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grew up in a single-parent family in North Delta, with a brother and a younger sister.

"My dad left the family when I was seven. Mom raised us and did a good job, I think."

Unsure what direction to take after graduating North Delta Senior Secondary in 1980, he drifted into heavy construction jobs before deciding he wanted to be a carpenter.

He attended Cariboo College in Terrace on a program that led him to extensive apprenticeship in the Kamloops area.

A success in a field that saw him working on concrete for highrises and building bridges, it was natural for him to start his own company to bid for jobs in the mid '80s.

Independence was always an aim.

"I wouldn't make a good employee," he said.

"I always have too many ideas of my own."

But he remembers trepidation at that first step-going to Terrace and leaving his girlfriend, Arlene, behind.

"But I ended up coming back and marrying her, so it worked out alright," he laughed.

He needn't have worried about Arlene-who continues to work closely with him in their current business-either then or when the construction business collapsed.

"She took it like a trooper," he said.

"We didn't go bankrupt, although we had to spend everything we'd acquired. It was a good learning experience."

Never at a loss for ideas, Martell bounced back in the voice mail business, finding in the developing technology a way Lower Mainland customers could circumvent costly long-distance bills, and offer other services.

When that marketplace changed, and the once lucrative business fell off, he bounced back again-after a friend introduced him to the Internet's limitless possibilities.

"There was a company in the U.S., address.com, offering free Internet access. They were trying to bring in subscribers."

Martell's friend had built a little website to troll for subscribers, and lo and behold, the company was sending him \$2.75 for every subscriber he sent them.

"I said 'you need to teach me how to do this'," Martell said.

"I'd never built a website before, but put my first one together to offer free Internet service."

To say he was successful would be an understatement.

"The first cheque I got from address.com was what allowed us to move from Aldergrove to White Rock in 2001," he said.

When the dot-com bust took the company with it, Martell maintained his cool yet again.

Would other companies, he wondered, pay him a fee for finding them customers through the Internet?

The answer was yes, they would, and handsomely.

Today, Martell is a past master in the world of affiliate marketing-the art of creating websites peppered with key words designed to attract leading Internet search engines.

Thus when a potential customer types in the words 'baby crib' he will find a Martell-designed crib manufacturer's site as the first or second choice to pop up on the screen.

Naturally, such a quick response gives Martell's clients access to tens of thousands of customers-but the other key to the business is a third-party organization that tracks resulting transaction and credits it to the Martell site.

The beauty, for both client and Martell, is his commission fee is geared to proven results.

The affiliate marketing boom has drawn many major players, including Disney, National Geographic, Major League Baseball and American Express.

Ironically, the dot-com bust that scared many from the Internet has become a boon to Martell's business, as major clients, gun shy of the web, turn to the fearless Martell to promote their products.

As lucrative as the business is-Martell has more potential clients than he can deal with-he's found it just as profitable to market his expertise to others.

What started with him showing a few friends the ropes turned into a \$1,000, once a week, four-week course.

When even that took up too much of his time, he turned it into a 257-page book would-be entrepreneurs can download online-for \$167 US. And many have.

"We thought it would be 30 or 40 pages at most. Seven months and many thousands of dollars later, it's been quite a risk, but it's an amazing document. Now people I've never even met are doing amazing things, doing business with the big guys."

The riches have given Martell a freedom to enjoy life he didn't have when he was in construction.

"I'd be sitting, on the phone, in Disneyland, dealing with subtrades-it's the nature of the industry."

It's a huge contrast with his working day now, which usually lasts from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., at the offices he took because the website business simply got too big for him to run out of his home.

It also means he and Arlene can spend a lot more time with their children; Adam, 16, a special needs student at Elgin Park Secondary; Justin, 15; Shelby, 13; and Victoria, 8.

That includes frequent mini-vacations and weekend getaways throughout the year-"we call them break-ations," Martell said, many of them inspired by Victoria, like her dad, an eternal optimist.

"Victoria is 'mini-me'," he said.

"She'll come walking in and announce it's time we took a break.

"We have the opportunity to do lots of travelling. Recently I took Arlene and the kids to California-we hopped in the mini-van and headed down the Oregon Coast and then on to San Francisco for some dune bugging.

"Then we went to Vegas for three days and had fun there, and then came back. Then it was back to work for a few weeks, and then Arlene and I went to Maui for our first time in 15 years."

The trip to Cuba with Justin's Elgin Park band (he plays saxophone) was "absolutely a ball."

"We called it Survivor: Roughing It. It wasn't a vacation-it was an adventure. Things are pretty primitive there, things we take for granted. When we got back we could have kissed the ground."

On a recent weekend, they headed to Seymour to ski, something first-time skier Adam, an avid bowler, really enjoyed.

"Adam has no fear, because of his challenges," Martell enthused.

"He started at the top of the ski hill and skied literally straight to the bottom."

Martell and his wife were stressed about sending Adam to high school, he recalled, fearing he would be a target for abuse.

"Instead, there must be 200 kids who know him by name. He's a friendly, outgoing guy and friends with everybody."

Shelby is already focused on working with children, Martell said.

"You put her in the nursery at church and she's a natural with them," he said.

Their church, Peace Arch Fellowship, plays a big role in Arlene's life, Martell said.

"She's basically a full-time volunteer there, working with the children's

ministry."

Arlene also creates her own websites through the company, and like Martell, enjoys sharing her expertise, and fortune with friends.

Another huge family enthusiasm is baseball. Justin plays and Martell, a volunteer coach in the community, has always been a fan of the diamond. The family often heads to Seattle to cheer their favourite team, the Mariners.

"We live for it," Martell said.

"When baseball season comes, everything stops."

Martell is also a frequent visitor to Nat Bailey Stadium.

"That's a great ballpark. You get the best seat in town for \$6."

Martell has bought a digital camera and video camera for taking pictures of the family-but he's also practising taking artistic still shots for his own amusement.

That's currently one of his favourite toys, he said, although he admits he is getting ready to buy himself an even bigger toy-a Shelby Cobra replica, for which he recently took an exploratory jaunt to the factory, near Las Vegas.

But some of his best times are much simpler pleasures, like going to dinner or the movies, or enjoying a Jack Daniels and soda at his favourite haunt, the Sandpiper Pub.

Good life or not, Martell is still surprisingly humble and low-key about his success.

"I still shake my head at it. I never take it for granted for a minute, and we enjoy every minute of it.

"We were in the right place at the right time-we were just ready for it."

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