e-mailing results directly to lap top computers in the barns, resulting in fast and efficient service.

Still, sometimes he looks longingly back at the old days, when he travelled worldwide. "I miss making deals," he admits. "I used to fly around the world for different companies. I miss the action of it." But, when he takes a moment to reflect on the life he and Nancy have built for themselves and their family in Halton, he realizes that's there's really no other place he'd rather be. "It's relaxing," he says contentedly. "My family is here, I drive five kilometres to work and I don't have to travel." Add to that a successful business and a well-deserved reputation as one of his community's nicest members and it's easy to see why Costas Demetrious is happy to call Halton home.

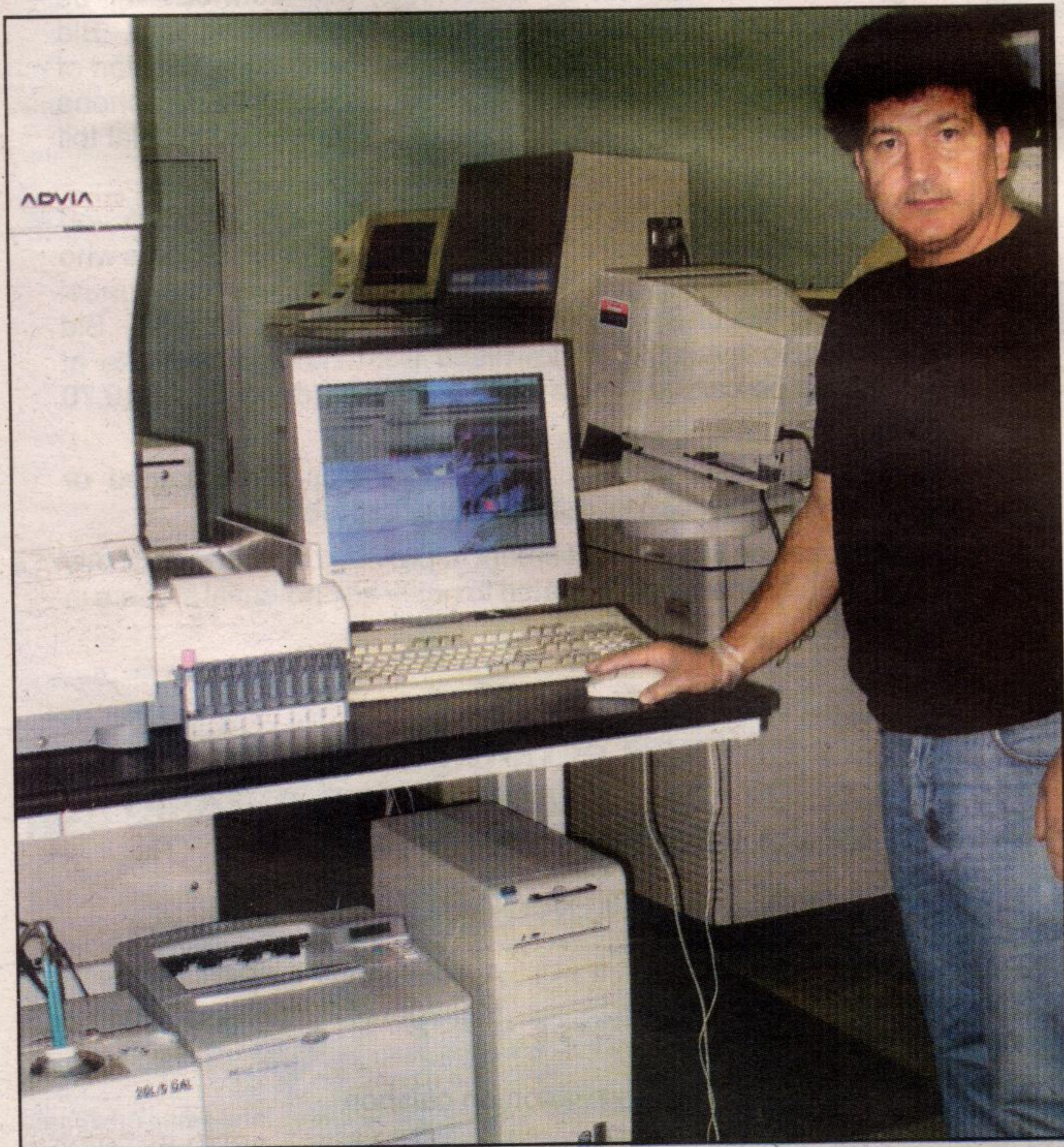


PHOTO BY DONNA DANIELLI

Costas Demetrious, owner of the Nassagaweya Veterinarian Laboratory, poses with some of the high tech equipment his business is renowned for.

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