A New King on the Block

By Mary Welch

Abby King may just be Atlanta’s Ivanka Trump. Both are tall, blond and beautiful with a passion for real estate. And they have much-beloved developers for fathers. Well, maybe we went too far. Abby’s father, Kim King, was the universally respected and liked developer and former Georgia Tech football star. Ivanka’s dad, “The Donald,” maybe not.

Like Ivanka, Abby has joined the family business, something she never anticipated. “I always knew what I loved, which was the arts sides of things — history, culture, literature. I didn’t have any specific vision of what I wanted to do,” she says.

But today as vice president of residential sales and marketing with Kim King Associates, the 28-year-old has successfully surfed the real estate learning curve, overcome the “Daddy’s little girl” tag and navigated the nuances of working in a family business to become an increasingly force in her own right.

Her father never pressured her or her siblings to join the business. “That was one of the great things about Dad,” she says. “There was no pressure — not even to go to Tech. Growing up, he encouraged us to express ourselves and to find our abilities.”

But the kids weren’t sheltered from the business, either. “We probably all learned about it through osmosis, especially at the dinner table. We would have great conversations at dinner. We’d drive out to the job sites. It wasn’t interesting to an eight-year-old.”

Although it was never explicitly stated, King also figured that her brother, Beau, was the heir-apparent, so she set her sites elsewhere. She followed her passion and graduated from the University of Miami with a degree in languages (Spanish and Portuguese) with a minor in Latin American studies. After graduation, she moved to Washington, D.C., hoping for a government job. In 2002, her father called and asked if she would help out on his new Midtown residential project MidCity Lofts. Another incentive to return was her father’s health. In 1999, he had been diagnosed with multiple myeloma, a form of cancer. After graduation, she moved to Washington, D.C., hoping for a government job. In 2002, her father called and asked if she would help out on his new Midtown residential project MidCity Lofts. Another incentive to return was her father’s health. In 1999, he had been diagnosed with multiple myeloma, a form of cancer.

“I was hesitant because I didn’t want to be the boss’s daughter,” she recalls. “But I said I’d try it out and was thrown into the project. I wanted to be home for Dad. He just told me to go do it. I had watched how Dad worked and I was like a sponge. I just figured it all out.”

“Dad was surprised that I was able to do the job,” she says. “I think he knows how far he can push me,” she says. “I think there is a lot of important player on the team.”

Today she is on job sites — complete with a hardhat with her name embossed on it — dealing with contractors, workers and suppliers. She admits there is still some chauvinism in the traditional male world of real estate, including on the job sites. “A lot of our workers only speak Spanish, and here I am blond with blue eyes,” she says. “I listen to what they’re saying and I lot of times I’ll look at them and say in Spanish ‘Would you kiss your mother with that mouth?’ That ends any sort of talk about a woman on the site!”

When her brother officially took over, the two siblings worked even closer together, a situation that can cause familial turmoil in some cases. But not here. “Of course when Beau took over, it was such an emotional time. But I know him and he knows me. He knows how far he can push me,” she says. “I think there is a lot of benefits working for a family business. There’s no politicking here.”

Currently, she is involved with the development and implementation of marketing and sales strategies for the company’s residential projects and assists with the residential business development for Fifth Street Management Co. A sign of her increasing confidence is that she is adding her married name — de Perez — instead of relying on the instant recognition of being a “King.”

She also is on the board of directors of the Kim King Foundation. “He had a clear vision of what he wanted to do. It’s an education foundation and we’re getting to awareness out there that we’re here to help childhood education.”

While she intends to stay in the family business, King believes there is more in the cards for her. She admits she’s looking at outside opportunities and projects. “I definitely have had the opportunity to work with some incredible people and I want to take advantage of that,” she adds. “But there are some exciting things going on elsewhere and I’d love to be a part of it. Whatever the role is, I’ve got a lot of energy and some things are brewing.”

“There’s a lot more for me in the future.”