

ONE CALL DOES IT ALL FROM HOUSING TO SHOPPING, SUSIE MINER MAKES THE LIVES OF PRO ATHLETES EASIER

BY TONI GINETTI - STAFF REPORTER

Tyson Chandler had talent and star power when he arrived with the Bulls in the fall of 2001. What the teenage sensation didn't have was a place to stay or time to look for one. The thing about my move to Chicago that was terrible was the timing," Chandler said. I had to move in on, like, Sept. 31, and training camp was starting two days later."

Enter Susie Miner, a businesswoman who knows all about the out-of-the-ordinary needs of professional athletes.

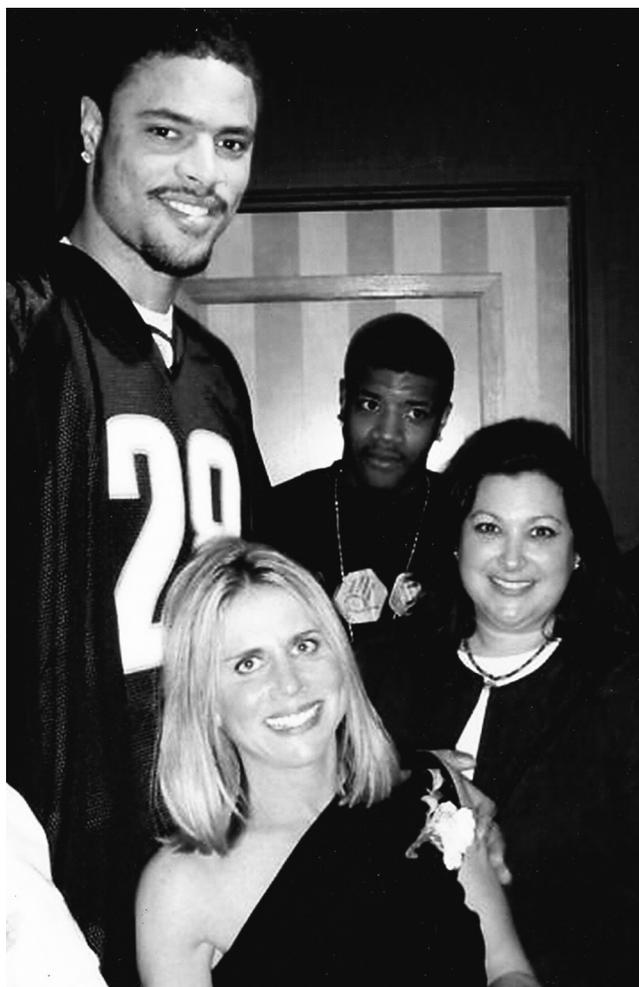
I had no time to do anything, and she came in and took care of it," Chandler said of Miner finding him a two-bedroom loft. She got the electricity, the water, the cable -- all of that -- connected right away, then she got my furniture. She took care of everything I needed overnight. I mean, a bed, a television, dishes, cereal -- everything I would need the next morning.

She can work miracles."

Such as the one she pulled off last summer for former Bears quarterback Kordell Stewart, a man whose love of high tech is high priority. Could Miner deliver the sophisticated video accessories he wanted to the unlikely confines of a Bourbonnais training camp?

We did it," Miner said of the rush order, which was made good in a day. We shipped almost \$20,000 worth of electronic equipment there. It was a palace. His place was definitely the magnet for guys on the team."

Miner's smile tells you how proud she was of pulling off that one, but it was just one of many



examples that reflect the uniqueness of the Chicago business she has built.

To be sure, Premier Relocation and Real Estate Services is first and foremost about high-end real-estate properties. But Miner isn't just about finding her clients a place to live. She is all about making life in Chicago livable -- whether that means decorating the just-purchased house or making sure the groceries have been bought, the dog walked, the baby-sitter called. Usually, it means that and more.

I'm sort of a life-resources consultant for them while they're here," said Miner, a real-estate agent and attorney who founded her company nine years ago. We help them in the short term with soup-to-nuts service, and if they are here for the long term, we help them with long-term needs and all the ancillary services."

And just what does that mean?

Well, everything -- literally.

Bears quarterback Rex Grossman recommended her to teammate David Terrell when he wanted decorating work one quickly. Former Cubs first baseman Fred McGriff recommended her to Kenny Lofton when Lofton first came here with the White Sox in 2002.

When NBA star Jerry Stackhouse was here for a summer to play off-season basketball, he turned to her to find him a temporary place to live. And a place for his cars.

He had brought his two Rolls Royce convertibles with him, and he said, I want to make sure these are parked well," Miner said. He wanted to see the garage space before he saw the living space."

She took care of it.

There's nothing she can't cover," said Bears cornerback Jerry Azumah, one of her several Bears clients.

If you need your walls painted by Friday, she can do it. If you need a baby-sitter, a reservation at a restaurant, tickets to a play, she can take care of it.

I first worked with her when she helped me find my place in the city, but she does more than just find homes. She tries to offer every service imaginable. She's worked with guys on our team, and that's how I heard about her. But I didn't know [the service] could be so sufficient. It's spectacular. Kordell wanted that [electronic] stuff. He got it.

That goes with the territory for the one-of-a-kind business whose staff of seven is on call almost around the clock.

Decorators, personal chefs, massage

therapists, limo driver, dog walker, doctors, baby-sitters -- we take care of their needs, and it's done quickly," Miner said. They've even called us if they've left their keys on the road somewhere and are locked out.

We're usually No. 1 or 2 on their [telephone] speed dial. My motto is, Learn to expect the unexpected."

With an MBA and a law degree from Ohio State, Miner wouldn't seem to have much in common with the likes of Grossman, Stewart, Azumah, Chandler, McGriff, Lofton, Bears cornerback R.W. McQuarters or former Blackhawks forward Steve Dubinsky.

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But like those athletes who have been her clients, she knows what it's like to start life in a new city.

The native of Dayton, Ohio, came here in 1989 to do legal and human-resources work for General Mills. The company offices were in West Chicago, but she wanted to live in the city. The company said she could stay at the Drake Hotel at its expense.

Three months and \$38,000 later, I found my own apartment," she said. But I realized there was a need for this."

Her bosses agreed, and she began doing relocation work as an added job duty.

But I thought this would be a won-

derful business if I could do both -- find the real estate and do all the relocation services," she said.

Her company was born in 1995, with her first clients consisting of corporate executives moving to the city.

By 1997, the business also was catering to filmmakers whose stars needed temporary housing during movie shoots.

Director Robert Altman, actors Tommy Lee Jones, Wesley Snipes and David Duchovny and actresses Neve Campbell, Minnie Driver, Diane Lane and Linda Fiorentino were among her clients.

Pro athletes were the next natural fit. McGriff was among the first athletes to seek out her company when he came to the Cubs at mid-season in 2001.

He wanted to be within walking distance of his favorite restaurant," she said. I remember making a map with circles around it as walking range."

Then she took the walks alongside McGriff, who found a Streeterville townhouse to his liking. Miner made sure the special-order 61-inch TV he ordered was installed and connected as part of the furnishings, and when McGriff called a day later from the ballpark to tell her that he had no groceries, her staff shopped for the peanut butter, bread, Gatorade and chocolate-chip cookies he requested.

McGriff recommended Miner's firm to Lofton when the center fielder signed as a free agent with the Sox before the 2002 season. Lofton was here only four months before he was traded to the San Francisco Giants that July, but when he was traded

again last July to the Cubs, Miner was among the first people Lofton and his agent, Nancy Cooper, called.

I was in Grand Cayman on vacation when Kenny got traded from Pittsburgh to the Cubs," Cooper said. It was a huge relief to pick up the phone and call Susie. She said: I know. I heard. We're on it.' She knew what Kenny liked and what he needed. It was a very easy move for him."

And a huge help for his agent, Cooper said.

You can't be in every city your player might go to," Cooper said. "Some of the players are more independent, or they have a wife or family who can do some of this. But Kenny is single. He's popped around quite a bit, and I've never run into a company quite like this one in other cities [that provides] everything from milk in the refrigerator to a view."

As valuable as the firm's work can be for an agent, Cooper thinks there are also benefits for the player's team.

The more you can take off [the player's] plate, the better," she said. They're free to concentrate on baseball."

Players say there is also peace of mind in knowing their privacy is guarded by the firm.

You know from the start she has a respect for confidentiality," Grossman said. I used Susie mainly as a [real-estate agent], but I trust her, and I told David Terrell to call her when he needed to find someone to decorate his place quickly."

Grossman did just that after purchas-

asing his first condo in the city through Miner.

She and I designed [the decor] and worked with a decorator, and it was exactly what I wanted," said Grossman, whose parents also used Miner to find a Chicago-area condo for their stays here.

Chandler was even more trusting of Miner, literally handing her the keys to his domestic decisions.

I helped him find a two-bedroom loft first," Miner said. When he decided to buy in the suburbs, he trusted us to furnish and decorate it. All he said was, I like these colors,' and we did literally everything."

Including having a custom-made 8-foot-by-10-foot bed built for his 7-1 frame.

The people I try to keep in my circle are like family to me," said Chandler, who also is working with Miner to purchase a Los Angeles-area home. She understood what I liked, then she understood my taste. I trust her."

"Something like this was needed for athletes. You don't have time to yourself, so you need things done as quickly as possible - Steve Dubinsky, forward Chicago Blackhawks

Trust is all-important to men who live their lives in a fishbowl.

Everyone thinks being a professional athlete is so great, that you have everything, but moving your family all the time isn't much fun," said Dubinsky, who met Miner when he was traded to the Calgary Flames in the fall of 1999.

She found a director from Los An



Susan Miner - president, Premier Relocation

geles who was going to be here for a few months working on a film to rent my house.

"I've thought for a long time that something like this was needed, like a concierge for athletes. You don't have that much time to yourself, so you need things done as quickly as possible.

Miner understands that.

"That's one of the benefits of a service like this, especially for the baseball players. They're on the road so much. It's a different world. They might have a lot of money, but that's not everything."

It's about treating them with respect as a human being and respecting their privacy," she said. I don't know what position they play or what their status is. I try my best to find out what their most important needs are, what would make this their best possible situation. I don't try to force-fit a situation. I try to find out what works for them.

We never say never. We always say, Let's figure out how.'