



MOTHER'S DAY

## The bonds that inspired sons to follow in their moms' footsteps

■ Sons who followed their mothers into the same line of work discuss what inspired them in their career choices.

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Working side by side with mom when he grew up was probably the last thing 8-year-old John Seidel thought about when he and a friend were inside stuffing envelopes instead of playing outside.

"Back in the '70s, there was no fancy Internet, so John and his friend from elementary school were helping us get out the fliers," Charlette Seidel remembered fondly.

When it got real quiet in the conference room, she peeked in. The boys were making paper airplanes out of Seidel's marketing materials.

Three decades later, John Seidel — the little boy who knew that persistent begging and good grades were just the right sales pitch to get his parents to take him on annual Disney World trips — has become a little more serious about his work and

• TURN TO FAMILIES, 2A



**ALL IN THE FAMILY:** Evan Goldman followed his mother Hazel into the real estate business. They're a good -cop/bad-cop team, she says. (She's the bad cop.)

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MOTHER'S DAY

## Like mother, like son — in business and politics

• FAMILIES, FROM 1A

followed his successful mother into the world of selling homes. He's now a 40-year-old licensed Realtor and a regular member of Coldwell Banker's elite inner circle of top sellers.

Like mother, like son. Charlette Seidel is managing broker of Coldwell Banker's Coral Gables Sunset branch.

On this Mother's Day, sons — and daughters — everywhere are honoring the women who gave them life. But studies show few of the sons choose to follow in their mother's footsteps when it comes to a career.

"I know of daughters who follow their fathers, sons who follow their fathers and daughters who follow their mothers," said Gina Robinson-Billups, founder and chief executive of the National Association of Moms in Business. "But I don't think there has been research done on how influential mom business owners are on their sons' career choices."

Nancy Golden, an interior designer on HGTV and one of four people to launch the DIY (Do It Yourself) net-



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**MOTHER-SON BUSINESS COMBOS:** From left, Judy Zeder and Nathan Zeder; Charlette Seidel and John Seidel; Wendy Levy Jackson and Adam Levy; Hazel Goldman and Evan Goldman and Donna Bloom and Scott Bloom. All of them work in the real estate business.

work, is one of those lucky moms. Her son, Nate Berkus, 39, a decorator who rose to stardom as a regular on the Oprah Winfrey Show and now has his own syndicated show [*The Nate Berkus Show*, 3 p.m. Wednesday, NBC-6] was strongly influ-

enced by her at an early age. He loved accompanying his mother to flea markets and garage sales on the weekend, Golden said.

"He tried Little League one year, but that was a big bomb," Golden said about her son's childhood years in suburban Minneapolis.

Once, after a play date at a friend's house, Golden remembers asking her son if he had a good time. His response: "Yeah, I rearranged Mrs. Swartz's living room."

Moms and sons have to find that common bond, Golden said.

"Nate and I had one right from the start," she said. "And on trips, we still love going together to consignment stores and vintage shops in shady neighborhoods and having the best time."

South Florida has one of the most well-known cases of a son following his mom. Former U.S. Rep. Kendrick Meek won the job after his mother, Florida Congresswoman Carrie Meek decided to retire.

After a stint with the Florida Highway Patrol as a state trooper, Kendrick Meek, won election in 2002 as the congressman from Florida's 17th district, after his mother decided to step aside.

"I grew up watching her lead," said Kendrick Meek, now 44 and president of KBM Solutions, which does

consulting for disaster recovery, humanitarian and emergency medical relief.

He recalls listening to phone conversations and accompanying his mother to the supermarket. Those routine events always turned into some sort of constituent service.

"Grocery shopping with Carrie Meek was never a 30-minute activity," he said.

But as much as his mom — who just turned 85 — loved public service, she never pushed her son in that direction. Once he decided he wanted to switch careers, his mother was there to guide him through the highs and lows.

"She said to be prepared to be hit by a Mack truck, even when you don't deserve it," he said. "But I also witnessed the rewards she received and how it made her feel to help the people of South Florida."

Those intangible rewards are the same reason that Jeffrey Weinstock, 51, decided to follow his mom into education, after a successful 20-year career in the corporate world.

"There's something about teaching," said Weinstock, a professor of marketing at the University of Miami. "I think it's in our blood."

Phyllis Weinstock, now 81, taught emotionally disturbed children in New York. Those were the times



**NEXT:** Former U.S. Rep. Kendrick Meek, who won the job after his mother, Carrie Meek, stepped aside.

CARL JUSTE/MIAMI HERALD STAFF

when teachers were locked in the classroom with the kids.

"It was tough for her, but she knew it was important," Jeffrey said.

So when he asked his mother's advice about giving up a lucrative job as a vice president in international marketing with Carnival Cruise Lines, she supported his career change.

"She told me: 'Look for the light, when it goes on in the students' eyes,' he said. "That still guides me."

If researchers were to be-

gin a study of the number of sons following in their mother's successful footsteps, they could easily start with the Seidels and four other mother/son combinations in the Master Brokers Forum, an organization of South Florida's top residential real estate agents that began in 1992 after Hurricane Andrew.

They also include Hazel Goldman and Evan Goldman of Re/Max Advance Realty's Pinecrest office; Wendy Levy Jackson and Adam Levy of Coldwell Banker's Pinecrest office, Judy Zeder and Nathan Zeder of EWM's Coral Gables office and Donna Bloom of Majestic Properties and Scott Bloom, who just finished a project with a court-appointed receiver for the Wind condominiums.

"I guess we're all mamas' boys," joked Evan Goldman, 35, as the group posed for a picture in front of a \$10 million home listed by the Zeders.

"We do a good-cop, bad-cop all the time," said Hazel, who has generated more than \$1 billion in sales during her 25-year career. "I'm the hustle-bird who takes no nonsense. Evan is more compassionate."

Goldman said he was a little apprehensive working with his mother, and they have had their mother-son moments. But, it has worked

out well for the past six years.

That's ditto for Adam Levy, 42, who used to be a licensed building contractor. He said his friends thought he was crazy to work with his mother — and his wife — in a three-person office.

He thought he would do real estate "just to see what sells, what floor plans work," he said. "Now, it's been 14 years."

Donna Bloom said her son Scott "was born into it." Scott, 37, who sees things just a tad bit differently, remembers being dragged to many an open house with his mother when he was a kid.

After growing up and having a short career in forensic accounting, he decided that mom's career — and compensation — was much more appealing.

"I've been doing this 41 years," Donna Bloom said. "I know a lot of tricks."

Valeria Merrill also can provide her son plenty of guidance after 31 years as a high school math teacher, now at an alternative education section of MacArthur South High School in Miami. She's close to retiring, but is thrilled another Merrill has taken up the noble profession. Her youngest son Wyatt, 30, teaches mentally and physically disabled children at Miami Southridge High School.

And, yes, she did name him after Wild West hero Wyatt Earp.

"It makes me feel so proud he's a teacher," Valeria Merrill said. "He used to tell me I was doing too much for my students. Now, he is doing the same thing. On his birthday, he chaperoned his students on a trip to Disney World."

Wyatt Merrill gives his mother all the credit.

"She's the leader of the pack, and loves to help kids," he said. "I guess I wanted to be like my mom."