

Meet The Elder Family



How I Got My Start

FROM BOARDROOMS TO SKI SLOPES

Find out how this agent gave up corporate life to give her kids a concrete-free upbringing.

With a love of the great outdoors, it's no surprise that Alison Elder and her family love living in the Tahoe area. "We love to ski and love the resort area," says Private Office Advisor/ Partner in Engel & Völkers' Truckee Donner Shop in Truckee, Calif. Like most real estate professionals, though, Elder took quite a circuitous route to get there. "It took a while, but I finally transitioned from the fast-paced corporate world to a much more family-oriented lifestyle working in real estate," she says.

The Early Years

After spending some time during college as an intern in Washington, D.C., Elder thought she wanted to be a lawyer when she graduated. "After some personal reflection, I decided I didn't want to spend my life in a law library," she says. Instead, she "accidentally ended up in healthcare administration" due to a family connection with the CEO of French Health Plan in San Francisco. "I loved the business and the people. I was impacting people's lives in a positive way selling staff model HMO plans," she says. In fact, she loved the healthcare business so much that she spent the next 12

years in the industry with several different companies, doing large-group brokerage sales for both HMOs and benefits administration. "As things started changing with Lincoln



Elder and her family, June, 2018

National Life, which moved out of large-group health insurance and started offering a small-group model that I felt wasn't strategically aligned to the business, I decided to start my own company," she says.

Small Business Owner

Capitalizing on the loyal following she had with insurance brokers and consultants, Elder took on two partners and started a small administration company that went from 9 employees in 1993 to 65 by 1997. "We had a sales organization in the Bay Area (San Francisco) and another in the Bellevue, Wash., area. We had clients like Oracle, Stanford and Netscape, who all liked what we were doing because we had a tech aspect to our

Alison and Rio



business,” she says. In fact, her firm, BeneSphere Administrators, was the first online benefits administration company for this type of product. “This was in 1993, during the boom in high tech. My husband is a tech guy and helped build the online system. It was pretty exciting to employees, who could get online and file claims and enroll in tax-free healthcare and daycare payroll-deduction programs; today, she says, it’s “normal and expected.” In about three years, we had almost 900 clients,” she says. ProBusiness, a payroll and human resources company, bought BeneSphere and went public shortly thereafter. “ProBusiness, which was later purchased by ADP, wanted to buy my company because in 1997, integrated benefits (health, benefits, payroll and human resources administration) was launching. I had the benefits piece,” she says. By then, Elder felt that she had outgrown the job and was looking for a new experience and opportunity. She was recruited by a large payroll service that wanted her to build its business. “I was there for 5 years, but the workload and

travel schedule were super heavy. I did consulting for a few years, but the national travel, four or more days per week, was too much,” she says. By then, she had small children and wasn’t



Andrew Elder, Donner Lake

keen on leaving them. In addition, her then-5-year-old son, Andrew, had some health issues. “We had a second home in the Tahoe area, it just seemed a good fit and Andrew was so much healthier in the clean air,” she says. “I had a goal to raise my kids off the concrete, and I determined that real estate was the vehicle to help me reach that goal,” she says.

Andrew Elder,
Winter 2018



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Partner, Corcoran

Transitioning into Real Estate

Not to mention that her corporate-learned skills were extremely transferable to real estate. The trick was helping her husband, who had finished his career in high-tech, plan for a slower pace. “He established a branch of Pacific Bay Lending and built his own business in Truckee, leveraging all our Bay Area contacts and local ones too,” she says.

That was in 1998, and Elder has been thriving ever since. She was named Chase International Real Estate’s Agency Realtor® of the Year for five consecutive years, joined Engel & Völkers as a partner of the Truckee Donner Shop in 2017 and ranks 3rd within Engel & Völkers 16,000 agents worldwide. She’s participated in the local chapter of the Excellence in Education Foundation, on the Cancer Advisory Council, which partnered with UC Davis, supported a successful community bond initiative and is a national rural model in cancer care. Add various other community involvement and commitments, the philanthropic fabric and personal commitment is evident.

As with her career in healthcare services, Elder is focused when it comes to real estate. “Everyone gets million-dollar service, no matter if they’re buying a lot, \$200,000 condo or a \$5 million home on Lake Tahoe. My service model honors every client’s needs,” she says. She also believes in “making sure my vision is clear. I want to know about my clients’ day-to-day experiences and whether or not they’re buying this property as a legacy property. Then, I take their vision and help sculpt it, based on their needs while honoring their budget.” About 75 percent of Elder’s business is with vacation-home buyers in Lake Tahoe. “The vast majority of my clients are high-net-worth individuals from the Silicon Valley to San Francisco, Carmel Valley and even Los Angeles who are looking for the next passion in their lives.”


It appears Elder has personally found that next passion. Elder’s son Andrew graduated from Sugar Bowl Academy in 2017 and earned All American status in collegiate Alpine racing in

Desmond Elder on the Knot Again, Emerald Bay



2018. Andrew attends Colorado Mesa University majoring in Business Administration and Finance. The Elder's daughter, Angela, graduated from Sugar Bowl Academy in 2018 and attends Colorado University at Boulder studying Art History and is a USCSA Alpine Racer and Gamma Phi Beta sorority member.

The entire family takes advantage of the Tahoe summers, spending a lot of time on their boat, "Knot Again". "Our downtime is spent enjoying the solitude of our natural environment, attending ski races all winter, spending summers boating on Lake Tahoe and just hanging out with family and friends," says Elder.

That's a far cry from the hustle and bustle of corporate life. "I lived that corporate, fast-paced life in San Francisco," she says. "It took me three years to re-engineer my life, but I'm there now and loving every minute of it." 

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— Alison Elder, Partner, Corcoran

Angela Elder,
Winter 2017



live who you are



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