

CARMEL PINE CONE - REAL ESTATE SECTION

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Mitchells to receive lifetime achievement award in real estate

By Jerry Gervase

"You have to come up through the ranks like you do in any profession," Vicki said. "And it takes hard work." Sometimes that work can be frustrating as well as rewarding. Bill told the story of Vicki working with a client who was looking for a \$300,000 condo. He turned down everything she showed him. Vicki was getting a little discouraged when she realized a condo wasn't what the client really wanted. He finally bought a \$3 million house.

"It was a challenging situation," Bill explained. "Vicki met the challenge by recognizing that the condos didn't meet

his needs. Once a property meets a client's needs, the price becomes less important."

One of the couple's major challenges involved a home that was listed for \$27.9 million. They seller did not allow them to advertise the home. So it became a collaborative effort — they even invited agents from other companies to get involved with selling the property, so there would be greater word-of-mouth publicity.

"We often use agents from competitors as part of our team. Even though real estate can be a very competitive business, here in Carmel, it operates on a very professional level. It's almost collegial," Bill said.

It is obvious from listening to the way this congenial couple talk about their business that they have become totally involved with the process. Real estate can be a large-scale, complex business that requires tremendous dedication. I was impressed by how well the Mitchells balance the need for intensity with geniality.

Like so many people who are successful in one area, the Mitchells are overachievers in several other aspects of their lives. Bill was a full-time pilot for American Airlines for 33 years. He holds a Bachelor of Engineering Sciences Degree from the U.S. Air Force Academy, as well as an MBA from Stanford. His six years of

military service included five years of combat duty in Vietnam.

Vicki holds a B.A. with a double major in education and speech pathology. She also earned an M.A. in art history at Stanford. She taught elementary school in Redwood City in all aspects of the curriculum as well as speech pathology. It was Bill who lured Vicki into real estate. She had been teaching for five years but took an interest in what Bill was doing.

"He said to me, 'Why not get a license?' — so I did, and I've been going strong ever since," Vicki said.

The Mitchells work well together, with each bringing unique characteristics to their team.

Bill believes that teachers make good real estate agents. "They come in with builtin trustworthiness and patience, which is mandatory for anyone to be successful in this business," he said.

Vicki believes that Bill's business experience, accumulated over many years, contributed to the sound judgment he needed to formulate a business model to fit the culture of the Carmel community. She and Bill manage a small, hand-picked staff capable of handling incredibly complex transactions with discretion.

Awards may be nice, but the Mitchells say they receive their greatest satisfaction from the friendships with clients that they've built up over the years.

And neither sees retirement in the near future.

"We're having too much fun," Bill said. "Besides, the market is improving. There's a whole lot more work to do."

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HOW DO you go from buying a \$17,000 starter home to selling some of the most expensive real estate in the country? Bill and Vicki Mitchell, owners and managing directors of Carmel Realty Company, indicated that it has been a long journey over many years.

"We sold that house for \$22,000 four years later," Vicki said. "That was quite a large transaction back in 1955."

But it's peanuts compared to today's sales in Carmel and Pebble Beach. Bill and Vicki's sales have surpassed \$1 billion during their careers in real estate. For their impressive body of work, they will receive the Luxury Real Estate Lifetime Achievement Award April 24 at La Playa Hotel. The prestigious award will be presented by the international organization, Who's Who in Luxury Real Estate.

And, while an announcement from the organization about the award says the Mitchells have achieved "legendary status," Vicki and Bill scoffed at such an idea. They believe the term "real estate junkies" describes them more accurately. However, one must be more than a "real estate junkie" to warrant the kind of recognition they are receiving. You don't just jump into high-end luxury real estate sales.