

# Lillian Peterson Plays to Win: 40-Year Honoree's Success Story

In the competitive real estate game in Northern Virginia, Lillian Peterson has earned NVAR distinctions that defy the odds.

Peterson, an agent with Long and Foster's Falls Church office, is the first-ever member to earn Multi-NVAR Million Dollar Sales Club honors for four decades. To understand how exceptional that is, only 5 percent of the 1,471 award recipients this year have been tapped for five years, and only 3 percent of that pool have been tapped for 10 years. And the percentages diminish for even higher years, underscoring what a distinguished achievement this is.

While many young girls her age were "playing house," Lillian Peterson was laying the foundation for what would become her life's work: selling houses as a successful Northern Virginia REALTOR®. *"I was raised in the lumber business in New York State,"* Peterson explains. Growing up in a business environment with a mother who was an accountant when women were not yet permitted to become C.P.A.'s made a strong impression on Peterson.

*"I learned all about real estate at an early age, playing Monopoly® with my mother,"* Peterson maintains. These words, which can also be found on her Web site, illustrate the deep-seated drive that has led to Peterson becoming the first-ever 40-year member in the NVAR Multi-Million Dollar Sales Club.

Peterson began her real estate career in November 1965 in the Lake Barcroft and Sleepy Hollow areas of Falls Church. Already a career woman at a time when working mothers were a slim minority, Peterson's boss, a builder of custom homes in Lake Barcroft, suggested she try selling real estate. Peterson worked with a number of brokers throughout her 42-year career before affiliating with Long and Foster.

The real estate business has evolved through many cycles during the course of Peterson's career. Not least among the changes, according to Peterson, is the amount of paperwork involved for a real estate transaction. She recalls the days of the one-page sales contract and recounts the story of writing a purchase contract for a restaurant on a napkin while having lunch there one day. The transaction settled the following week.

It becomes clear why Peterson has not only survived, but excelled in the real estate business for over 40 years. *"I like to work,"* Peterson claims. *"You could say I'm a confessed workaholic,"* she adds.

Peterson believes that the key to success in the real estate profession is self-motivation — something that cannot be taught. She credits her background as an athlete with reinforcing this instinct. An avid swimmer as a child, Peterson is still involved in distance swimming. *"At some point it dawned on me,"* claims Peterson, *"that people involved in individual sports have to be disciplined and very motivated."* She believes these traits follow people in the business world. Peterson is concerned that many REALTORS® who entered the profession during the recent boom years in Northern Virginia may not have what it takes to go the distance in a slower market. They don't all have the "get up and go" that comes with a lifetime of disciplined activity.

*"In Upstate New York, they say summer begins and ends on the 4th of July. We were ready to jump in the water when it hit 70 degrees,"* Peterson states. This fortitude has allowed Peterson to excel in the real estate business in any climate and provides a shining example for the NVAR community.