

Power Brokers

What the women of residential real estate bring to the table

By Lisa Crawford Watson



Carol Crandall, photo credit: Philip M. Geiger

When listing the male-dominated professional careers, real estate often makes the top 10. Statistics support the assumption, but only if we're talking about commercial real estate. According to the National Association of Realtors, more than 63 percent of residential Realtors are women.

Some say the higher incidence of women in the business is because women tend to make the decisions about wanting to move, about where to move, and about what they want in a house. Others say it's because women can relate to women – their needs and expectations, and their sensibilities about the home.

In Carmel, the real estate inventory is heavily skewed toward residential properties, and plenty of women are negotiating the transactions.

Carol Crandall, who established Preferred Properties in 2003, never imagined she'd open a real estate brokerage in Carmel. Although her father was in real estate, and she considered him a genius in putting together transactions in an "out-of-the-box" approach, she set her sights elsewhere.

Until he became her mentor, her role model, her example of how good

business is done.

"Some say real estate is a tech business, a numbers game, which is part of it," Crandall says. "But those who are successful in real estate understand it is a relationship business. You need to get to know all the inventory, and then get acquainted with and understand who your client is, so you can advocate for them."

"Women are intuitive. We understand that a house becomes a home, and that families and individuals are really looking for that home to become a haven," says Gin Weathers, a member of the Weathers Gannaway Group for Compass, in Carmel. "Women have a wonderful way of perceiving the energy of a house and matching it with people," she says. "We can feel the match. I have called people from a house to say, 'I'm in what I think is going to be your home.' This understanding goes beyond the business of what is presented on paper. It's intuition."

Collaboration and Camaraderie

Gin Weathers, whose career began in commercial real estate in Los Angeles, never really thought about getting into residential real estate until 15 years ago,

when she moved to the Monterey Peninsula.

"I was in a world where we cut to the chase," she says. "Yet it turns out I have the qualities that are really important in residential real estate." One of those qualities is empathy, the ability to identify with others, to understand their sensibilities, to develop a sincere rapport with her clients.

"I believe women are more empathic because we have the ability to understand both sides of the negotiation," she says. "When looking for a solution, we tend to use collaborative tactics to achieve a win-win. Our approach to problems is, 'Let's think about how we can make it work.'"

Collaboration is the cornerstone of the Weathers Gannaway group, which includes administrative assistant-turned-real estate agent Martha Davis, giving additional direction to their compass headings.

"Working together with Compass gives us the technology, the brain power, and the collaboration to be better agents," Gannaway says. "So, when we go out to do our job in this field, we can focus on building relationships, which is what our business and this community are really about."

An Alchemy of Empathy and Foresight

In June, Real Estate Broker Associate Judie Profeta celebrated 41 years in the business, 25 of which have been in Carmel, by merging her business with Carmel Realty. Profeta began her local business with Contempo Realty but, once they went corporate, she joined Alain Pinel Realtors, preferring to work with a family-owned business.

"I've always maintained ownership of my company because I wanted to have control over who we worked with and for," Profeta says. "It's true, women are successful in residential real estate because we are intuitive and

collaborative – I've built my business on intuition and good values – but we also need to be smart in business. You have to look ahead."

When Profeta was looking to make a change, a lot of companies, both corporate and local, interviewed her and her team. When it came down to the decision, more than 95% of her associates wanted to remain a local, family-owned, client-driven, service-oriented company. Which is why, she says, her merge with Carmel Realty has been very successful.

When working with Alain Pinel, about 70 percent of Profeta's team were women. In general, she says, women are better in residential real estate than men are because women tend to be more in tune with the needs of the buyers and the sellers.

"However, the men who are good in this business," she says, "have that same empathic quality. Women are more the caregiver, which is why we see more men in commercial real estate, which is less emotional and needs to be. The good women and the good men in our company have always cared about the client."

Setting the Stage

Hella Rothwell, who owns her independent brokerage, Hella Rothwell Realty in Carmel, has designed her office to look and feel like a living room. Like a place where people can relax, admire the art, watch the sun and the moon come up over the rooflines, where people can feel at home.

Rothwell, who came to Carmel in 1995, hails from an extensive career in marketing and advertising in the hospitality industry, which laid a particularly effective foundation for welcoming people home.

Rothwell actually got her first real estate license in Hawaii during the mid '70s but didn't really pursue the field deciding, instead, to stay in hospitality. After a five-year as-



Hella Rothwell, photo credit: Philip M. Geiger

signment in New York, she returned to Hawaii, updated her real estate license, and went into the field.

It was Gordon Hentschel, owner of Stonepine Estate Resort in Carmel Valley, who also has interests in Hawaii, who invited Rothwell to work with him in Carmel. Once again, her real estate license languished in Hawaii.

After looking into buying her own properties, in 2006, she decided to get her California real estate license. Three years later, in 2009, she achieved her broker's license. And today, as a broker in both California and Hawaii, she is a frequent flyer, representing residential buyers in both states.

"When I work with clients, I get involved in their life, their lifestyle, their hopes and expectations," Rothwell says. "Buying a home is stressful, but it's also an adventure. We do serious business, but we have fun."

Rothwell has been known to close an escrow in Carmel and then get on a plane to show a vacation property in Hawaii. If that's what her client needs.

"This business is about relationships, about understanding what the client needs, and about intuitively knowing whether or not this is the right engagement. I will list a property if I feel it's the right project, but primarily I represent the

buyer. Listing agents have a fiduciary responsibility to their client. As a buyer's agent, my role is to be totally on his or her side."

Community Investment

Carmel is a community worth investing in. Whether a client is looking to invest in a first, second or third home, or these real estate agents are looking to invest in the community, the commitment is worthwhile.

Gin Weathers has been an active supporter of the Monterey Museum of Art, Carmel's Pac Rep Theater, the Carmel Chamber of Commerce, Carmel Heritage Society, Carmel Women's Club, Gathering for Women, and more. Hella Rothwell gives back to the community by organizing the legendary Carmel Art Festival and historic Plein Air Painting event. Carol Crandall is an active supporter of the Make-A-Wish Foundation, The First Tee, and the Monterey Peninsula Foundation. Judie Profeta is a champion of the arts, as well as Community Partnership for Youth, the Women's Fund, and Classroom Connections at Sunset Center.

"I have developed so many rich relationships through my involvement in the Carmel Art Festival and other aspects of this community," Rothwell says. "This is the way to do business. Invest in your clients and in your community. I'm all in."