

THE TAXMAN COMETH

For the savvy homeowner TRS cuts property taxes

By REGINA MARCAZZO

It was after successfully lowering the property taxes at his farm house in Greenport eight years ago that Paul Michael Henry decided to make it his business to see others paying fewer tax dollars on their homes as well.

"Long Islanders are probably the highest property taxed homeowners in America," said Henry, president and founder of Tax Reduction Services Inc.

Today the 42-year old entrepreneur works out of the same home that saw taxes go from \$6,000 to \$11,000 then down again after a worthwhile and tedious struggle with bureaucracy. Henry got property tax relief on his Greenport home twice, a 25 percent reduction the first year he filed a grievance and an additional 15 percent the following.

Tax Reduction Services Inc. files around 5,000 grievances a year working across the island in both Nassau and Suffolk Counties. The company has been successful in helping tens of thousands reduce their taxes by an average of \$1,000 a year. "We're very customer service oriented. We've built a loyal client base," Henry said, adding, "We have a lot of referrals, we have a lot of mailings and do advertising."

Henry uses the expertise from his former pro-



Paul Michael Henry

fession as a computer software engineer to help in his business today. "I write for myself now," he said, of software programs that work to help locate potential clients and create crucial statistical models. "We mix and match different data bases to come up with our clients," Henry said, noting that he conducts mailings to those he feels are overassessed.

Tax Reduction Services is careful in choosing potential customers. "We're very careful in qualifying our business. My only profits come from success," he said.

Addressing questions of assessment reductions

for some increasing taxes for others, Henry said, "There's a lot of people who are underassessed and a lot of people overassessed. It's very simple, the laws read that people should pay proportionately to what their property is worth."

Those wishing to seek the assistance of Henry's firm pay the county filing fees to get the ball rolling so that the real estate taxes can be appealed through the respective county's supreme court. If the tax reduction process is successful, Tax Reduction Services, Inc. is paid a fee that totals one half of the first year tax savings.

The company is currently going through one of its busiest times since grievance day in Suffolk County is later this month. "This is the one day a year that people can grieve their taxes," Henry said of the third Tuesday in January for Nassau County residents and the third Tuesday of May for Suffolk homeowners. "We're signing up clients now. We're very busy," the tax expert said, referring to the May Suffolk deadline.

"This is what I call my marketing phase. In June we will be meeting with grievance boards and getting ready for hearings. The May filings affect the following December tax bill," he added.

Although Henry and his employees are hurrying to file paperwork by the end of the month, their work will continue past the deadline since grievance applications are followed by hearings and the submission of additional paperwork. "We have a lot of data on our computers. We're able to scramble and complete all the grievances," he said. "After that [the deadline] we can regroup."

The father of two college age children is also busy planning future ventures for his company. "We're exploring different areas perhaps to pursue," Henry said, not yet ready to elaborate.