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**KEN RIEL**  
BROKER | REALTOR® | DAD

Falling in Love in the Queen City

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▶▶ cover story

By Zachary Cohen  
Photos by Amanda Anderson

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LOVE  
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# KEN RIEL

## BROKER | REALTOR® | DAD

falling in love in the queen city

“Love brought me to Charlotte,” Ken Riel says with a smile. “My partner, who is now my husband, is an equestrian and had clients here. I was living in New York City, and he was living in Florida, and we’d dated long-distance for some time. Charlotte is an awesome city, so we decided to make it home.”

Over the past 15 years, Ken has fallen in love with Charlotte’s southern charm and balanced way of life. He’s also picked up a new career and passion project — real estate sales.



### New Beginnings

Ken spent the first 16 years of his adult life living in Manhattan, the majority of those working at Simon & Schuster. He built a successful sales career by directing Fortune 500 marketing programs and spearheading creative initiatives, like his multimillion-dollar deal with General Mills to include miniature versions of classic children’s picture books in cereal boxes so that kids everywhere could read *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs* over a bowl of Cheerios.

Yet, as much as Ken enjoyed his work and his time living in the Big Apple, in 2008, he picked up his life and moved south to Charlotte. Upon landing in Charlotte, Ken continued working in publishing remotely, but soon, another career opportunity would present itself.

“We rented a house on Thomas Avenue in historic Plaza Midwood and became fast friends with our neighbors. One of our neighbors was the owner of the boutique firm Nestlewood Realty,” Ken reflects. “He kept nudging me to get my license and join him. I always had a strong passion for houses and the process of creating a home, and I finally decided to just do it.”

Ken got his license in 2012, and a decade later, he’s thriving in real estate. The passion for service he displayed while in publishing transitioned perfectly to real estate, allowing him to continue making a positive impact in the world. He finds the opportunity to help people at a pivotal time in their life to be an honor, whether it be a time of growth, downsizing, marriage, or divorce.

“My job isn’t to sell anybody on buying or selling a home but to help them make a decision that’s best for them,” Ken explains. “People like working with





me because I put their needs at the forefront. I was given a plaque that says, ‘REALTOR®: a full-time psychologist who shows houses every now and then.’ You have to laugh because my undergrad degree is in psychology, and it comes into play — working with people and hearing what they may not be saying and helping them figure out how to get to where they want and need to be.”

Ken has been a solo agent since day one, and he joined Compass in 2021. That same year, he closed 40 transactions for \$25 million; in 2022, he closed 35 transactions for nearly \$30 million.

### **It’s All About Family**

Ken moved to Charlotte to be with his husband, and his family continues to be his primary driving force. He now has two children, 12-year-old twins, Charlie and Olive. He and his husband, Steve, enjoy going to the beach and the mountains, as well as spending time cooking with family and friends.

“My big why is my family and my clients. They drive me to be better every day, to listen more, to work harder, and to do the right thing,” Ken says proudly.



Top performer Ken Riel is a solo agent with Compass.



Ken is excited about watching his children grow into adults or, as he says, “watching them unfold and supporting them in who they want to be.” Professionally, Ken hopes to continue selling real estate at his current pace, fine-tuning his professional relationships, and growing the REALTORS® Read program. He is driven toward professional excellence and success but also realizes the importance of having fun too.

“Don’t forget to have fun,” Ken reminds us. “This is a crazy ride, a phenomenal journey we get to take. And there are some amazing characters along the way. Just remember humor; it’s a great tool. I love to laugh.”



Ken Riel (center right) with husband Steve (left) and their twins, Charlie and Olive

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#### GIVING BACK

Giving back to the community is a central part of Ken’s business, as well as his larger purpose in life. He’s started an organization called REALTORS® Read, which encourages literacy by donating books to local kindergarten students in Title 1 schools. He partners with First Book, a literacy nonprofit and one of his former publishing clients.

“I love what I do. I don’t see myself ever going into retirement. I love where I am, the pace, the volume. I just want to continue to build relationships and serve people with excellence. One of my biggest dreams in all of this is to, at some point, expand the REALTORS® Read program into a national program.”