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## Finding Fulfillment with Balance & Grace

**How many years have you  
been a real estate agent?**  
Almost three years

**What is your career  
volume as an agent?**  
\$10.2 million

**What are your favorite  
books or music?**  
I love listening to worship  
music. My favorite book is *Can't  
Hurt Me* by David Goggins. I  
love his mindset that pain is  
not something to be avoided.  
I also really love *Battlefield of  
the Mind* by Joyce Meyer.

**When and how did you start  
your career in real estate?**  
I've been in some type of sales  
role since I was 16 years old.  
Most recently, I owned a clothing  
and accessories boutique in  
Lenoir City called Cedar & Twine  
for three and a half years.

With our kids getting older, I  
knew I needed more flexibility  
in my work. I knew I still wanted  
to pursue a sales role, interact  
with people on a daily basis,  
and also be a problem-solver.

**What has been the most  
rewarding part of your business?**  
I love collaborating with other  
agents. We all know how hard  
it is, so there's a mutual respect  
there. Each agent is so different,  
so I have learned a lot on each  
transaction. Some of them are  
super analytical, while others  
are more sales-minded. As an  
agent, remembering that there's  
another human being on the  
other side of the table really  
helps things go more smoothly.

**What has been your  
biggest struggle?**  
First, just setting boundaries—  
on time and emotions. Real

**"I LOVE  
COLLABORATING  
WITH OTHER  
AGENTS."**





estate doesn't have set hours, so it's really easy to try to solve problems all hours of the day. Also, you have to navigate a lot of emotions—your clients', your family's, and your own.

Secondly, I used to get frustrated when other agents didn't get back to me right away. I was afraid things would fall through, but typically that wasn't the case. I've had to learn to manage my frustrations. Most agents I've worked with have been amazing, and they've gone above and beyond in communicating.

Finally, one of my biggest struggles starting out was getting the admin side of things down. In every other sales role, admin support is included for free. Now I'm like, "Someone who loves administrative stuff...come help me!"

**How have you handled the challenges?**  
I didn't do a very good job of balancing things in the beginning. I can get really into working where I start to neglect my health, my family, and things around the house. But the Lord made it really clear to me early on that His heart for us in any realm of life is to have balance. He tells us in Scripture not to wear ourselves out trying to get rich. I found I was spreading myself too thin, thinking it was all up to me to make something happen. Hard work plays a huge role, but you can't get out of balance.

So I sat down and started to think through what's important to me. Now I prioritize my kids, my family, ministry, and then my job comes after that—and it's worked out a lot better that way, rather than putting work at the top of my list. Also, I'm going to have grandkids eventually, and I want to be strong for that season of life, so I really prioritize my workouts. I set aside one hour three to four times a week, and that's my workout time.

**How do you define success?**  
I learned early on in real estate where the grace of God is on my life, and I just knew I had to stay within that. It looks like a lot fewer transactions than some agents, but I'm more fulfilled, and personally that's better. I have to be very realistic about where my strengths are, how I'm wired, and how I can best serve my clients—and not compare myself to others, because that's very easy to do.

That said, I define success as being balanced in every area of life. We find contentment when we enjoy things but don't make them an idol.



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WHEN WE ENJOY  
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# BENTLEY FAMILY

## BENTLEY HOME INSPECTIONS

### Building a Legacy Business

BY LUCY REYNOLDS AND PHOTOS BY AMY SULLIVAN PHOTOGRAPHY

When Shannon Weatherford was 13, she moved across the street from a boy named Zach. She was interested right away, but it took him seven years to realize they should be more than friends.

When they finally started dating in 2012, neither could have imagined they'd someday be married, have four active children, and be running a home inspection corporation together.

Today, Shannon and Zach helm Bentley Home Inspections alongside Shannon's mother and step-father, Susan and Donnie Bentley—affectionately known across the region as Santa and Mrs. Claus. Bentley Home Inspections is a “family” business in the truest sense of the word, with kids tagging along on photo shoots and homeschooling on the road between industry conferences.

This wasn't always the plan for the Weatherfords—but when Zach got out of the Air National Guard in May 2020, he told Shannon that God had laid it on his heart to become a home inspector. He'd been helping Donnie with radon mitigation on the side for several years, and the timing just seemed right. “I said, ‘Alright, cool, you can be a home inspector,’” Shannon recalled, “but I talk to my mom every day and I don't want any part of the business.” I told him it was stressful and crazy, and I didn't want to deal with it.”

But life never works that way, does it? When an office employee quit soon afterward, Shannon figured she

could at least answer the phones. Fast forward...today, she oversees payroll, billing, accounting, and finances—for not just the home inspection company but also for Bentley's radon and pest divisions, plus a Christmas light installation business they run during the holidays. “Zach and I always wanted the opportunity to work together,” she quipped, “and now here we are.”

What makes Bentley a different kind of company isn't just the family dynamic—it's their business philosophy. For more than 30 years, Donnie has said, “We're in the ‘taking care of people’ business—and we do that by doing home inspections.” Another company mantra is “Do the right thing,” and the Bentleys and Weatherfords mean it. For example, they delivered truckloads of donated supplies to people in need after the flooding last year, their inspectors regularly pray with clients when the moment calls for it, and office conversations often revolve around how to love on team members who are going through personal struggles.







But passing the torch from one generation to the next requires more than good intentions. Susan admits that she and Donnie disagreed about how to transition leadership. She wanted to make things easier for Shannon and Zach, given they had a young family, but Donnie insisted that they earn their way. “I built this making sacrifices,” Donnie told Susan. “They are going to earn into the business, making those sacrifices, too—because, in the end, everyone else will have seen that they earned it, and it wasn’t just given to them.”

“He was so right,” Susan acknowledged, “and now, other companies in the industry are asking us to teach classes

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on creating a generational company because our approach really works.” The Bentley team watched Shannon and Zach put in long hours while still prioritizing their family. They saw Shannon dive into finance, constantly consulting with the accounting team to learn best practices. They watched Zach become a master inspector, earning respect through his knowledge and his unique ability to walk into challenging situations and leave 15 minutes later with everyone shaking his hand and asking for estimates.

“He’s the only person I’ve ever known who can do that,” Shannon remarked. The proof is in the pudding, and Zach’s philosophy of listening, leading with grace, and approaching difficult conversations with “How can we help you?” instead of blame has made the transition nearly seamless.

Other companies in the industry are asking us to teach classes on creating a generational company because **OUR APPROACH REALLY WORKS.”**

For the next five years, the company’s focus is putting the right people in place so nobody feels overworked or like they can’t take a vacation. “We are passionate about making sure there’s good life balance for everybody,” Shannon explained. “Sometimes growth isn’t sunshine and rainbows; sometimes it’s organization and putting things how they should be.”

“This is Bentley’s—and it will always be Bentley’s,” Susan reflected. “It’s really cool to see that legacy live on and have a team that knows they’re taken care of. It’s people first here, and it’s just a great thing to be able to watch.”

Meanwhile, Donnie gets to reap the rewards of the business he spent his life building—you’ll find him out on his new bobcat.

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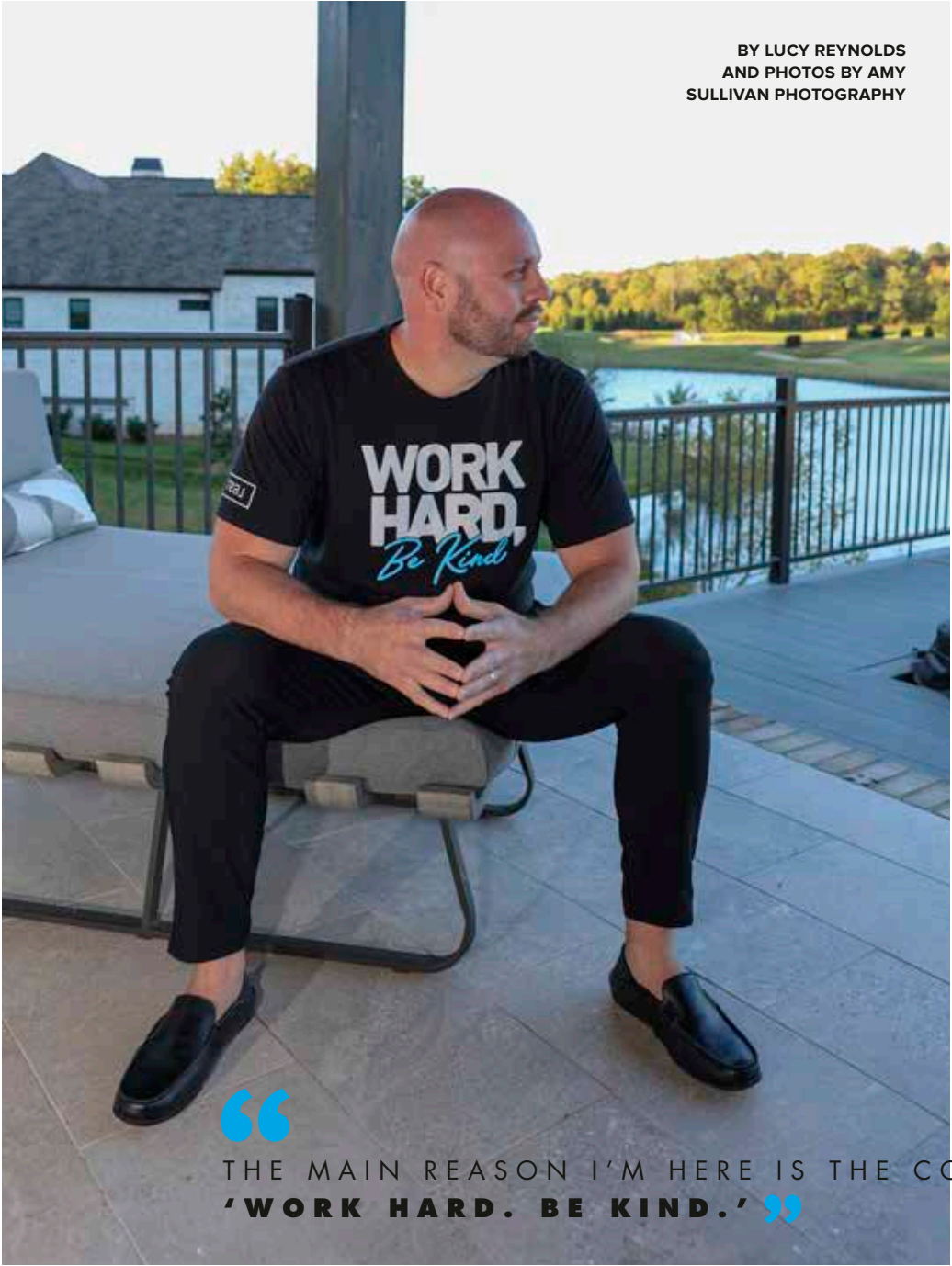






# Stephen Weiler

REAL BROKER



## From Culinary Arts to Real Estate Success

Like many agents, Stephen Weiler never planned on getting into real estate. In fact, his journey to Real Broker—the country’s second largest cloud-based brokerage—in Knoxville led him through culinary school at the prestigious Culinary Institute of America, resort kitchens in the Adirondacks and Florida, upscale restaurants in Las Vegas, a hospitality management degree from the University of Nevada (UNLV), and living in a remote cabin in Alaska that was only accessible by boat or floatplane.

After seven years of working seasonal chef positions in Alaska—where he met his wife of 12 years—Stephen moved back to upstate New York to be near family. With the help of a great agent, he bought a house and made plans to open his own restaurant. But he kept in

“THE MAIN REASON I’M HERE IS THE COMPANY SLOGAN: ‘WORK HARD. BE KIND.’”



touch with his agent, and one day she told him she thought he would do really well in real estate because of all the great questions he asked.

“I had eight months free during my offseason in Alaska,” Stephen explained, “and since I’m all about education, I decided to go learn about real estate. So I took the class, and I passed the state and the national, still with no intention of using it.”

But later, when Stephen and his wife decided to relocate to Knoxville and purchase a home, the experience proved frustrating. Despite being pre-approved and ready to buy, agents weren’t returning his calls. Eventually, his own brother, who had just obtained his broker’s license, stepped in to write the deal. The Weilers bought a fixer-upper sight unseen, and Stephen got to work renovating it himself.

It was during those months of swinging a hammer in his new home that he reflected on the stark

contrast between the service standards he’d maintained throughout his hospitality career and what he’d just experienced as a homebuyer. “Whether I was the chef in the kitchen or the maître d’ or beverage director, my mission was always about the person walking through the door,” he explained, “and knowing we were there to execute at the highest level.”

Soon Stephen decided to try his hand at real estate and see what he could do differently. Starting in April, with his brother as his broker, he closed 18 deals in his first seven months—a remarkable achievement for a rookie agent in any market.

His secret wasn’t complicated: he returned phone calls and put his customers first. The following year, he doubled his production and continued building from there. “It was 100% because I had the hustle,” he insisted, “and because I provided a service. I want to help more people and be the person they can rely on.”

Now, nine years into his real estate career, Stephen has found a home with Real Broker that aligns with his core values. “The main reason I’m here is the company slogan: ‘Work hard. Be kind,’” he explained. “The first time I saw that slogan, I thought, *Man, that is me to a T. That is my heart.*”

He wears it with genuine pride, literally, sporting the phrase on Real Broker shirts. In an industry where ego can sometimes overshadow service, he believes kindness and professionalism should be the baseline. “We just have to remember what our main goal is,” he said. “A buyer wants to buy, a seller wants to sell. It’s not about ego, yours or mine; it’s about getting it done for the better of our buyers and sellers—and that’s it.”

This philosophy definitely shapes how he defines success. With five-star reviews nearing 100, he measures achievement not by transaction volume but by client satisfaction. At every closing, he asks his

clients what he could have done better. “That’ll help me grow,” he explained, “and when I grow, that means I’ll be servicing the next person even better.”

Committed to continuous education, he walks for 45 minutes every morning at 5am while listening to podcasts to stay on top of industry trends and changes. For example, when Zillow recently dropped Matterport from its platform due to litigation with CoStar, he had already researched alternatives and briefed his team before most agents even knew about the change.

After living and working in five diverse states, Stephen has truly found his home in Knoxville. But more importantly, he’s found purpose and fulfillment in his real estate career. “We’re in a ‘like and trust’ business,” he summarized. “When you meet me, you’re going to learn really quick that your interests are my front and center, and your goal is my goal.”

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