

“My Leisure: Al Coker”

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MY LEISURE

Al Coker

Sure, Al Coker's been chased out of the water by a shark once or twice. But the **SURFER** knows outswimming a shark beats not outswimming one. "I'm thinking karuna," he says. "I don't eat shark, and they don't eat me." He learned to surf in Taiwan when he was 12, honed his skills in Florida and Hawaii, but ended up landlocked in Dallas. To escape, Coker and his friends drove a Volkswagen van with no air conditioning to South Padre where they'd surf by day and sleep on the sand at night. That didn't pay the bills, so at 19 he opened Dallas' first skateboard shop before finding his calling in real estate. Though reluctant to grow up, the 50-year-old Coker—now president and CEO of Al Coker & Associates, a real estate marketing firm representing high-end residential properties—has found that with age (and financial stability) comes certain advantages. For one, a home in Mexico for breaks between projects, including The House by Philippe Starck and Yoo at Victory Park and the Waterstone Resort on Lake Travis. While life has changed since his first ride, his love for the water remains constant, though it doesn't always love him back. "You're never going to conquer the ocean," he says. "It just occasionally lets you have your way"—JESSICA JONES

SURF'S UP: Once a shaggy-haired surf "punk," Al Coker still rides, but now heads his own residential real estate branding and marketing company on the side.