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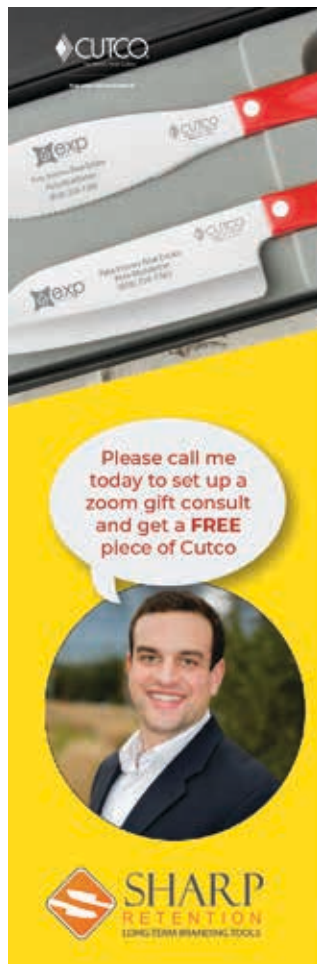


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On March 21, 2023, our real estate community lost a precious friend in Jo Shaner. There are no words that can adequately express this loss. All who knew her recognize the powerful force she represented in the Memphis community.

Jo was scheduled months ago to be the cover feature for the April edition. We had done a formal interview, photoshoot and actually were on our last round of revisions prior to going to print when the news of her tragic passing reached us.

We thought long and hard about how to move forward with her story and how to honor her and her family. The decision was made to press forward with her story as it was originally written with a brief editor's note about her passing.



We hope this edition will be held dear to the hearts of all who knew her as her story reminds us of the bright light that she was in our real estate community.


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Names: Shelley Dunn and Lara Long

Where were you born?

Shelley: Memphis, TN; **Lara:** Senatobia, MS

Where did you grow up?

Shelley: In the Memphis/Desoto County area;

Lara: Went to high school in Senatobia, MS but lived in and spent the majority of her life in Hernando.

What are the names of your crew or team and how did you end up together?

Producing Branch Manager: Shelley Dunn

Senior Loan Officer: Lara Long

Loan Officer Assistant: Brenda Jones

Loan Processing Specialist: Kristie Gundlach

Brenda & Shelley have worked together in the mortgage industry since 1999. Brenda was the manager at GMAC Mortgage at the time, and the two met at a Homebuilders golf tournament. Brenda was Shelley's mentor and taught her everything she knows about mortgage loans. They worked together on and off for years after that. Once Brenda decided she didn't want to be a loan officer anymore, she became the loan officer assistant, so the two still get to work together.

Lara and Shelley met due to a mutual referral partner that thought they would make a great

pair. Lara joined the Shelley and Brenda at Supreme Lending, where Kristie was already a processor for the company and specifically, our region. Together, the quartet make an unstoppable team with the sole mission to help as many people as possible accomplish the dream of homeownership!

How many years have you been in this role?

Shelley has been in the mortgage business for 24 years and Lara has been a mortgage loan officer for three years.

Is there someone you have looked up to, or has mentored you? Why do look up to them?

Shelley: There are so many people in my life that have shaped the person that I am today. Personally, my dad has always been my super-hero... he can do anything, can fix anything, and has a way of looking at problems as puzzles to be solved, which is part of what makes me good at my job.

Professionally, Brenda taught me everything I know, and I will always be grateful to her for pushing me out of my comfort zone and always being there to help me.

Lara: This is a hard question to answer as there are so many people who have pushed me, motivated me, and guided me through my journey. On the personal side, my biggest motivation is and has always been my children. Everything I do, I do for them. My grandfather

personally made sure I had everything I needed to get where I am today and I hope I am making my momma proud, in heaven. When it comes to business, I would never be here if it weren't for Colie Sanford, DeSoto County President of Guaranty Bank and Trust Company, and Kristy Hopper. Colie brought me into the world and Kristy taught me all about it, embraced all of my questions, and encouraged me to strive for what I wanted. While working in Memphis, I got to work with some extremely knowledgeable people in the business, specifically Steve Sutton, EVP of Financial Federal Bank. He, much like Shelley, is a walking book of knowledge that would never hesitate to teach me anything I wanted to learn. Finally, Shelley, my boss now. She's everything you could dream for in a boss - her willingness to coach and mentor me to further my career path speaks volumes about her in general. I look forward to seeing what we can accomplish together.

What have you had you to overcome in your life/business to get to where you are now, and how did you overcome it?

Shelley: I always considered myself as shy and have never been "good" at sales. Overcoming my own social anxiety was one of the main things. I had to push myself to go out and make public meetings and get my face out there. I really like to learn and grow and help people.

Lara: My main struggle to get to where I am now was to get out of my own head. It was a big change for me to make overnight and a lot of scary possibilities ahead. But, I made the change I took the leap, with encouragement from my family and close friends. It can be scary to put yourself out there fearing rejection and failure, but you will never know if you don't try!



What has been the most rewarding part of your business?

Helping people overcome their own obstacles and pave the way for them to purchase a home is one of the most rewarding things you can do.

Looking into the future, how does working with real estate professionals fit into your dreams and goals?

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Tell us about your family, including names, interests, and what you like to do together.

Lara is married to Ben Hickey. Son, Carson (8) and Daughter Liza (18 mo.)

They enjoy being outside and enjoy fun trips together. They have three dogs (Jack, Jepp and Judge), four cats (Sylvia, Skittles, Tom and Gretchen.) They enjoy spending time with our families, eating good food and watching good movies. Lara is the eldest of four brothers and one sister.

Shelley has three grown children: Christian & Connor, who are twins that are 27 years old and both live in the Memphis area; and her youngest, Graham, who is 25 and lives in Los Angeles, CA. She has two cats, Isa and Osi. Travelling is a passion they all share. The goal for 2023 is to take a small trip every month this year!

Define success.

Typically, I guess one would say it's identifying a goal and accomplishing it. I think success is whatever you dream it to be.

It doesn't look the same for any two people, and at different points in your life, you identify areas that you want to improve. Each step forward and each improvement in life all contributes to success.

In the spirit of 'Real' Producers, what is something that not many people know about you, something that can't be found in your bio online that people can't google about you?

Shelley: I'm SUCH an introvert. I live my life in my own head, thinking through problems, going down a rabbit hole with information that I will never remember or ever use again. I think if you cracked open my brain, a plethora of useless information would leak out (haha). I love history and feeling like I am part of something much,

much bigger than any one life. When I travel, I love to geek out on places that have a cool story.

Lara: I hate ranch dressing. I am left-handed. I enjoy photography, though I haven't dedicated much time to it lately. I really want to go skydiving, but I am terrified of heights, that's come with age. I'd prefer to be on a lake than the ocean but love being on the water in general.

Given your status and expertise, what is some advice you would give people or what can others learn from you?

Not only do we have the knowledge of credit and mortgage products and services, but I think what is especially rare about our group is that even if we are unable to personally close a loan for our client, with our gathered experience in previous years we are able to help guide our clients into the direction they want to go, whether that be purchasing a lot, getting a construction loan or even wanting to acquire agricultural land. We are in it to be what our clients need. I think that in this business, getting to the "why" is the most important thing that we can do to be able to guide someone on the path to achieving what they want to achieve.

If there is ONE thing you want to be sure the article captures about yourself or your team and how you run your business, what would that be?

That we genuinely care about educating others in the mortgage industry and are here to help in any way possible.

Favorite quote or "top tips":

- Great things never came from comfort zones. – Eric Thomas
- Share your magic with the world, you ever know what impact you'll have. – Rebecca thatcher
- Teamwork makes the dream work. – John C Maxwell
- Anything worth doing is worth overdoing. – Shane Patton





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how does memphis real producers work?

FOR THOSE WHO MAY BE NEW TO REAL PRODUCERS, OR IF YOU ARE JUST CURIOUS, HERE ARE SOME QUICK FACTS ABOUT REAL PRODUCERS:

Distribution: This magazine is sent free of charge to the top 500 agents in the greater Memphis area based on MLS productivity. Within this area, there are over 5,000 active agents, but everyone who receives this publication is part of an elite group. You are remarkable. Just to be in this group is truly a badge of honor!

Content: This is all about you, the Memphis real estate community. We will do personal and unique stories on members in this community, giving you a platform to inspire others. As we grow, we will add fresh content focused entirely on you. In the coming months, we will be adding several other sections as well. It costs absolutely nothing for a real estate agent to be featured in the publication.

But to be featured, an agent must be nominated by a peer or leader in the Memphis real estate community. We are always taking nominations and encourage you to nominate individuals who are making a huge impact on our local real estate market.

Our Partners: Anyone listed as a "preferred partner" in the front of the publication is a part of this community. They will have an ad in every issue, attend our events and be a part of our online community. We don't just find these businesses off the street, nor do we work with all businesses that approach us. One or many of you have recommended every single preferred partner you see in this publication. We do not meet with businesses until they are vetted by one of the agents in our community and receive a "stamp of approval." If you are looking to add to your arsenal of incredible vendors, look no further.

Connections: We love connecting REALTORS® and BUSINESSES in a variety of creative ways. If you ever would like a personal introduction, we would love to arrange it.

Events: Along with the monthly publication, we host various social networking events where top agents, along with our top preferred partners, get together at reputable local venues to rub elbows, mastermind, have a good time and strengthen our greater Memphis community. We communicate information about the events through the publication, emails and social media.

Contribution: If you are interested in contributing, nominating REALTORS® for certain features, know of top-notch affiliate partners who should be a part of our community or would simply like to network, please email me at any time. I look forward to hearing from all of you!



Jeff White
Owner/Publisher
Memphis Real Producers
Jeff.White@RealProducersMag.com

meet Crystal Mitchell

TRUE GRIT

▶ featured agent

By **Christina See**
Photos by **Mike Berry**

Fact 1: Most Memphis area REALTORS® are hard workers and eager to make sure their clients find their dream home.

Fact 2: Few people have worked harder than Crystal Mitchell to get to where she is today near the top of the real estate market. Her story is a true rags-to-riches tale.

Crystal was born in Mayfield, Kentucky, but from ages 4-15, she lived in Texas. Her mom married young, had four children by the time she was 22, and did the best she could given the circumstances. Honestly, mere survival was the daily goal. Looking back on her life, though, Crystal laughs and says those 10 years in Texas were probably the most “normal.” However, they prepared her well for her own journey.

Since 1998, she’s been a proud Memphian. She graduated from the University of Memphis in 2011 with a degree in Criminal Justice and Legal Thought. She tried pursuing a Master of Education with the intent of teaching, but that was ultimately unfulfilling.

Crystal first started into real estate when she landed a job at Crye-Leike recruiting agents. She later landed a role recruiting talent there for three years. A bit later, she moved to Kaizen Realty and became the Human Resources Manager and Talent



Recruiter. She also worked at Huey’s to supplement her income. From her HR position, she could see firsthand the benefits of getting a real estate license herself. This was 4 and a half years ago and Crystal is now a dynamic young Affiliate Broker and Director of Recruiting and Training with Paradigm21 Realty and is already making big waves in the Memphis market.

Crystal has been in the Multi-Million Dollar Club for 3 years, has a career volume of around \$31 million and made \$10.6 million last year and \$11.4 million the previous year. Her instincts and tenacity are what keep her thriving, but she has also credits Stephen Anderson at Emmett Baird who has been a helpful friend and mentor for the past three years. As the Recruiting and Training Director, Crystal really enjoys managing and training agents and tries to help them grow their businesses. Her next professional goal is to be a Managing Broker.

Having an extremely extroverted personality, Crystal loves her clients like family and works hard to make sure the process of buying and moving into a house is a positive, no-stress experience. Her business is now 100% referrals. She tried to use her degrees in law and then education, but they were just not the right fit. Although real estate was never the dream, Crystal found her passion here and knows it is exactly what she is supposed to be doing.

The most amazing part of this story? Crystal is now, herself, a single mom raising four children. When the family moved to Memphis in 1998, Crystal was home-schooled, but started dating her high school sweetheart and got pregnant. She has been on her own and self-sufficient ever since. When she was just 17, she moved into

an apartment with a friend who also had a baby. She bought her first house at age 22. The survival skills she learned in her childhood prepared Crystal well for what was to come in her own life.

Being a single mom and sole provider, she wanted to teach her children the value of hard work. Raising four children has not been easy, but when it’s sink or swim, Crystal always chooses to swim. Now, she can’t imagine a better life! Her children are her everything. Her oldest daughter, Taylor, is 23 and is graduating college and starting nursing school this year. Her extremely talented son, Isaiah, attends school and plays football for Munford High. He plans one day to follow in his mom’s footsteps and get into real estate. Daughter Lana is nine years old, in 2nd grade, is already very savvy, and wants to start her own business. Baby Camryn is just seven months old. Last year, while pregnant, Crystal still managed to close 53 transactions.

Crystal considers herself a hard worker and a good mom. She cares deeply about her agents and clients. She has been the Treasurer of Shelby Youth Sports and is very passionate about these young athletes. She loves sports and is an avid Dallas Cowboys and Memphis Tigers fan. She often travels with Isaiah for his football games, and really appreciates time off to



travel around the world - preferably with one child at a time! She’s been to Dubai, Dominican Republic, Belize and Honduras to name a few. Crystal is grateful for her large support system of friends and family who help her with the kids - especially her mom and sister-in-law.

FIND YOUR OWN SPHERE AND GIVE YOURSELF THE GRACE TO FIGURE OUT YOUR OWN PATH FORWARD.

Her advice to the next up-and-coming top producers? Stay true to who you are. There's room in this business for every kind of personality. It can seem like a cut-throat business with all the competition, but your interactions with other REALTORS® don't need to be. Find your own sphere and give yourself the grace to figure out your own path forward. Stay educated and don't compare yourself to anyone else. Your journey is your's alone. Give yourself grace - sometimes it takes a bit to get your act together.

Crystal's favorite poem is from Marianne Williamson: Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small doesn't serve the world. There's nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; its in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we're liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.





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meet
PETERSON WELLFORD

AUTHENTIC & AMUSING

▶▶ rising star

By Christina See
Photos by Elizabeth Looney Photography



Meet multi-talented, hard-working, creative, fun, and endlessly amusing Peterson Wellford – the hottest addition to the Memphis real estate market. Like many of us, real estate was not anywhere near his first job or passion. His passion was healthcare.

Born and raised in Memphis, Peterson graduated from MUS and the University of Alabama. He came back to Memphis and worked at St. Jude for a year before continuing his studies in an MA in Healthcare Administration at the University of Kentucky. He thought he'd eventually like to run a hospital, but the constant focus on continual cost-cutting instead of patient care ate away at his soul and made him rethink his future.

Then he discovered fitness. He started teaching at Cycle Bar, was eventually hired as the manager in Germantown, and opened Cycle Bar Midtown three years later. He managed and taught at both studios for two years. Then Covid came along and made him appreciate the possibility of a more stable income. He took a step out of management in 2021 (but kept teaching and still does) to reassess what he wanted to do for a living. He knew he didn't want to sit at a desk or be tied down to one space every day, and he really wanted to work with people.

Real Estate entered into the chat, he found a great online course, finished the whole course in one month, took his real estate exam the next week and "Peterson Wellford – REALTOR®" was born! He

kept teaching fitness full-time throughout 2021 and thought he wouldn't really see any real estate action for a year. However, Peterson got a couple of clients and closed his first deal in January 2022 – only six months after getting his license and closed the second one soon after. It was a real high. It was also a confidence boost that he had proven to himself that he could gain peoples' trust in a way that allowed him to help them.

He found his real estate home in The Firm after meeting Broker, Elizabeth Duke, and another member of the Firm, Anna Dobbins, at a class he was teaching at Cycle Bar. Anna mentioned The Firm and he gave it some thought, had lunch together and made the decision that he'd be a great fit. He is truly indebted to Elizabeth and can't sing her praises enough. She has been kind, patient, and present in every way. He is absolutely delighted with the camaraderie, energy and passion of The Firm. He says it's a great group of 20 people who want to be good at what they do and help each other succeed. His biggest high to date was winning Rookie of the Year honors!

He now has listings with a few close friends and feels very blessed to be able to help them. The most rewarding part of the business so far has been selling his very best friend's condo (where he, himself, once lived). The sale has such sentimental value and helping her sell it is bittersweet, but mostly sweet!

Peterson loves freedom and flexibility. He can be as busy as he wants to be and he is a little surprised but delighted by his success so far. Right now, real estate fits his lifestyle and just feels right. It allows him space for his other passions and every single day is different and never boring. His plan is to always be the hardest-working one in the room. He's in it for the long haul.



“

Always ask questions, even if you think you know the answer. People are so willing to help if you're open and vulnerable. Plus, it's always good to get someone else's perspective.

”



A little-known fact about Peterson is that he went to the University of Hawaii for his first year in college before transferring to the University of Alabama. Fact #2 – he loves a good margarita- especially if it is a half frozen, half on the rocks from Las Delicias! His advice to future Rising Stars is: Always ask questions, even if you think you know the answer. People are so willing to help if you're open and vulnerable. Plus, it's always good to get someone else's perspective.

One of Peterson's greatest gifts is his savvy of social media. He is a digital and social media marketing expert. He's always loved it and has a large local following. It lets him be his authentic self and has also been very beneficial in his business. Out of his 14 transactions last year, five of those clients came about from social media. He loves being able to connect with a larger community because people tend to care more if they know a little bit about you. So, check him out on Instagram: [@pwellford](#)

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The Legacy of Jo SHANER

FEARLESS & FUN

Editor's Note:

It is our great regret to inform our readers that Jo Shaner passed away just as we were about to print this month's Real Producers Magazine, but we want to continue to share her story as it was written and honor her lifetime of achievement in the profession she was passionate about her whole adult life.

Memphis Real Estate Agent Extraordinaire Jo Shaner is full of delightful surprises. As the story has it, Jo's very first surprise was being born in the back of a taxi cab on Halloween! Thank goodness both she and her mother survived that little trick-or-treat!

Jo was raised in East Memphis and after college, she worked at a lighting store that also manufactured neon. A specialist in the Color Referencing Index, Jo could give you a good assessment of how any light source shows object colors "naturally" when compared to either incandescent light or daylight. Clearly, Jo has a natural eye for color and design.

As she was considering buying a house, Jo went on an excursion to look at houses in a new subdivision. Unfortunately for her, she was treated extremely rudely at a builder's model home by the model sitter. Later on, she thought to herself, "If this nut could be a "successful"

REALTOR®, I could really rock this industry!" Her boyfriend at the time, Tim, thought she would be a natural at it and encouraged her to look into it. Jo and Tim eventually married, and Tim works with his brothers at Shaner Printing.

Jo was still interested in learning more about real estate and got a job with a builder. Unbeknownst to Jo and the 30 other people who worked for this builder, he hired them without letting them know they needed to be licensed real estate agents to sell the properties.

After this little bump in the road, Jo was all business, figuring out what she needed to do to get her license and really start her real estate business. She earned her



real estate license in 1997 and she has been closing deals and making lifelong friends for 27 years. Her first foray into home sales was with Bowden Homes from 1996 - 1997, before moving to Pyramid REALTORS® from 1997 - 1998.

She started as an independent agent, but in 1998, she formed a team with Danny Lipsey as The Lipsey Shaner Team. They are MAAR's (Memphis Area Association of REALTORS®) oldest non-married team in their history. When their company was bought out by another independent model, they joined RE/MAX Group in November of 1998. It changed ownership in 2003 to RE/MAX Elite. Then in 2005 (October), Keller Williams officially opened their doors

in Memphis. Jo was the 2nd agent to join (her business partner, Danny, was the 3rd). The first person was Karen Stephens, who retired from real estate about 10 years ago. Jo is proud and honored to be an original core member of Keller Williams Memphis (MEM 1 584).

Clearly, they are a great team and have won many awards and accolades. Just a few of Jo's awards include Rookie of the Year (Pyramid), Chairman's Club, President's Club (RE/MAX), MMDC Life (served as Director five times including President and Chairman), WCR (local president 2007), WCR REALTOR® of the year and entrepreneur of the year, MAAR's Good Neighbor Award Recipient (entered into NAR's consideration Good

Neighbor Award), Youth Villages Lion Heart Award 2010 (MAAR's oldest affiliated sponsorship in the community), Keller Williams REALTOR® of the Year 2011 and 2018, Keller Williams Team-of-the-Year: 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2014, 2017, Keller Williams Culture Icon Award 2006 and 2018.

When asked about her total volume last year, Jo would only give a team volume of \$12,105,600 because their motto is: T.E.A.M - Together Everyone Achieves More. Jo's greatest mentor was Frank Donoto - the co-owner of the first RE/MAX franchise with whom she first affiliated. He showed her what business models were all about and which ones would work. He also instilled in her

the concept that you are running a business inside of a business. And while everyone has stumbling blocks along their professional journey, Jo thinks it's important to open yourself up to "Seek first to understand. Life is a journey - not a destination, so be kind, serve others and they will reward you in the most unexpected ways. Give adulation to others - It's not always about you. Whatever you are going through (great or bad) will not last forever, so don't be a braggadocious blowhole or a doomsayer - no one likes either!"

The most rewarding part of her business is "Seeing clients from 20+ years back refer us as the only agent on earth to use or having a past client want to become a REALTOR® (what a fabulous compliment)!"

"Real estate is a fantastic business that has no ceiling to it. It has shown me how to be financially secure - investing in what I truly know and love. I'm so happy to have helped others to do the same."

In her free time, Jo has been involved with Youth Villages for 25 years, serving on and off (formally known as MAAR community involvement/benevolent now referred to as MAAR Benevolent Fund). She has always enjoyed the fundraising committee, going back to her first year at MAAR. She has also served on the Keller Williams Culture Committee and has been on the ALC - agent leadership council for 16 years.

One of Jo's greatest joys is her 5 grandchildren - four boys and one girl who affectionately call her Gamma. Her daughter, Stephanie, and her husband, Tony, own 16 restaurants and event facilities in Tennessee and Arkansas. They all vacation 3 to 4 times a year as one huge crew.

When she is not running her business or vacationing with the family, Jo likes to paint, usually with acrylic because they dry the quickest! She loves music -live or canned, fine dining, fishing (with a guide of course), having fun lunches with her interesting friends and catching up on their lives, and traveling.

For Jo, success means being comfortable in a subject/direction/career you have expertise or passion and interest in. As for advice, Jo keeps her home an oasis. "When your family is present at home, be present - if a business call comes in, NEVER take it



inside, step outside. Finish your call in the driveway/garage before you enter your home. The same goes for texting. If you can't do this, you have to let your family know they are second best to you and you do not have good time-blocking skills. Direct your life - Don't let it direct you."

Jo prefers to run her business like a servant - "It's not a nasty word; it's a gift to be able to help others. A giver gets more than they could imagine while a taker only gets the minimum." Her favorite quote comes from her friend, Pat Beech's, refrigerator magnet: "Love many, trust few, and always paddle your own canoe."

In closing, Jo's wish for everyone is to have a life worth living. "No one cares about your overly financed vehicle. Be the tortoise, not the braggart hare. Your clients are your clients, but all the other REALTORS® out there are your customers. So play nice out there!"

Editor's Addendum:

In true Jo spirit, her last comments to us summing up her life were: "I want to be remembered as a fun chick with good judgment, nice hair, and I want everyone to succeed." Funny, fabulous Jo Shaner right to the end. You'll be missed dearly, Jo.

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