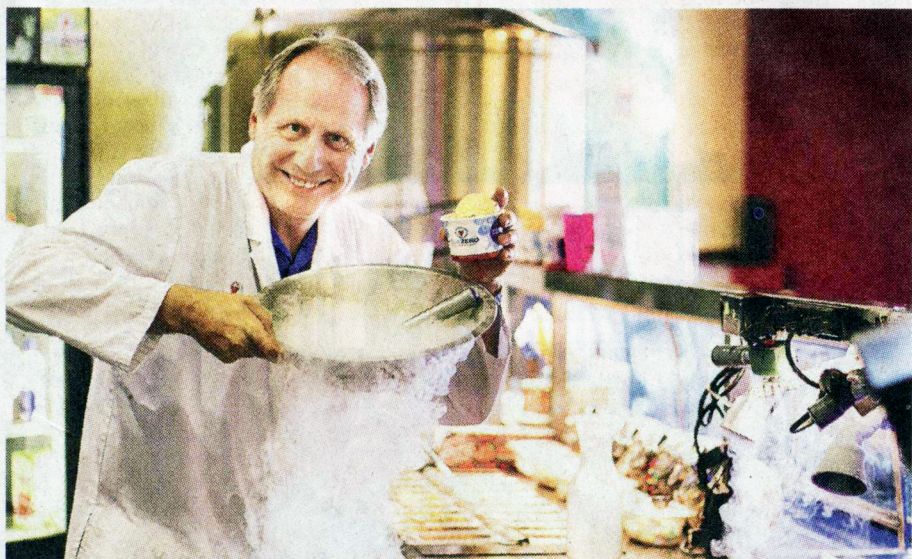


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THIRTY YEARS IN CORPORATE FINANCE. NOW COMES DESSERT.



KAYLANA BROWN

Rob West

Age: 61

Hometown: Simi Valley, Calif.

Primary career: Corporate finance

Current path: Ice-cream franchisee

Why this path: Mr. West says of his customers, "They come in happy and leave happier."

Ice cream has always held pleasant memories for Rob West. "I can't remember many years growing up when my mom didn't serve an ice-cream dessert," he says. "When ice cream was being passed around, it was always the happy times."

Now 61 and living in Simi Valley, Calif., Mr. West is having his dessert once again. After a 30-plus-year career in corporate finance, first with two consulting giants, then an insurer, Mr. West has found a way to relive the joys of his childhood—as a proprietor of several ice-cream shops.

Mr. West started out as an entrepreneur at 12, selling lightbulbs door to door. To earn money for college, he bought 11 used movie projectors and drove around Salt Lake City selling them to audio-video dealers.

When it came time for a career, however, he chose corporate finance. He found it rewarding. But continuously looking for ways to reduce costs was stressful, he says.

He increasingly longed to do something on his own terms, to be his own boss as head of his own company.

Then, on a visit to Boise, Idaho, he stepped into an ice-cream parlor with a different kind of concept—and something

clicked. Customers chose their own unique mix of ingredients, the type of cream, the flavors and add-ins. The order was then dipped in liquid nitrogen, creating instant ice cream in a burst of frigid fog.

The shop was part of a franchise called **Sub Zero Ice Cream**, and Mr. West immediately wanted one for himself. This was in 2010, and the company wasn't yet registered to sell franchises in California. So Mr. West spent the next two years working with the company to register the business in California, and negotiating issues with city officials in Simi Valley, where he wanted to open.

He often works 12-hour days now. Still, he relishes it. With three stores now, he supervises young employees, keeps the books, takes inventory and caters. His experience in marketing, sales, financing and accounting have helped, and he's still learning about advertising, inventory and construction.

One of his favorite tasks, he says, is the science presentations he gives at schools in which he demonstrates the unique properties of nitrogen. He'll dip a rose in liquid nitrogen for five seconds, then crush it with his hand. It breaks into "a million pieces," he says.

For the grand finale, he pours water into a bucket of nitrogen. "It makes this huge cloud of fog blow up 20 feet. There are times when if I do it just right, I'm lost in this cloud and nobody can see me."

Mr. West says he's gained 20 pounds. Still, he sees his product as a bridge to happiness. His customers are often celebrating an occasion, whether it's a sports team or families commemorating a milestone.

"I just feel I'm lucky to be part of that," he says.

—Julie Halpert