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FAMILY AFFAIR

EDGARDO AND ANA CRISTINA DEFORTUNA TAKE CARE OF THEIR OWN

BY AARON GLICKMAN
PHOTOS BY: JOHN H. ANDERSON

The word family has many meanings. In fact, the dictionary has 19. Two obvious definitions are for the nuclear family and the extended family. The nuclear family is a social unit composed of a father, mother and children; while the extended family involves those outside of this immediate group, some of whom are blood related, but others who are not, yet who share common attitudes, interests or goals. In the case of Edgardo and Ana Cristina Defortuna, they lead families that fall under both scenarios. *Luxury Condo Living* was fortunate enough to be invited into their Key Biscayne estate to meet their nuclear family and discuss why their company, Fortune International, is indeed a family affair.

Resting along Biscayne Bay is the opulent four-story structure that Edgardo and Ana Cristina currently call home. Known as the "Greek House," the architecture features multiple domes, interior arches and fountains, an elevator and spacious balconies on floors two and three. It's here that Edgardo and Ana Cristina work, play and raise their two boys, Andres and Alexander.

"We bought this house without seeing the inside," explained Ana Cristina. "It's better that way because I won't be disappointed if the deal falls through." This residence, however, is only temporary. The Defortunas recently purchased the Nixon estate and are having their new home built on the property.



It's apparent after spending time with the Defortunas that they are a loving and compassionate family who adore their children. Their beautiful offspring visibly want for nothing and the affection demonstrated toward them by Ana Cristina and Edgardo is lovely. The act of watching Edgardo, this powerful real estate mogul, gently dealing with his young sons breaks down any preconceived notions that anyone could have. Family is truly the most important thing and this line of thinking extends to their professional family as well.

The seeds of success were planted early for Edgardo. His father, Jose Andres, was the head of a power transformer manufacturing plant that employed more than 1000 workers. The ability to manage an organization of

ful, realizing that much of their accomplishment is predicated on the talented people who surround them. For this reason, the Defortunas go out of their way to ensure that their extended family understands how grateful they are. Simple gestures, like opening their new home to employees to watch the World Cup, demonstrate an emphasis on having a tight-knit group.

"Ana Cristina worked so hard to get everything ready for the World Cup party," Edgardo said. "She literally made herself sick. We had only been in the house for three days and I thought it was fine, but Ana Cristina wanted everything to be perfect. She would wake me up in the middle of the night to move a table here or there. That's the way she is."

And those who work for Fortune value the personal

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this magnitude is no easy task and Edgardo learned from his father the disciplines of effective leadership. This knowledge enabled him to build an immense corporation of his own that is one of the most respected companies for the development of luxury properties, as well as the sales and marketing of outside ventures. Some of the projects currently under development by Fortune International include Jade Beach, Jade Ocean, 1200 Brickell, Artech, Ritz-Carlton Club and Residences, South Beach and The Sonesta Resort and Residences Key Biscayne. Projects from other developers that are currently being marketed by Fortune International include Mint, Flamingo South Beach, Sian Ocean Residences, 1800 Club, Ivy, 1060 Brickell and many more.

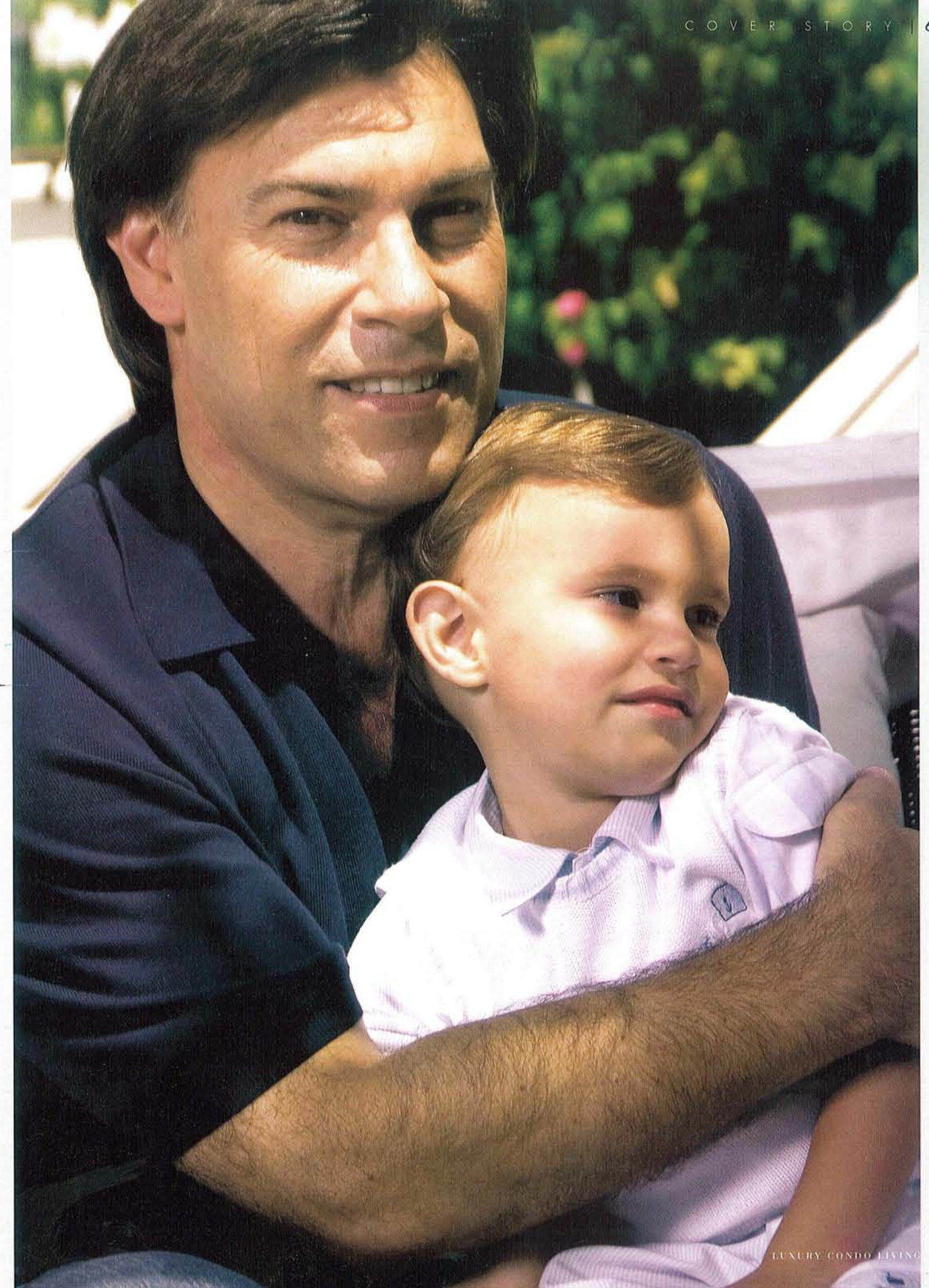
Yet, with all of the power and success that Edgardo and Ana Cristina have, they remain humble and grate-

atmosphere that Edgardo and Ana Cristina have created. "I wrote a song for Edgardo," said Andrea Greenberg, vice president of marketing for Fortune International. "The music was from Abba, and a lot of us sung the lyrics for his birthday video. It was sweet."

These gestures of kind demonstrate a general feeling of respect. That respect has been earned through years of dedication and an understanding of how solid relationships are a key aspect to success.

"The importance of relationships was stressed to me when I was very young," Edgardo explained. This was another facet of leadership that was learned during his youth. "I remember going on trips with my father and seeing engineers who worked in his factory join us. He was very generous."

Edgardo took this concept of generosity and ex-



panded upon it. For example, he buys his team lunch every Friday. "It started with just a few of us, but now many participate. It allows us to see people that we normally don't. Everyone comes to the dining area and catches up. It's very positive, and when employees are happy at work and realize that we care, they are more productive."

This Friday afternoon lunch, however, is merely the tip of the iceberg. Once a year Edgardo and Ana Cristina, with the help of Greenberg, organize a company trip that involves everyone - from top-level executives to designers and architects to valets. And it's not just the company; it's their spouses and children as well. "You can't underestimate the effect that Edgardo's generosity has on us," said Greenberg. "The massive undertaking that is involved with moving more than 100 people is so much work, but it's worth it."

Edgardo has sponsored trips to New York City, Las Vegas, Palm Beach and Buenos Aires. "We wind up in groups together - breakfast, lunch, dinner and then some. Really, it's about bonding. At work, we're together all day long, day after day, but sometimes it takes this change in the environment to spend that quality time together."

Of course, when a large group spends so much time together personal relationships can evolve. Many organizations discourage relationships within the company, but Fortune International does not. Edgardo and Ana Cristina are a primary example of how close relationships can be very successful - Ana Cristina is the director of developmental sales. "We've had several instances of employees becoming couples," said Edgardo. "Obviously, business and personal must remain separate, but it has yet to be a problem. In fact, it's been very positive."

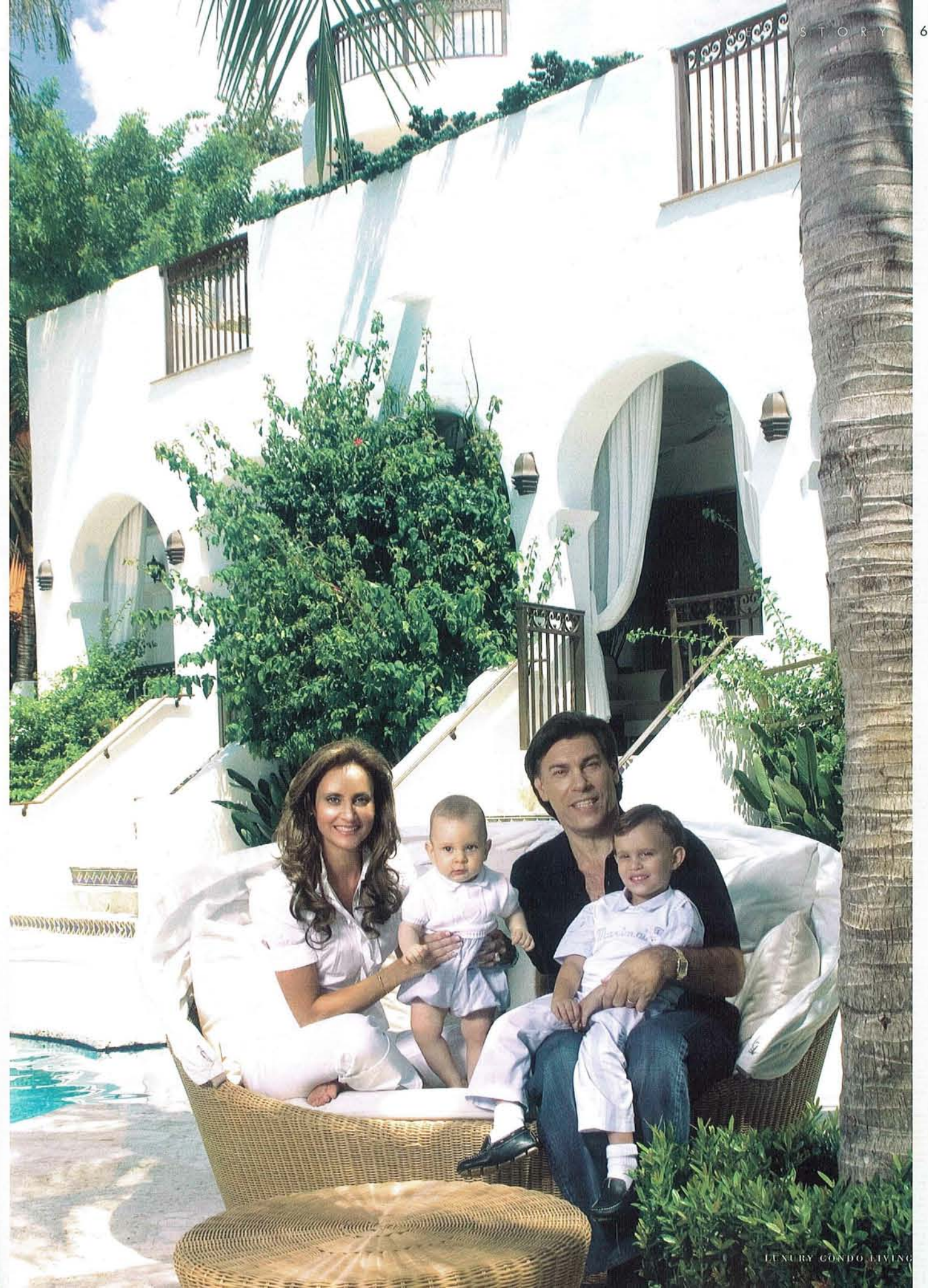
Much of the process of having a loyal and unified working environment begins from the moment a potential employee goes through the interview process.

No one is hired by chance. Potential employees are screened by four or five people to ensure that they will fit in. And fitting in does not involve any kind of stereotypical attributes. Creativity is essential, from design to construction to marketing. Energy is also very important, as is loyalty. "We need people who have respect and who are loyal and put the company ahead of their individual goals. Everyone understands that, which is why we are so successful," said Edgardo. "The main thing is to go to work happy. If people are not happy, they are not going to be productive. We look for people who will contribute to an environment where we can enjoy our work."

Ironically enough, the familial atmosphere extends to the conception of Fortune's signature brand - Jade. At first glance, one may assume that the name is a reference to the stone alone, but in reality it's an anagram for Edgardo's father's initials. "We couldn't figure out what the name should be. Nothing was good enough. Then Andrea (Greenberg) asked what my father's name was - Jose Andres Defortuna - JADE. At first I wasn't sure, but we learned that in China jade is a stone of good fortune and it is given to people for good luck. It's also defined as a little piece of heaven on earth," explained Edgardo.

Once the team learned the true meaning, the decision was made. There are currently three Jade developments and Edgardo wants to save the name for his most special projects. "If we overuse it, then it no longer remains unique."

A healthy family is often an important attribute of success. In the case of Edgardo Defortuna, the concept of family has extended from his childhood to his nuclear family to his professional life. His wife, Ana Cristina, is a strong-minded and intelligent woman. Together they work as a team to raise two healthy boys and run an immense real estate company. They lead by example and those who surround them are the beneficiaries. ■



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