

DC METRO

REAL PRODUCERS.®

CHANGING. ELEVATING. INSPIRING.


WASHINGTON
FINE PROPERTIES

WASHINGTON
FINE PROPERTIES'

LEE
MURPHY

LIFE-CHANGING MOMENTS

SEPTEMBER 2019

A woman with long brown hair, wearing a white sleeveless dress and white strappy high-heeled sandals, stands in a large, white-painted wooden bookshelf. She is smiling and holding an open book. The bookshelf is filled with many books, mostly with brown and gold spines. The background is a wall of more bookshelves, also filled with books.

LEE MURPHY

Life-Changing Moments

Lee Murphy was lounging blissfully on a boat in the middle of the Red Sea contemplating her move back to the States after finishing a long journalism assignment in Cairo when a conversation with a good friend changed the course of her future. It would be the beginning of her next great adventure.



» cover story

By **Karla Lutz Bowling**
Photos by **Ryan Corvello Photography**

“He suggested I try real estate. My first thought was, ‘Well, why not?!’” she reminisces.

Even though real estate was about as far away from her academic and career background as could be, Lee was eager for a challenge. Before she had accepted the assignment in Cairo, Lee had worked primarily in journalism and politics. She assisted with political campaigns in several different states, as well as with a presidential convention, and she had recently served as a communications director for members of Congress.

The Right Stuff

Lee’s impressive credentials proved to be the perfect foundation to build a successful real estate career. Lee holds undergraduate degrees in international studies and French from Austin College. As a junior, she received a Rotary Foundation Fellowship and

spent a year at the American University in Cairo. She received her Master of Arts degree from the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. She has worked in the offices of a Texas senator and a Texas representative, in the de-facto embassy in Taiwan, as an editor for several newspapers and industry publications, and as a marketing specialist for an international company.

“I love the feeling of success and accomplishment I get from building my own business, but my greatest satisfaction is helping my clients achieve their dreams. I want everyone to have a shot at owning their own home. I think the notion of freedom and the right to dream bigger than what life has handed you is integral to our nation. It is who we are and what makes America truly great. Homeownership is an enormous symbol of success for so many—fulfilling a dream, putting down roots, helping your neighbors, and the sense of belonging to a community. For me, being a part of making that happen is a beautiful experience. I love to see those smiles on faces at closing!” she shares.

Since Lee began her career 17 years ago in 2002, she has reached a career volume of more than \$300 million. Last year, her volume was nearly \$37 million. Lee’s awards are numerous. She was named a Washingtonian Top Producing Residential Real Estate Agent in 2015, the first year it was created, and again in 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019. Lee was also named Washingtonian Best Residential Real Estate Agent in 2015 and 2017. Since 2014, she has been recognized in America’s Best Real Estate Professionals list with a ranking in the top 25 agents in individual sales volume for the DC area by REAL Trends (in partnership with Trulia and Zillow).

In 2019, Lee was a Greater Capital Area Association of REALTORS® (GCAAR) Award Winner and received the Individual Gold Award.

Lee attributes much of her success to the teamwork, collegiality, and the support of her colleagues and brokers at Washington Fine Properties. The firm offers a platform of the finest agents in the capital region combined with top-notch marketing and advertising programs to provide the broadest exposure for her clients’ homes.

For Lee, a career in real estate provides the perfect balance: Empowering her to achieve her ambitions, while serving as the conduit for others to realize their dreams.

“Purchasing my first home was a life-changing moment for me,” Lee remembers. “I barely had two nickels to rub together, if that! But my agent was so patient and understanding. She hung in there with me as I tried to find a house within my limited resources, which wasn’t easy with champagne taste on a beer budget. Nothing would satisfy me unless it was a large Victorian with original details intact. When we finally found the perfect house in Eckington, I was beyond thrilled! The night we closed and I finally had the keys to my first home, I was so excited that I slept on the floor just so I could stay in the house.

“When I considered a career in real estate, I thought if I could make someone else as happy as my agent had made me that would be pretty cool. I liked the idea of seeing smiles rather than frowns. I wanted to help others experience the permanence of a home and how it makes them feel safe and confident about the direction they are going in their lives. They feel proud of themselves—I know I certainly did! I

wanted people to feel like I did when I bought my first house. Homeownership is not merely a part of your financial portfolio or a thing you own; it is a powerful, positive emotion!”

Lee’s grit and determination from a young age are also the reasons for her success. She isn’t afraid of new and exciting experiences. She was born in Texas and, impressively, is a sixth-generation Texan.

“My family fought in the Texas Revolution against Mexico, and there is a town named after one of my great grandfathers. But, I always joke that Texas wasn’t big enough for me, and it inspired me to take my first solo trip to France when I was 18. That turned into a trend, maybe even an obses-



sion. From that time, I’ve either been living abroad or have traveled abroad every single year, except the year my daughter was born. I love to travel and explore other cultures. I get a lot of pleasure from wandering around a new city or country, and I especially love Paris and Cairo. They are both similar yet each distinctive, and I feel like I’m at home when I go to these amazing cities,” Lee reflects.

One of the most influential people in Lee’s life has been her grandmother, who instilled in her a strong work ethic and a healthy sense of self-confidence. “My grandmother remains my guiding star. She was my inspiration as a child and remains so to this day. She is a blessed 93-year-old, sharp as a tack and an amazing person, and she still drives every day! We often have a good laugh over the phone over something one of my children has done, or something going on in her life. She follows my career and offers unasked for, but always unfailing, correct advice on my career and as a parent,” she shares.

Lee recalls the lessons she learned working in her grandparents’ business. “I was brought up from an early age to work at their place. It was a meat company—not the most genteel work around! (To this day you can ask me my opinion on steaks. I’m never wrong!) I worked every Saturday in high school and over the summers for a little over \$3 an hour.

When I considered a career in real estate, I thought if I could make someone else as happy as my agent had made me that would be pretty cool. I liked the idea of seeing smiles rather than frowns. I wanted to help others experience the permanence of a home and how it makes them feel safe and confident about the direction they are going in their lives.

Ouch! My grandmother was the hardest boss I’ve ever had, but I learned so very much from her. I will forever be grateful for her influence and support of me, and especially for her undying belief that I could go anywhere and be anything I wanted to be. My parents also had that unrelenting faith in me. With a tribe like that, you can’t go wrong!”

Family and Community Always a Priority

Her curious and adventurous spirit has rubbed off on her children: Barratt, 14, Dalton, 13, and

Mary Frances, 11. Her sons go to Deal Middle School in the District, and her daughter has attended Lycee Rochambeau French International School since second grade. “Mary Frances originally wanted to go there so she could learn French and talk with me in secret code about her big brothers who don’t know the language. But now, her French is so perfect she says she can’t possibly speak with me in French because mine is so bad!” she laughs.

Lee’s political prowess is another trait she has instilled in her children. The family has lively debates around the dinner table as they gear up for volunteer work on the upcoming presidential race. “We’ve had a ‘team meeting,’ and it looks like we may have some diverging opinions on who to volunteer for. But, I think we may be close to a consensus!” she smiles.

Lee is also generous with the time she devotes to the community and causes which are close to her heart, especially those that celebrate the contributions of women. She is an ardent volunteer for the National Women’s History Museum (NWHM) and served as co-chair of this year’s distinguished Women Making History Awards. “Next year will be the 100th anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment, and we are hoping the NWHM will be making some big announcements. I believe we need to have a museum that shares the accomplishments and contributions of women in building this country. I want both my sons and my daughter to know what women have done and are doing for our country, not just what men have done.”

Additionally, Lee serves as chair of the board of directors for Humanities-DC. She is a sustaining member of the



Dalton, Lee, Mary Frances and Barratt

Junior League of Washington and on the board of directors of the Junior League Gardeners. She is also a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution and supports other groups such as Refugees International, the National Museum of Women in the Arts, the Citizens Association of Georgetown, and the PTAs of her children’s schools.

Surprisingly, Lee finds time in her busy schedule to indulge in her passion for gardening. When she can steal some time away with her family, you will find her at their weekend house on the Eastern Shore. It is called Stone House, named after the third Episcopal Bishop in Maryland, Bishop William Murray Stone, and was built in 1776. Lee has created an exquisite French parterre garden and over the years has planted more than

500 boxwoods, 100 rose bushes and thousands of bulbs and perennials.

“It is all very amateurish and looks like I scribbled out of the lines. But, it is my stab at creating something beautiful. What I love about it is that I can still see my chubby little toddlers racing around the garden with dump trucks like they did so many years ago. It is a place where we are very happy as a family,” Lee smiles.

Another one of her lifelong passions is book collecting, a hobby she began when she was appointed fifth-grade class librarian. She started collecting books and established her own library, dutifully cataloged by subject and author, and now has two bountiful libraries, one at each of her homes.

“The one at my home in Washington is a not-so-carefully curated collection of very old books. I have a few vellum books, early-1600s, that I picked up in France and elsewhere. Most are late-1700s to 1800s. I collect whatever interests

me or strikes my fancy in some way or another, and have over the past 40 years. I also have a collection of art books lugged painfully over my shoulder from every place and museum I’ve visited abroad, adding 30 pounds to my carry-on! It is a compulsion that I can’t seem to shake,” she reveals.

No Substitute For Hard Work
Lee brings an intense passion and zeal to everything she touches. It’s no surprise that her success in real estate can be attributed to this same philosophy of hard work and tenacity. “I’ve worked very, very hard to get to this point. In the beginning, a 60-hour-plus work week for me was standard. Every week, every year, year after year after year. Determination is key. You need to chart a path that is built on integrity and honesty and never veer from that

course. I see this as a ‘must,’ not as a goal or a target, but something imperative that has to be met 100 percent every day and always. That was important in building the bedrock of my business.”

Lee adds, “I know my clients are confident that when I advise them on an issue, it is coming from the perspective of representing their best interests. It isn’t about me or what may work best for me. They know it is about how to help them and make sure they have a good experience.”

She encourages agents not to give up when things fall through. “Being from Texas, we believe that if you fall off that horse, you have to get right back on. Immediately! When my horse threw me as a kid, I knew that once I recovered from having the breath knocked out of me, I had to get back

on and ride. It’s the same thing in real estate. The blows that happen in real estate can come quickly, with sustained intensity and detrimental effect. When my kids were little, and I was still relatively new, I lost three deals in one day for various reasons. It represented a lot of potential revenue for me, which we needed as a family. I allowed myself a brief moment to catch my breath. But the next day, I was in the office even earlier than usual, more focused, and more determined than ever. You have to get back on that horse!”

Through many years of getting back up on that horse, Lee has a clear view of what success is. “Success is bringing the A-game to every single day. It is striving to be the best person I can be, even though it may be an ongoing evolution, evaluation, and refinement of the product — me! Success is making sure I have smiles at a closing and making sure that at every turn, I approach all matters with strict integrity and honesty. It is teaching my children the values I bring to my business and my approach to life. I want them to be as proud of me as I am of them. THAT is success.”

“It is teaching my children the values I bring to my business and my approach to life. I want them to be as proud of me as I am of them. THAT is success.”

RADON

Radon can seep into a home regardless of when it was built, its location, or the materials used in construction.

Newly constructed homes, older homes, town homes, and condos all can be impacted by radon.

Even though a home may have been tested in the past, shifting ground due to construction, blasting, or settlement cause new opportunity for exposure.


SCHEDULE YOUR RADON TEST TODAY!



703-771-8374


www.donofrioinspections.com





PARTNER. PLAN. PROTECT. PROSPER.

Learn how we offer customized solutions designed for DC Metro Real Producers like you.



Herbert Valentine Kelly, III
Financial Advisor
8484 Westpark Dr. Suite 700
McLean, VA 22102
703-848-4870
tripp.kelly@nm.com | tripp-kelly.com

© 2018 Northwestern Mutual is the marketing name for The Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Company (NM), Milwaukee, WI (life and disability insurance, annuities, and life insurance with long-term care benefits) and its subsidiaries. Herbert Kelly is an Insurance Agent of NM.