

PROFILE

Marcia Donen Roma, senior vice president,
Fox Residential

Forget mansions, this former Playboy Bunny has passion for penthouses

By SARAH TREFETHEN

Marcia Donen Roma credits the people skills that make her a top-selling broker to a saucy source: her former career as a Playboy Bunny.

"We're both selling," she said, of Bunnyhood and real estate.

Roma was recruited by a Playboy representative in a New York restaurant, and has fond memories of her Bunny career, from opening for Sammie Davis Junior at Carnegie Hall to playing against the Broadway Show League in Central Park every week on the Playboy softball team.

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"It was amazing," she said. "We thought it would never end."

Today, Roma is a senior vice president at Fox Residential and was that company's top grossing broker for eight years straight. She goes the extra mile to find a perfect apartment for her clients.

"I care about people. I care about finding the perfect fit," she said. "If they're 100 percent happy with it, I'm happy. I tell them the pros and the cons. I don't leave any stone unturned, so I have a good client base to pick up from and contact."

Roma's current listings include a brownstone on East 73rd Street, and she has sold a number of uptown's luxury buildings, including the Barbizon and the Chatham.

Roma grew up in New York City; worked as a Bunny for Playboy clubs in New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Miami; lived for a time in London and has traveled around Europe. But she was living in North Miami Beach,

Fl when her marriage to restaurateur Tony Roma — the former Hugh Hefner employee who had launched her Bunny career — came to an end. That's when her career in real estate got its start.

"I had to sell the big house and get a smaller house and I thought, 'why not make some money while I'm at it?'" she said.

Roma lived 11 years in Florida, where her former husband had started the first of his national chain of restaurants. She enjoyed horseback riding and learning to play tennis, she said, but in 1996 she decided to return to New York with her daughter.

She settled on the Upper East Side and went to work for Fox. "It was a lot coming back with a eight-year-old on my own, but I couldn't be happier," she said.

She also made the move back at the right time.

"My timing was perfect because all the new condominiums were going up on the Upper East Side, and I was able to sell in all those new condominiums," she said.

Selling in Manhattan is more to her tastes than her work in Florida, she said.

"It was so much more involved with a house. There were inspections and we wrote out our own contracts," she said. "Also, I enjoy showing apartments a lot more than I did showing homes, and you meet more diversified people in New York."

She has even been able to put her international experience to use as a member of Fox Realty's international division.

Foreigners have been buying more residential property in the city recently, she said. "I think people feel safe in New York and in their investment."

Roma, now an empty nester, lives with her rescue Chihuahua, Thor, who she adopted when she move back to the city 15 years ago. She maintains her real estate license in Florida, but has no plans to move away from New York.



To this day, some of her best friends are her Playboy colleagues, and she has sold apartments to three former Bunnies.

"The friendships that I've developed over the years are the best part," she said. "It's kind of like growing up with people."

