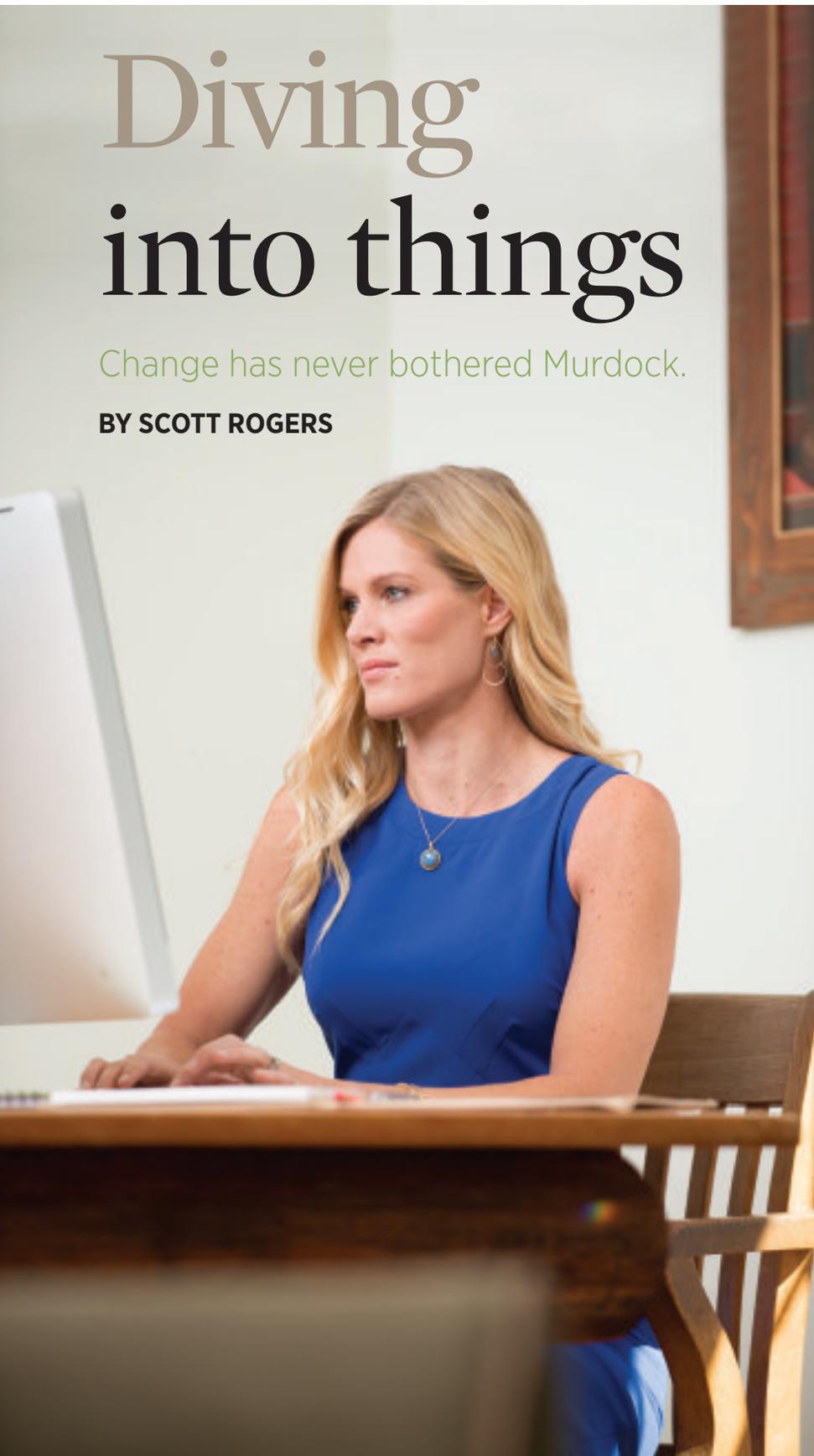


Diving into things

Change has never bothered Murdock.

BY SCOTT ROGERS



You don't learn anything by just sitting still. **Alison Murdock**, a three-year MDRT member from San Diego, California, knows this acutely well.

Many advisors introduced to the financial services profession by their parents follow a set script. Murdock herself was practically born into the financial services field, as her stepfather, **Steven A. Burgess**, a 28-year MDRT member from Salt Lake City, Utah, has his own firm, The Burgess Group. Despite having this opening, Murdock needed to find her own way there. "I'm not afraid to dive into things," she said.

Murdock's risk-taking began early. At age 15, she moved from Salt Lake City to Germany, by herself, to pursue a modeling opportunity. She traveled a lot — around the United States and all over Europe. Always in motion, Murdock learned to handle different cultures and life situations. But sometimes the hardest part of leaving is coming back. After two years abroad, Murdock headed home, unsure of where she fit in.

Rather than face high school — hard enough for most average Americans, let alone someone who spent prime years of her adolescence out of the country — Murdock enrolled in provisional classes at a college.

After attending the University of Utah, she thought maybe she'd follow in her mother's footsteps and become an attorney. But that didn't feel right. She'd worked in her stepfather's firm throughout college and continued helping out post-graduation. But making it her full-time career never seemed to be a real option to Murdock, despite the fact that she was more qualified than she realized at the time. "I had a much greater understanding of the business than I ever thought I did," she said. "I started out doing everything that you could possibly imagine — running illustrations, filing, helping with PowerPoint presentations — because I was the only one who had any tech abilities." Along the way, Murdock said she started picking up the business, learning more and more each day by implementing these presentations, but never realizing the expertise she had.

After four years back at home, Murdock decided it was time to move on. Feeling the need to expand her horizons, she packed up and headed out to San

Diego, trying to figure out what to do next.

She was immediately hired as a retail manager, where she worked for a bit before being recruited to work at a life insurance firm, based off of her prior experience, as a director of marketing. Her experience notwithstanding, there were aspects of this position she was unprepared for. “I was 22 years old. I had people working for me who were in their 50s, and I had no idea what I was doing when it came to managing a team,” she said. “I knew the insurance part, the products and how to design really great proposals for agents, and I knew a lot of the high-level advanced-marketing-type style programs. But I did not know how to manage a team of people.”

Murdock left this position to take a brief foray into the real estate world, but soon found herself contemplating the financial services industry again.

“As much as I loved real estate, I kept tying things back to [the finance] industry. I kept saying, ‘Well, just because real estate is a tangible asset that we can see and feel, it’s not much different than really understanding the economic inner workings of an insurance policy and the value it can provide.’ My brain was always kind of retriggered by that space.”

Luckily, her family wanted her to join the firm, and technology allowed her to work remotely. She got her official licenses and became a member of the firm, specializing in premium finance for national and international clients.

“We go in and basically give (clients) that opportunity gain of keeping their money effectively working for them, having the bank finance the premiums and then putting up their assets depending on what’s most effective for them as collateral for the transaction,” she said. “The policy becomes part of the collateral because you’ve got a cash value. The other part would come directly from their assets. Back to my real estate experience, it’s not much different than buying and financing a house. You want to make sure your house retains its value. You’re doing the same thing with an insurance policy.”

This specialty carries unique challenges. “Being in premium finance, I have to deal with the bank regulations and changes, then I have to deal with insurance companies’ regulations and changes,

“What I realized is there is so much flexibility, if you open your eyes to adapting to it.”



and they often don’t work that great together,” she said. “The first few times things changed, it derailed me. I thought, ‘Oh gosh, we’re going to close our business. There’s no way we’re going to get through this.’ What I realized is there is so much flexibility, if you open your eyes to adapting to it. You just have to be willing to make those adjustments, make those changes.”

Murdock works out of her home, comfortable in the life she built with her husband and children in San Diego, while relying on staff in the Salt Lake City office for any assistance she might need. It truly is a family business, with her stepfather, stepbrothers and mother involved in the firm in Salt Lake City.

With such a varied background, it’s fair to wonder where Murdock will go from here. “Anytime anyone asks me about a five- or 10-year plan, I’m terrible at it because I’m one of those ‘live in the moment’ type of people. I know that sounds cliché, but I almost do it to a fault,” she said. “I know that I’m very happy in this business. But I also have this confidence. I could see myself always working for the family business or taking a different angle within the business. I don’t see myself leaving this industry. I really like it, and I think I’m good at it.” **KT**

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LEARN MORE: Hear Murdock discuss her life and career at mdrt.org/podcast.