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ELK COVE INN PROPRIETOR ESCAPES SILICON VALLEY TO DRAW ON CREATIVE PASSIONS

David Lieberman knows just how much his guests need a respite from overwork and the frustrations of urban life—he's been there in spades.

After 22 years in California's Silicon Valley—where he was a marketing executive at Apple Computer, ran a syndicated market research service, and most recently served as a strategy consultant to companies including Hewlett Packard, Intel, IBM, Panasonic, Amway, and Elizabeth Arden—Lieberman decided it was time for a change. He chucked it all in pursuit of a long-held dream that would allow him to draw on his creative passions.

"Though I had transitioned from a 'regular 60-hour a week high tech job' to become an independent marketing consultant," Lieberman recalls, "the pace of Silicon Valley was wearing on me—the congestion, the road rage, client meetings until 2 a.m. My plans for semiretirement had been to complete a book on marketing strategy and teach part time at junior colleges. But the book process seemed daunting, and then I ended up with the proverbial nightmare client. The thought suddenly occurred to me, maybe it's finally time to open that B&B."

Lieberman's friends had been encouraging him to do it for years. "I love people, love to entertain and cook, love to design and decorate, and was Mr. *This Old House*, constantly taking on remodeling projects in my home," he says.

Operating a B&B also represented a return to his roots, of sorts. “My parents had a small dry cleaning and tailoring business in Naugatuck, Connecticut. I was literally raised behind the counter, so I grew up serving customers,” Lieberman says.

He began an exhaustive search of B&Bs from Santa Barbara to the San Juan Islands. After an attempt to buy an inn in Napa fell through—fortuitously, as it turns out—his broker brought him to the Elk Cove Inn. “I knew instantly when I saw it that this was where I was meant to be,” he says.

Former owner Elaine Bryant says she knew it too: “The instant I met David I knew he was the one to take the inn to the next level.”

Lieberman’s goal is to create an atmosphere that invites total relaxation and comfort. To that end, he’s been working on upgrading every aspect of the inn, from light fixtures and food service to linens and furnishings, and is turning a rebuilt garage on the property into a full-service therapeutic spa.

As a marketing executive, Lieberman was quoted in the *Wall Street Journal*, wrote for *Inc.* magazine, and appeared on CNBC’s *Business Today*. As a Mendocino County innkeeper, he appears at the organic grocery, the local planning commission, and housewares stores. Does he miss his former life? Not a chance.

“I get to experience my favorite things every day—people, entertaining, decorating, fixing things up,” he says. Not to mention morning walks in the fog, ocean kayaking on calm, sunny mornings, the beach and the salt air
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