
The Independent



Real Estate & Home Improvement

**Celebrating 60 Years In The Business
With Ann Marie Francavilla**

Meet the well-versed member of Douglas Elliman's Porto Team

Francavilla Celebrates 60 Years In The Business

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By Zachary Weiss

From making \$1 an hour in her high school years to brokering million-dollar deals, Ann Marie Francavilla has always remained firmly planted in the Hampton's real estate scene. Here, we celebrate her 60 years in the business with a look back at her illustrious career that's even included a stint as a hotelier.

Congratulations on 60 years in the industry! First, tell us how you got your start.

I was a high school junior and was on split session because the school was overcrowded, and they were in progress to build a new school. My sessions were from 7:30 AM to 12:15 PM and I had the rest of the day off. So, I thought I would get a part time job. I put an ad in the local newspapers stating that I was in high school and had knowledge in shorthand, typing, and bookkeeping. I got three replies — one from a real estate company, and two from insurance companies. The rest is history.

I worked [at the real estate company] until I graduated high school. My salary was \$1 an hour, \$20 a week. I thought I was on top of the world. I saved my money and bought a new 1955 Chevy Bel Air hardtop. Wish I'd never sold it.

What prompted you to start at such a young age? Did you always know this would be your career?



Ann Marie Francavilla, Connie Porto, and Carol Pugliese

I never thought that this would be my career. I had dreams of working in New York City in advertising, but I ended up enjoying real estate so much, especially getting leads and working on them. I was only almost 16 when I started.

Is there anything you miss in today's day-to-day dealings?

What I miss in today's world is the immediate personal connection that was present years ago. Everything was on a one-on-one basis and it was truly about that personal relationship, where loyalty mattered to all involved in the process.

Also, there were no exclusives. Everyone put their signs on the lawns and it was the luck of the draw of who sold it first. Obviously, this was before the internet. I did my appointments with a composition book and my leads were on index cards in a tin recipe box. But it worked. I would constantly look

through the recipe box to keep me focused with my customers, who they were, what they wanted, where they lived, etc.

We hear you also have experience operating a hotel. Tell us how this came to be.

In 1966, with my young family, we bought a waterfront home on 1.2 acres in Hampton Bays. It was our thought to build a marina and rent out boats. But in order to do that, we had to build cottages and/or a motel. That was the zoning. You couldn't have A without B. So, we got mortgages and proceeded to build cottages, a marina, a motel, and swimming pool. Plus, we rented boats, sailboats, had dockage, and gave water skiing lessons.

When did you decide to

make your return to real estate?

The motel was operated until May 1984, when I sold it. It was at that time that I went back to real estate, got my broker's license, and opened up my own real estate office in 1986 with my son, Eugene. It was Premier Properties in Hampton Bays and it was operated for 16 years until 2002, when we sold it to Century 21.

By that time, the mom-and-pop operations were getting to be a thing of the past. So, with the new technology, changes in listings, and more, it was time to move forward. That's when I joined Douglas Elliman, because they had the best suite of services for agents and for clients and customers. They still do. Even more so now.

What do you think has been your key to success?

As far as being successful, I think it comes from me living in Hampton Bays for 52 years, having the motel for 18 years, being on a great team (the Porto Team with Connie Porto Carol Pugliese and Mary Binder), plus knowing all of the people I have met throughout the years.

I was never pushy and I always felt that if it was a good "fit" with the buyer or the seller, then I would be able to put together a deal or close a deal. In my experience, honesty, being upfront, and loyalty are key traits in being respected and successful in this business.