

THE CAREER AND EDUCATION RESOURCE FOR HISPANICS

TODAY HISPANIC

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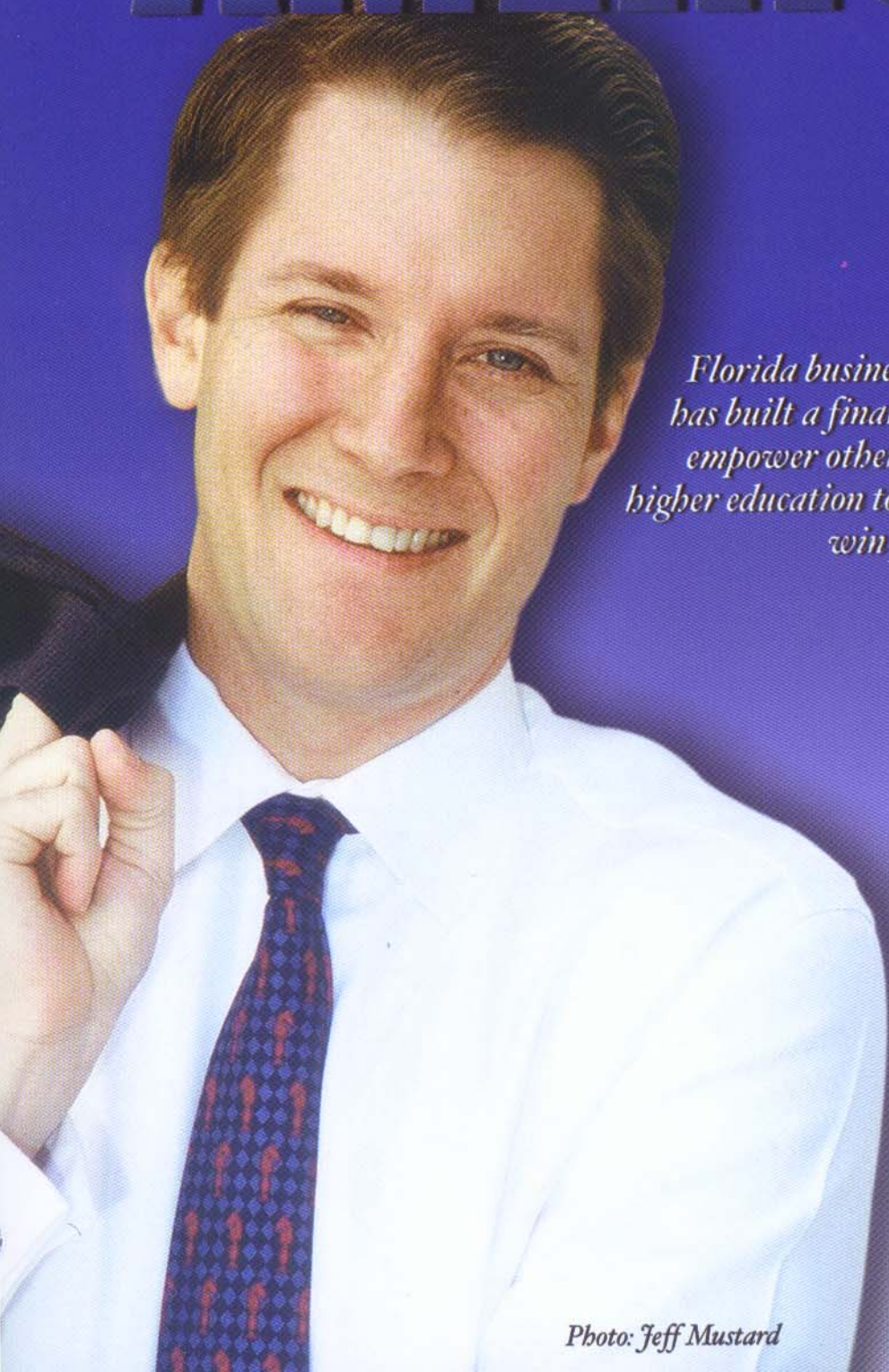
Charles Patrick Garcia
**COMMITTING TO
HISPANIC AMERICA**

**MEXICO'S
ECONOMIC
RENAISSANCE**

**LEADERSHIP
THE LATINO
PERSPECTIVE**

**THE CHANGING
FACE OF
MISS AMERICA**

COMMITTING TO Hispanic AMERICA



Florida businessman Charles Patrick Garcia has built a financial empire. Now he works to empower other Hispanics to achieve through higher education to gain status in business, and to win positions in the judicial system.

By Susan Sharo

Photo: Jeff Mustard

Charles Patrick Garcia, chairman and CEO of Sterling Financial (right), with Sterling's president, Alexis C. Korybut, at a banquet ceremony where the University of Florida named Sterling Financial as the fastest growing privately held company in the state.



Charles Patrick Garcia has incredible energy. He is known to begin his workday at 5am and stay on task until almost midnight, and his intensity is certainly one of the keys to his success. His company, Sterling Financial Investment Group, has grown 3,000 percent since its inception only three years ago. While cries of recession inspired hiring freezes and e-commerce companies collapsed like houses of cards, Garcia's company "trounced Wall Street" and returned a stunning 36.7 percent during the first quarter of 2001.

In January 2001, the University of Florida identified Sterling Financial as the fastest growing privately held firm in the State of Florida and the fastest growing minority owned firm.

But personal success is not enough for Garcia, a former Air Force captain who has always been imbued with a keen sense of volunteerism and a desire to give back to others. When Garcia takes an objective look at the circumstances of Hispanics in Florida, he sees a national emergency. Garcia devotes 20 percent of the time from his marathon workday, as well as sizeable chunks of his own money, to focus on one compelling goal—to elevate the status and economic power of Florida's Hispanic community on a statewide level.

"My main focus is helping the Hispanic community and I do that in a variety of ways. We are the fastest growing minority owned firm in the state—if we can do it, others can do it too. I think it's a tragedy that 40 percent of Hispanics do not graduate from high school," Garcia says. "We have such a low percentage of students going on to universities and such a low rate registered to vote. One of the big problems is that there aren't enough Hispanic leaders in positions of power in government. There are a lot of administrators that don't understand the problems unique to Hispanics, and we get lost in the shuffle. These are nationwide issues."

"If we don't educate our children, we won't have qualified Hispanics to serve as judges or U.S. attorneys."

In April, Garcia began serving on the Federal Judicial Nominating Commission, and on June 6, Governor Jeb Bush appointed Garcia to the Florida Board of Education. Is his involvement in state politics the beginning of a political career? Garcia says, "No," and claims to have no political aspirations whatsoever. He says, "I'd much rather be the guy in the background, who whispers into the king's ear." Garcia feels that he is a more effective force as a private citizen than he would be in political office. "People don't question what your motives are. I did my stint in Washington. The board of education position is unpaid. I'm taking valuable time away from my work and I take that very seriously. I prefer to go in and tell it the way it is."

Garcia plans to tell it the way it is while working in three separate, but interconnected arenas—education, government and business—and he calls the 40 percent Hispanic high school drop-out rate a "national tragedy and a disgrace." He hopes to encourage Hispanics to pursue higher education, and wants to see more Hispanic leaders in positions of power in government. He also volunteers his time to unify Hispanic businesses, helping to create a state level Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and serving as the chairman of the fundraising committee.

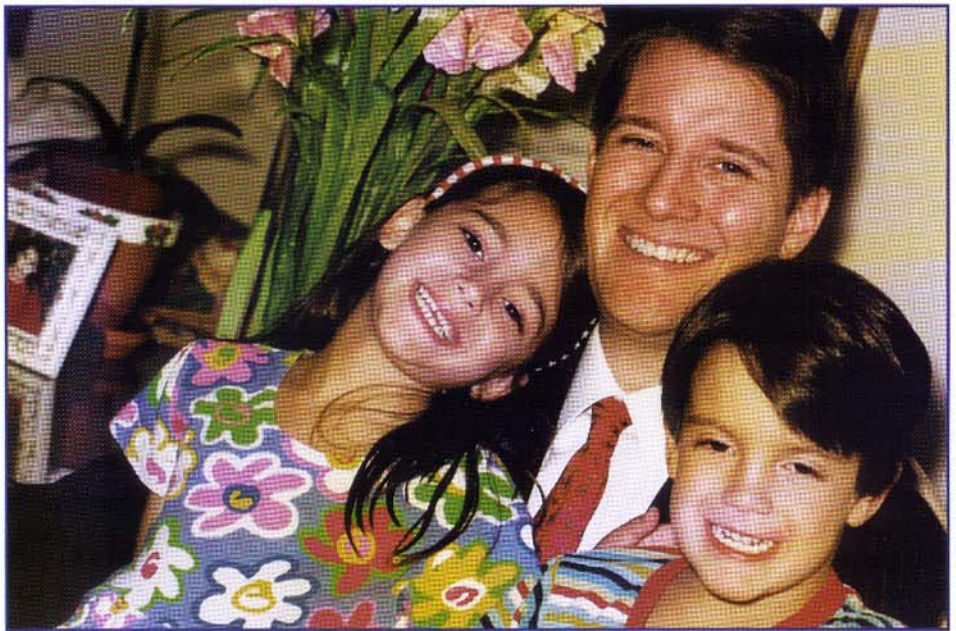
Calling it one of the most historic events of his tenure, this spring Florida Governor Jeb Bush created a "superboard," a new 7-member Florida Board of Education (FBE). The FBE eliminates the Board of Regents of the state's universities and a host of other education boards, and abolishes the state's voluminous and outdated education code. The FBE aims to remove barriers as students move from one phase of education to the next, making schools and colleges more efficient. The FBE will completely recreate the education code, and administer nearly half of the state's annual operating budget of \$44 million. A radical and controversial step,

the new superboard is likely to be challenged by Democrats hoping to reinstate the Board of Regents.

Garcia will serve on the FBE as its only Hispanic member. "I've been devoted to education for a long time," Garcia said. "If we don't educate our children, we won't have qualified Hispanics to serve as judges or U.S. attorneys. A nation is judged by the quality of the citizens it produces, and I hope to make a significant contribution to this country by helping to improve the quality of education for all Florida students regardless of race, color, or creed. Hopefully this program will be used by other states as a new educational model," Garcia said.

The exponential growth of Sterling Financial is due largely to Garcia's habit of keeping an ear to the ground and being not only intensely attentive, but also willing to meet the very specific needs of diverse markets. He plans to employ a similar strategy on the education superboard. "We will meet in July to set the agenda for six months," he says. "Right now I am more process oriented. I want to make sure the process is good and that we will solicit advice and counsel from all the parties we should listen to, so we can put together a product that is impressive and that works. I have a lot of ideas but the other members are a diverse group with their own ideas. As the only Hispanic on the board, I will build an understanding of what's important to Hispanics so I can take that with me. I will keep the issues close at heart and make certain Hispanics are represented."

Garcia is concerned about meeting the needs of Florida's large Spanish speaking population. "Forty percent of our yearly growth



Charles Patrick Garcia pictured at home with his two children, daughter Olivia (left, age 6), and the company's namesake, his son Sterling (right, age 4).

comes from immigrants," he says. "It's harder to teach them when they have to learn the language. We don't even do an adequate job of teaching our regular students to read, much less our students that don't know how to speak the language. We need very specific training to reduce the drop-out rate from 40 percent back down to the norm."

The busiest district court in the country is in South Florida, which prosecutes more cases than any other district. In his work as a member of the Federal Judicial Nominating Committee, Garcia helps screen candidates for federal judgeships and the position of U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Florida, an arena where Hispanics are alarmingly underrepresented.

"The majority of those being prosecuted are Hispanics," Garcia says. "There are civil cases, drug cases, race and civil rights issues, maritime issues—the majority of the issues are affecting the Hispanic community. I was asked to serve as a force on the panel to get more Hispanics serving as attorneys and judges. This will have an impact on attorneys that will be there for life. We need Hispanic representation."

Garcia also serves as chairman of the fundraising committee for the Florida Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. "It's difficult to start a state chamber because you are competing with the memberships of county chambers," he says. "But we are up to 9,000 members." Governor Jeb Bush will be the keynote speaker at the Chamber's first inaugural ball in August.

Garcia has worked as an attorney, a writer, a Latin American intelligence analyst, an Air Force captain, and a White House Fellow, before becoming an entrepreneur in finance. His approach to managing his business is as fascinating as his background. He says, "Hire smart people, let them



Charles Patrick Garcia practices on his horse "Rebel" in 1975, the year he earned a position on the Panamanian Equestrian Team for the Pan American Games.



Garcia's artwork a series of "money montages" utilizes real money singles twenties fifties and one hundred dollar bills depicting various social themes This 36" x 40" piece one of a series of images is called "Brother Can You Spare a Quarter?"

do their jobs, have a clear focus, and communication and feedback are extremely important."

The practice of hiring smart people has paid off. "Last quarter when the market was down, if you had followed our recommendations, your portfolio would have been up nearly 40 percent," Garcia says. We've been very good at making general market calls. We have done 30 billion dollars in transactions in the last twelve months and many of our clients are all blue chip firms. We are establishing a really good reputation as a boutique research house."

Sterling Financial's results are based upon research provided for 33 companies Sterling Financial covered during 2000 and the first quarter of 2001. This includes 15 companies for which Sterling Financial made "buy" recommendations and 18 for which Sterling made "sell" recommendations. "These results are particularly satisfying to us," says Garcia, "especially in light of the fact that we have a pretty evenly divided portfolio of both long and short recommendations—short recommendations of course being the road less traveled seemingly by the majority of the nation's bigger brokerage companies."



STERLING FINANCIAL INVESTMENT GROUP

Sterling Financial's short recommendations on 18 companies generated a 64.4% gain.

"As the markets were declining, we took an even closer look at the fundamentals as well as general market conditions. Using our proprietary research methodologies we recommended shorting 18 companies we have been watching closely," says Robert Wasserman, a research and business analyst for 17-

years who is Director of Sterling Research. "Clients who followed our recommendations not only saved money but made money in a very volatile market," says Wasserman who was named by the Wall Street Journal last July as the best healthcare analyst in the country.

Garcia is particularly excited about his company's role in funding a new digital optical medical technology that provides 97 percent precision in detection of breast cancer. The test only takes five minutes, is painless, and the information can be easily stored on a CD. The machines are already being used in Europe and FDA approval is pending in the U.S. "We like to raise money for companies like that—companies that do good things for people. I'm having a lot of fun," he says.

Sterling Financial has a worldwide network of more than 400 investment professionals operating out of 54 offices in 10 countries. To keep communication and feedback moving like clockwork, Garcia utilizes a "global relationship team," an internal audit team that works right next to his own office. "I require a daily report from all my managers," he explains. "The team calls every broker and every manager every day and asks two questions—did we do anything wrong today; and, is there any product out there that we could get for your clients to make them, and you, happier? The answers to these questions become a report that Garcia reads religiously every day to keep apprised of the pulse of the entire firm.

"Clients who followed our recommendations not only saved money but made money in a very volatile market."

Any problems that occur are dealt with immediately. "If something is wrong the staff has 24 hours to fix the problem. If the problem is unsolved after 24 hours, it goes on a watch list. It must be fixed in seven days or someone could lose their job," Garcia says.

Garcia believes that his company's growth curve has been so dramatic partly because an ability to resolve problems quickly makes people want to join the firm. "I have a huge sign above my door that says, 'Don't bring me problems; bring me solutions.' I surround myself with people who are positive and who can solve problems."

Sterling has overseas offices in London, Madrid, Athens, Panama City, Santiago, Bogota, Cali, Quito, Quayaquil, San Paolo and San Jose. Garcia attributes the growth of his overseas operations to his ability to understand the diverse services that different cultures require. "When Merrill Lynch goes into a country, they say 'Here we are; we are Merrill Lynch, and we do things the way we've always done them,'" Garcia explains. "However, we find local shareholders who build the office with us, and we find local people respected in the industry. They determine what products and services are best for that particular market. What works in Mexico doesn't work in Chile. In Chile, they don't know what a taco or a burrito is."

A recent book, "Now Discover Your Strengths," by Buckingham and Clifton, is a favorite of Garcia's. "Basically, our company has intuitively already done what this book recommends," he says. Garcia advises that instead of working harder on an individual's weakest areas of ability to reach an average level of performance, people should focus on their strongest areas of ability and increase those by 20 percent. "Get yourself to superstar level," Garcia says. "We decided to manage the company based on people's strengths. We divided the revenue streams and the responsibilities among the people most qualified to do them."

Jeff Mustard, Sterling's director of communications, has worked with Garcia at Sterling Financial from its beginning. Mustard says, "Charlie has a clear vision of what he wants to get done, but he relies on people around him. He has a strong military background and the structure of the office reflects that. For instance, his assistant has the title 'Chief of Staff.' He believes he can't



Charles Patrick Garcia's late father, Dr. Carlos A. Garcia, M.D., a Georgetown University trained heart surgeon, became one of the Republic of Panama's most prominent physicians. He was the Surgeon General of Panama in the 1970s, and served as an advisor and personal physician to General Omar Torrijos, Panama's leader from 1968 to 1980.

know everything and he can't be in all places in all times. He runs his shop in a military manner. Everything is designed for efficiency."

"This is almost going to sound silly," Mustard says, "But Charlie is a good guy with lots of integrity who means well, works hard, is honest and tries to do the right thing. Those are very real adjectives that apply to a real person. A lot of people might say that's what they are and strive to be that way, but Charlie actually does those things every day. Plus, he's likeable, easy going, and down to earth. I've known him four years now and I've never seen him raise his voice, ever."


In 1988, President Ronald Reagan selected Garcia to serve as one of fourteen White House Fellows, a prestigious program in which approximately one dozen professionals are selected from more than two thousand applicants from around the country. As a White House Fellow, Garcia, who has a master's degree in public administration, worked for former Goldman Sachs Chairman John C. Whitehead at the U.S. State Department, focusing on international narcotics policy.

Garcia also served in President George Bush's administration for former Secretary of Education and "Drug Czar" William J. Bennett, where he helped draft the nation's first National Drug Control Strategy with a budget of over \$6 billion distributed to 23 federal agencies. He also helped Bennett edit two books about improving the nation's schools.

A graduate of the U.S. Air Force Academy, Garcia became the 4th highest ranking officer among 4,400 cadets. He was elected

to serve as chairman of the Cadet Honor Committee and was awarded the "Class of 1983 Honor and Ethics Trophy," an honor bestowed to the graduating senior who "most personifies the ideals of personal integrity."

General John R. Galvin, the Commander of the U.S. Southern Command in the Republic of Panama, who later became NATO Supreme Allied Commander, chose Garcia as one of his key advisors on guerilla warfare and insurgent movements in Latin America. Garcia earned the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, the highest peacetime award given to a member of the U.S. Armed Forces. After his government service, Garcia attended Columbia Law School.

What advice does Garcia have for other Hispanics? "The most important thing I've realized is that success is finding your calling in life regardless of financial gain. To be happy you have to follow your passion. Too many times people don't follow their dreams—they become doctors or lawyers because other people want them to. Find out what makes you tick, and then do what really makes you happy. Also, we need to do more to help each other. I believe that you have to give back to the community and I've always done that." 

More Information about Sterling can be obtained from its website—www.mysterling.com



President Ronald Reagan congratulates Charles Patrick Garcia upon his selection as a White House Fellow in June 1988.



Charles Patrick Garcia (seated front row 2nd from left) Chairman of the Cadet Honor Committee at the U.S. Air Force Academy pictured with the committee. Garcia was awarded the "Class of 1983 Honor and Ethics Trophy," an honor bestowed to the graduating senior who "most personified the ideals of personal integrity."