

REAL ESTATE INSIDER

FIORA ASTON

OF COLDWELL BANKER

AS TOLD TO DANIELLE ACCOVELLI
PHOTOGRAPHY BY PAUL JONASON

After receiving her Master's degree from British Columbia University and working as a city planner in Vancouver, Canada, Fiora Aston decided to make the move to L.A., finding true fulfillment with a career in real estate. A top-producing agent since 1989, she has received numerous awards, including the International President's Elite, and was named as one of the top 100 agents in Southern California. Here, *Westside DIGS* chats with Fiora Aston about her passion for the industry, unique marketing program, philanthropic work and deep love for the place she calls home.



How did you get your start in real estate?

I moved from Vancouver, Canada, to L.A. when I met my soul mate in 1981. Once in L.A., I started working in the fashion industry. Fashion had always been my passion since I was a little girl and I loved many aspects of the fashion industry: dealing with different people on a daily basis, going on buying trips, finding unique clothing lines and managing the large group of people who worked in the company. In many ways, the fashion business was very satisfying for me, however, there was always something missing. It was not challenging enough for me at the time.

In the late '80s, when the real estate market was extremely strong, my brother, who was a commercial broker, suggested that I look into selling real estate. At first it sounded like a strange idea, but the more I thought about it the more I realized that it may be the perfect venue for me. I am so happy to confess that I have enjoyed every day of this part of my life ever since I got into real estate back in 1989. At the beginning of my career, all the business that came to me was through holding different open houses and, amazingly, I still work with some of the clients that I met at open houses during my first year in real estate.

What, specifically, makes you so passionate about the industry?

I love people, and I love dealing with their needs and wants. I know a lot about the different parts of Los Angeles because of my educational background and work as a city planner. I have a great knowledge of different homes and I am a problem solver: I see challenges every day in all different aspects of the real estate business. I get bored easily and real estate is one industry that you never get bored in, not even for one day.

I also listen to my clients and understand their needs. I am passionate about that aspect because I become part of my clients' lives; I feel their pain, but also see their joy and happiness. When I am in the process of finding or selling a home for a client, I communicate with them numerous times a day, and when the transaction is done and the communication stops, I truly feel a big gap in my daily routine. At so many different occasions, I keep calling my clients even after the completion of the transaction just to make sure that they are really gratified.

Describe your real estate philosophy.

I think everyone needs to find a place where they can go and restore their soul each and every day. For me, it is my home that gives me that satisfaction. I have made it my commitment to find that dream home for all my clients; to find them not only a home to meet their needs, but the perfect combination of amenities, location and design to fit who they are and how they aspire to live.

What distinguishes your firm from others in the same market?

I work with Coldwell Banker, one of the largest real estate companies with an amazing reputation, both nationally and internationally. For over 80 years, the Previews program has had a history of representing some of the

world's most significant properties and has been a leader in the marketing of luxury homes.

In 2011, I joined forces with two other top agents in the industry and formed WSA, a brand within Coldwell Banker. The W stands for Ron Wynn, who is a legend in our industry; the S stands for Steve Sawaii, who has been one of the top agents on the Westside for over a decade. And, of course, A is for Fiora Aston. Throughout the years, we each have built a reputation for excellence in service and representation, and by joining forces, we envisioned that our combined efforts could ultimately create more fruitful results for our clients.

That is summed up in our message: Solutions by Collaboration.

What makes you the competitive choice for this market?

My reputation, among my clients as well as professionals in our industry. Most of my business comes from referrals of past clients. Here is a story: A few months ago, I received a call from a client who wanted to sell her house in Brentwood. When I met her, I asked her who recommended me and she said that it was her business manager, but I would not know him. I was puzzled and asked her if I had done any business with his clients in the past, and she said that I had not. However, she said that he had met me in the early '90s at an open house in Brentwood and was so impressed by my knowledge and honesty that he made a note of my name.

That is why I love this business. I think my positive attitude, 'can do' philosophy and knowledge of the Westside makes me stand out above all others.

Will you describe your unique marketing program?

I can't go through all the details of my marketing plans... What I can share with you is that I have always been one step ahead of the game. I had a personal website when no one else had one. I was also one of the very first agents who started marketing via mass-email many years ago and have been using virtual tours with drones for a long time too. Now, I am looking into 3-D virtual tours, which is very new on the market.

What do you love most about the Westside?

The Westside offers one of the best real estate markets in the world. With our climate, everyone wants to live in this area because of its vicinity to the ocean, clean air and truly unique lifestyle.

You are also involved in many philanthropic efforts for the Westside. Can you elaborate?

I have always been passionate about donating my time to charities. I have done three triathlons with Team in Training—a truly amazing organization [that] donates the proceeds for research in Leukemia and Lymphoma—which has been the most gratifying experience of my life. I also donate time and funds to The Westside Children Center, a truly unique organization that serves the needs of children and their families in Los Angeles.