

# Honour is all in the planning

**BE PREPARED** | West Vancouver's Marian Snowball, B.C.'s Financial Planner of the year, believes in planning both money and family, writes **Michael Kane**

**EDMONTON**  
**F**inancial planning is supposed to liberate us from financial worry and help make our dreams come true. That's certainly the creed of West Vancouver's Marian Snowball, who was named B.C. Financial Planner of the Year here Friday.

For Snowball, and her husband and business partner, Ken, financial planning and family planning are much the same thing. That's why they flew to Norway to have each of their four children. It's also why the whole family took three months off last winter to go backpacking in Australia, Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand.

The award, presented at the annual conference of the Canadian Association of Financial Planners, shows it is possible to win the recognition of your peers while maintaining a healthy balance between business and an active and rewarding family life.

Not everyone should have their kids in Norway, of course, unless they also have Norwegian forebears and the chance to inherit some ancestral real estate.

In Norway, land can be passed only to the native-born. Snowball's parents are from Norway, but she was born in Vancouver. By crossing the ocean to give birth in Lillehammer and Oppdal, a small ski village nearby, she ensured that Nicole, 9, Martin, 7, Patrick, 5, and Katrina, 3, are in line to inherit recreational property.



As carefree as it sounds, last winter's family sabbatical also involved financial planning, including bringing on a fourth partner, JoAnne Mulligan, to join founding partner Blair MacLean and hold the fort at BC Partners in Planning in Dunderave.

Marian Snowball held her 40th birthday party in January in Thailand during a trip that she says was idyllic but for the loss of \$500 US to a thief, mostly likely another tourist.

"We were treated well everywhere we went and we didn't let the robbery spoil our trip," she says. "It made us realize that money is replaceable, as long as we were all right."

The trip also gives the lie to the widespread view that financial planning is about saving and suffering now to have fun in the far-distant future.

"Being in the planning business, we see all sorts of people, many who work all the time with the thought that they'll take time off when they retire," says Ken Snowball, 46. "Many don't; they're dead, or sick or still working."

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MARK VAN MANEN/VANCOUVER SUN

Marian Snowball with Katrina, 3, left, husband Ken, Patrick, 5, Martin, 7, and Nicole, 9.



# Snowball one of seven AIM regional winners

## From C1

The Snowballs say families who travel with young children usually value the experience far more highly than any sacrifices the trip may have entailed.

Aside from air fares, they kept their living costs to about \$100 a day by using all forms of public transit — including rickety buses, boats and three-wheeled taxis called tuk tuks — and camping or seeking out local resorts where they could rent small cottages.

Marian Snowball, a chartered accountant and certified financial planner, was one of seven regional winners honoured by AIM Funds Management for helping Canadians to realize their financial goals.

She was recognized for helping a young, affluent family develop a comprehensive financial plan encompassing the best use of stock options during the frenzied high-tech boom, minimizing taxes, funding education for two children, and ensuring both parents could retire by age 50.

Ken Snowball says his wife's skills were the catalyst for BC Partners in Planning, although the firm's roots go back to Prince George, where she attended school with MacLean.

She had planned to become a lawyer but switched to accounting when she was inspired by an accounting professor who, she recalls, "wore tight leather pants and used to smoke in the class right under the 'No Smoking'

sign and swear at everybody, saying we were all stupid." She thought to herself: "Here's an accountant who is not boring — whoa, they can be real people."

After she and Ken married, they took three years off to travel, paying their way with tax refunds from the days when you could forward-average income.

"I've watched Marian over the years working with people and doing really neat things for their over-all finances," Ken says. "It didn't mean they had to buy mutual funds or products to make it happen."

With Marian as the tax specialist, Ken and Mulligan handling investment matters and client relations, and MacLean providing expertise in investment, insurance, pensions and estate planning, the firm targets affluent clients who want to consolidate business and personal affairs in one location.

As well as insisting that every client has a written financial plan, at a cost ranging from \$2,000 to \$3,000, depending on the complexity, the firm charges a two-per-cent fee up front for advice and management of the first \$250,000 invested, and nothing afterward.

The partners say the fee gives the client maximum flexibility and an assurance of objectivity because the planners have no financial incentive to favour one investment over another.

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