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NY REAL ESTATE COMMERCIAL

Robertson's Legacy From Hedge Funds To New Zealand

Role of New Zealand Real Estate in Life of Hedge-Fund Pioneer



Julian Robertson, left, and his son Alex. PHOTO: RAMSAY DE GIVE FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

By **SARAH ROSE**

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Billionaire Julian Robertson is renowned on Wall Street for being a pioneer in the hedge-fund industry in the 1980s and, more recently, for being a philanthropist who is giving much of his fortune away to causes in and outside New York.

What's less known is the role that a New Zealand real-estate investment has played in his career as well as in the life of one of his sons, 37-year-old Jay Robertson.

That investment today consists of 15,000 acres of first-rate land in New Zealand and three luxury hotels—the Kauri Cliffs, the Farm at Cape Kidnappers and Matakauri Lodge. Jay Robertson manages all three properties that include waterfalls, steep ravines and lush emerald hills.

The story of the family and its New Zealand properties underscores the important role that real estate plays in many of New York's wealthy families, even those that aren't in the real-estate business. Unlike other assets, stocks and bonds, real estate is a business that can set children off on successful careers.

The son of a textile-industry executive, Julian Robertson was raised in the textile and tobacco town of Salisbury, N.C. He joined Kidder, Peabody & Co. as a trainee and worked there until he moved to New Zealand with his wife and young family to write what he says was “the great American novel” in 1978.

That novel was never published and Mr. Robertson decided to return to New York and Wall Street. He launched Tiger Management's hedge fund in 1980. At its peak, Mr. Robertson's fund had \$22 billion under management.

But his returns later tumbled, reached \$6 billion in 2000, and Mr. Robertson closed the fund in 2000. “I didn't want my obituary to read he died getting a quote on the yen at 2 a.m. in the morning,” he says.

Since then he has mostly been focusing on his philanthropies and in seeding new hedge funds. Mr. Robertson has launched several foundations with more than \$900 million in combined assets.

Over the years, the Robertsons' ties to New Zealand have gotten stronger. In 1995 Mr. Robertson bought a 6,000-acre property on the North Island, with grazing sheep, and panoramic vistas over the Pacific coast. The price was “the cost of a modest New York apartment,” he recalls.

Mr. Robertson says he didn't encourage his sons to follow in his footsteps to Wall Street, but his youngest son Alex, 35, chose to go into the family business anyway and is currently a director at Tiger Management. His oldest son, Spencer, 40, is executive director of the Pave Academy charter school in Brooklyn.

But Jay Robertson chose the family firm in New Zealand. In high school, he held afterschool jobs at Taco Bell, a subsidiary of Yum Brands Inc. After college, he began training in hospitality in Florida and soon moved to his father's properties in New

Zealand where he started at the bottom—in the restaurant.

“I certainly never thought I would be in New Zealand for 11 years. It still hard for me to believe.” His wife is a New Zealander and he has one child.

As Jay worked through the ranks, he joined his parents in opening the Farm at Cape Kidnappers, which opened a golf course in 2004 and as a lodge in 2007. . When lakeside Matakauri Lodge was up for sale outside of Queenstown in 2008, Jay led the deal to acquire it.

As part of his philanthropic activities, Julian Robertson’s foundation has committed \$50 million to a breast-cancer surgery center at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center named after Mr. Robertson’s late wife Josie. It also has given money for medical research at Rockefeller University in Manhattan.

“Once you get into the giving game, it is so much fun that you give all your money away,” says the billionaire, who is helping to seed charities as he does hedge funds. “If I had started younger I wouldn’t have anything left to give.”

Mr. Robertson’s sons say they are supportive of their father’s generosity.

“I’d be a little concerned if he was blowing it on something crazy, but he can make the world a better place all he wants to,” according to Jay Robertson.

Alex Robinson adds: “My dad said, ‘Just handing over a bunch of money at a young age is the greatest thing your mom and I could do to ruin your life.’”

When considering his legacy, the senior Mr. Robertson hopes people will say, “He was a good honest slob who never cheated anybody and was a decent person.”

And if in the end his obituary reads, Julian Robertson made a lot of money and gave it all away? “That would thrill me,” he said.

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