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**SUCCESS**™

CALGARY NORTH EDITION

INVESTIGATING CONCEPTS OF SUCCESS

A man with white hair and glasses, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and patterned tie, stands smiling in front of a pond. The pond's surface is covered with fallen autumn leaves, and the surrounding area is a grassy lawn with scattered leaves. The man is wearing a small blue pin on his lapel.

**'SALE' WITH  
THE CAPTAIN**

# 'SALE' WITH THE CAPTAIN

By Sarah Ennals

A flamboyant character, Al 'The Captain' Gibson delights in the fun, yet respected RE/MAX balloon banner and its motto, 'above the crowd.' It sums up his conviction that buying or selling a house does not have to be a stressful experience for the customer but can instead be fun-filled and rewarding.

Oldest of four children, Al Gibson played with 'The Chandels' in high school, and later shocked his steadfast Baptist parents by going on the Western Canada rock-music circuit with a number of different recording artists. This, after graduating from the University of Calgary with a BA in Sociology/Psychology. His musical ladder comprised a number of leading local T.V. bands beginning with Rant Recording artists, The Chandels; and including Quality Recording artists, The New Brands; The Eldorados; Capital Records artists, The Dewline; Black and White Affair; Hickory; MGM Recording artist, Russell Thornberry; recording artists, Painter; The Ronnie King Band; The Tarantula Brothers; Louie Louie; Live Liver; and settling in for twenty-two exciting years as a member of Calgary's Premier Party Band, Fun Company.

"Eventually facing reality, I came off the road, and joined Studio City, Alberta's main booking agency in the Calgary area, to try and help other aspiring rock stars realize their dreams." He acquired his nickname and nautical persona

fishing expedition to Nasty Fish Charters in East Sooke, and Ucluelet, B.C.

The business, however, was no longer what it had been – hotels were no longer hiring live bands to play six nights a week and Al felt it was time for a career change. Some years before he had followed his brother, Laird's example and earned an auctioneering license through Regal Auctions. The company also had a real estate branch, Regal Realty: "There were a lot of similarities between being a booking agent and a real estate agent...and the light at the end of the tunnel burned much brighter. So off I went."

Al was later with Touchstone Real Estate until the company closed down its Calgary offices in the mid-nineties: "The bulk of the agents were absorbed by different RE/MAX offices," he recalls. "I interviewed three other companies but was drawn to RE/MAX because it was really the 'main game' in town, and I personally had a great deal of respect for the broker-owner, Lowell Martens, of this specific office (RE/MAX Mountain View)."

"The scope of my listings has ranged



when, for eight years at the height of his success in the musical business, he kept a small yacht, 'The Leg of Whale' moored at False Creek Marina in downtown Vancouver, B.C. He still continues the aquatic theme with his annual salmon-

from \$30,000 mobiles to \$2,500,000 homes. Land has ranged from an \$80,000 city lot to a \$20,000,000 acreage parcel. When acting as a buyer's agent, I have worked all areas of the city as well as surrounding areas, dealing in residential homes and country acreages. I have represented a number of builders on smaller condo projects and have marketed them to specific communities as well as [to] my sphere of influence and the public at large. At the moment I have two land developments – a quarter-section of land in Bears paw and 67 acres zoned commercial within the city limits."

"At the end of each year, I find that my sales are almost equally split between buyers and sellers. However, I particularly enjoy walking first-time buyers through the entire buying process."

The Captain brought his eccentric show-biz promoter's flair to his new career in real estate: clients are referred to as "Crew Members," and "my referral program," says Al, "is like no other...you receive among other gifts, Frequent Fryer Points – 24 free-range chickens from Bon Ton Meat Market – for each referral...clients love it!" Prior to the shift towards web-based advertising, Al's television ads

on Channel 10, Shaw Cable's local real-estate channel, were notable (some

recipient of the prestigious RE/MAX Hall of Fame Award. and is a member of the Calgary MLS Million Dollar Club.

Some thoughts from a few happy Crew Members:

"I have sold and purchased property before, but have never had the level of commitment that I found with Al (and the sense of humor!). Although he was very low pressure, (a pleasant surprise), he was extremely knowledgeable and intuitive as to my property wants and needs. Not once did I feel pressured or that he wasn't acting in my best interests." Peggy Weidinger, Bowness

"Thanks for a great job in selling both of our homes on time and at the price we wanted. This big step was made so easy because of your professional manner in handling all of the affairs. We would highly recommend you to anyone buying or selling a home. Thanks

again, Al, for a great job done." Carl Moschenross & Patty MacPherson

Al's flamboyant persona conceals a solid, customer-based approach to the business; he is also "continually upgrading educationally and keeping abreast with technology." "I find that the internet plays an increasing role in the scheme of things...my newly-created website at [www.calgaryrealty.org](http://www.calgaryrealty.org) now allows clients to have specific access to all Calgary MLS listings, including addresses." For clients



might say notorious): "I was kind of their guinea pig." The Captain's Elvis-themed commercial ("Do you think I bought Graceland from just ANY realtor?") won first place in advertising at the 2000 RE/MAX Western Regional Convention. In the Spring of 1998 Al was also excited to learn that his "Paintbrush Brochure" won the Award of Merit for Personal Promotion at the Annual RE/MAX International Convention in Las Vegas. There were entries from more than fifty-five countries! Al is also the proud

who don't wish to sort through the MLS listings themselves, Al offers The Captain's 'Flag' Team option: would-be buyers, having given him a description of what they wish in a house, receive descriptions and photos of suitable properties in their mailbox or email the day each is listed on MLS. When they see one they like, they contact Al. A selling point of the program is that the clients receive no phone calls and can decide at their own leisure if they wish to investigate a particular house. Clients are often pleasantly surprised by the Captain's patience and low-pressure

approach to the house-hunt; but then, Al takes the long-term view:

"In my opinion a successful agent is determined not so much by the number of units he sells, but by the number of referrals or repeat clients he has. Unfortunately, many of the upper-echelon Realtors make such huge amounts of money that the business becomes merely a numbers game. A successful agent also manages to create balance in his life and doesn't let the business control him." Al credits his wife Robbie with helping him to keep

things in balance. Robbie, originally from Birmingham, Alabama, made the relocation to Calgary in 2002 to join the Gibson family: "I am the poster boy for internet dating," laughs the Captain. Son Graydon, 25, from Al's first marriage, is currently traveling and working in Australia. Daughter Trisha works in the Calgary beauty salon industry. Sailor, the family Bichon/Shih Tzu, rules the roost. Al and Robbie travel frequently, sometimes on vacation with friends, and sometimes to do humanitarian work for the Forgotten Children's Ministry in Honduras: "Our first trip to Honduras was an incredibly eye-opening experience...helping us appreciate just how fortunate we really are in this society. The poverty there was simply overwhelming." At home, the Captain is particularly involved with his agency's support of the Children's Miracle Network, volunteers for Meals On Wheels and received the 2003 Ina Walker Memorial Award for his professionalism and contributions to the community.

"ALWAYS TAKE TIME TO ENJOY LIFE, AND NEVER TAKE YOURSELF TOO SERIOUSLY." Now 61, the Captain maintains his 'work hard, play hard' ethos – he still occasionally plays live music with his buddies around town, and plans to continue in the realty business for years to come: "Retirement doesn't hold much allure for me."



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