

Hawai'i Woman

ALLURING AND CAPTIVATING

View from the top

So why do men hire only businesswomen
for the top jobs? — find out

All in the Family

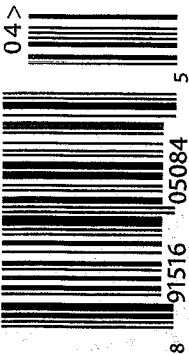
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What challenges have you faced as a woman in this industry?

"When I had the executive vice president position back in 1969, I had a lot of trouble with the "old guard" of the company. I dressed very conservatively and tried my hardest to look older. But I was determined to not give up. Over time, we cleaned house and hired a lot of young college graduates."

If you could do one thing differently in your career, what would it be?

"I would have tried to find more of a balance. I love my work, I've always put in very long days, and to this day I generally only take Sundays off. It was hard on my children when they were growing up, and I have to congratulate women that are married and manage their careers at the same time, because making a relationship successful can be a full-time job in itself."



Jane Onaga, President, Amazon Construction

Company: Known as "Mama Jane" in the trucking industry here in Hawaii, this mother of five started her first construction project in 1981 with just \$200. Her business has been listed as one of the top 25 female-owned companies in Pacific Business News

for years, and offers excavation work, grading, demolition, hauling and trucking. Bearing a gold chain necklace emblazoned with the word "amazon" — a la Carrie from *Sex and the City* — "Mama Jane" shares her tribulations, philanthropic work ethic, and a dream she still hopes to turn into a reality.

What motivated you to start your own construction company?

"When you own your own company, the buck stops with you. I also wanted to be a role model for my children — if I could be successful, they could be successful. I had originally planned to be a beautician, but I began assisting my ex-husband with his trucking business and became passionate about it. I truly believe that everything happens for a reason."

What challenges did you face as a woman in this industry?

"I feel lucky that I managed to find a great support system in this industry. I also feel that being humble verses being aggressive got me a lot further — especially when dealing with men here in Hawaii at time [the 1980's]. Men cannot handle women that come across as if they know everything. I'm also very lucky to have my sons working for the company, they set the pace. I feel I am a C.E.O. because of them."

What do you enjoy the most about owning a business in Hawaii?

"It would not be the same if I owned this company in the mainland. There truly is a sense of ohana and aloha here, people have a warm feeling. In the mainland, it seems as if workers are just a number, and the bottom line is always the main concern. You cannot just focus on profit margins — you have to show appreciation to your workers. We had almost 700 people at our company Christmas party last year, as a gratitude effort to tell people 'thank you.'"

The Women of Kumai Realty Inc.



Donnelle Saguibo Alos
Realtor Associate
391-2567



Cherry Moana Sabung
Realtor Associate
285-9277



Yolanda J. Salondaka
Realtor Associate
285-3574



Ethel Shima
(RA, CRS, GRJ)
391-2567



Cerise Richardson
Realtor Associate
389-0479



Schereen Numasaki
Realtor Associate
221-0580



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