

BUZZ

10 L.A. WOMEN
WHO MAKE
MEN NERVOUS

CHARLES
GRODIN'S
VACATION
IN HELL

DIARY OF
A MAD

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER

"THE BEST
MAGAZINE YET
ON THE
LOCAL SCENE!"
—L.A. Times



THE BROKER. Four years ago, while working for Fred Sands Realtors, Christine Lee Watt negotiated a precedent-setting partnership between Sands, the doge of L.A. real estate, and Sumitomo Bank, one of the richest and most powerful financial institutions in the world. The deal called for Sumitomo to market Sands properties in Japan on an exclusive basis—an arrangement that virtually overnight made the Fred Sands name a household word in property-ravenous Tokyo.

By any standard, it was an impressive coup for Watt. For her boss, however, it was something of an unsettling experience. Because Watt spoke Japanese and Sands didn't, Sands had no choice but to depend on her almost entirely throughout the nerve-wracking negotiating process. Watt, in other words, was in control—and that made an independent-minded male broker like Sands anxious indeed.

"She made Fred *very* nervous," recalls a former associate of Watt's who was present during the Sumitomo negotiations. "He would be sitting there not knowing what was going on." Fred Sands is hardly the only male broker whom Lee makes nervous. "Let's face it, most guys in this city are not exactly internationalists," says her ex-colleague. "So they're hostage to Christine's knowledge."

That knowledge is vast. Born in Hong Kong and raised in Japan, Watt speaks fluent Japanese, Chinese, English, and French. Before she came to L.A. she was a corporate officer with Sanwa Bank, Credit Com-

merciale de France, Irving Trust Co., and Mitsubishi SA, Paris. In short, she has what most brokers in L.A. *don't* have: cross-cultural breeding and hands-on experience in international finance.

Somewhat surprisingly, Watt finds that "the Japanese are more accepting of women in my role than American men. In this country, you have to fight all the way, and then prove and re-prove yourself all the time. In Japan, it's all based on relationships."

Earlier this year, Watt left Sands to join Remax Estate Properties, a Sands competitor. Will Sumitomo move with her? "In Japan," Christine Watt repeats with a smile, "it's all based on relationships."