

The Slotnick Family

A fairly well-known name in the construction and real estate management businesses, SEIGuam, formerly known as Slotnick Enterprises, has been on the scene for many decades, in one form or another.

The newest addition to the SEIGuam family, Construction Resources, offers a comprehensive database for active contractors to locate, bid on and manage development projects, among many other services.

Connie and Leonard Slotnick

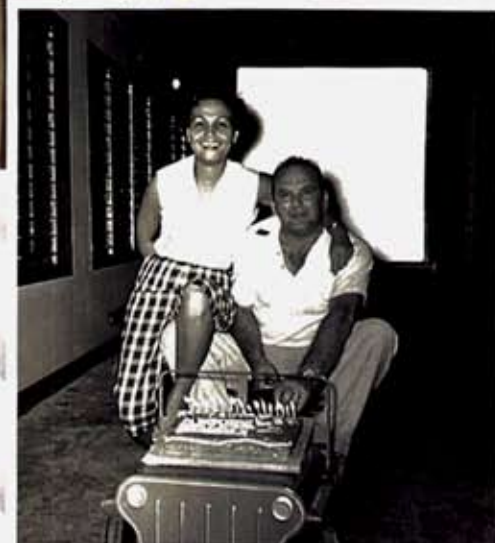
Founders of Slotnick Enterprises,
now SEIGuam

Kitty and Jimmy Ferrante

Owners of Kitty's Hair Salon

Jay Rojas

Executive Vice President
SEIGuam



Clockwise from top left: Connie Slotnick with her husband, Leo, co-founder of Slotnick Enterprises. Bottom left: Slotnick with her nephew Jay Rojas.



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— Jay Rojas,
executive vice president,
Construction Resources

But the company was not always in the area of expertise it is now. Connie Slotnick, widow to the late Leonard Slotnick and co-founder of Slotnick Enterprises, said the family business began as Coral’s Dress Shop in 1950 on today’s Marine Corps Drive.

She said her husband, a native of Boston and accountant by trade, retired from Pacific Island Engineers, the company that originally brought him to Guam. The storefront was subsequently purchased as a place in which to open shop.

“We never planned on all of this,” she said. “I didn’t know I would be in fashion. It just kind of started.”

What began as a love of sewing and going on buying trips to New York and California to obtain articles in the latest fashion of the day, Slotnick said, slowly blossomed into a store that succeeded beyond her expectations until 1984. She added that looking back, it wasn’t always easy.

“In the beginning, we struggled,” she said. “There was no money. But you have to be aggressive; you have to start small and get in there.”

Slotnick’s sister, Kitty, and her husband, Jimmy Ferrante — entrepreneurs in their own right — opened Kitty’s Hair Salon down the street creating a situation in which women purchasing new dresses could also immediately get their hair done, according to Jay Rojas, great-nephew to the Slotnicks.

Ferrante also operated various dining establishments and was involved in liquor distribution in the region as well, Rojas said.

Later ventures for the family included hotel investments, a string of movie theatres, including Hafa Adai Cinema in Tamuning and the Agana and Dededo theatres. The Cinema — currently unoccupied — can still be seen today adjacent to what is now the Hafa Adai Exchange.

It was at this time that SEIGuam, comprised mainly of property and real estate management endeavors, was formed. The enterprise consolidated much of the family’s assets in one place as the original founders began getting older and experiencing health problems.

Much like the dress shop, Slotnick said the idea of a business spanning several generations was never planned. Without children of her own, she said making sure she and Leo pitched in to raise and educate their extended family members was paramount.

Such efforts paid off in spades when the time came to entrust certain operations to family members, affording certain opportunities in order to carry on operations. According to Slotnick, the opening of Construction Resources, a reinvestment of family assets, came from an idea by Rojas, who is and now executive vice president for Construction Resources.

“He came to me,” she said. “That was his idea. I still come to work every day — I still have things to say — but I know [the business] is in good hands.”

Rojas said he always planned to forge his own business experience — and did so quite successfully — finding himself working in Manhattan, always a dream of his. But with the passing of his great uncle and an unsure direction for SEIGuam, he said he put little thought into his decision to come home and assist with the family in business.

“Auntie Connie, who was 86 at the time, asked if I would come home and help her out,” he said. “There was no discussion. In two weeks, I quit my job, packed up my apartment and got on that plane. That was four years ago. And I will never regret it.”

Rojas said working in a family business is not always a piece of cake for later generations.

“It can be very difficult to separate the business operations from the family structure,” he said. “In a regular employment situation, you can always leave your office and your work behind. In a family business, you can leave your office, but then 10 minutes later you will see those same family members at home.”

Paradoxically, however, it is this closeness that Rojas said guides him in difficult business decisions. He said he has learned from his family’s strong work ethic to “aim high but be prepared for defeat,” and if defeated, to try again with the new learned experience.

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