

Tim Guard of McCabe, Hamilton & Renny finds the stevedoring business to be an uplifting experience.

THE GUARD ON THE WATERFRONT

BY LUCY JOKIEL

FIVE YEARS AGO, Robert "Tim" Guard was a happy headhunter. He was contentedly running his small, seven-year-old executive search firm, Robert T. Guard & Associates, when a client's request changed his life. The board of directors of McCabe, Hamilton & Renny—the state's oldest and largest stevedoring operation—asked Guard to compile a list of potential executives to succeed President Tom McCabe, who would retire in the next few years. Two weeks later, Guard was told to scrub the project. The board had already selected the perfect candidate: *him*.

The naming of Guard to the post made perfect sense to MH&R officials. Most of them had worked and prospered under the leadership of Guard's father, Jack, a 58-year veteran of the firm. Jack Guard started his career at MH&R as a junior clerk in 1913 and, by the time of his death in 1971, had risen to the rank of chairman emeritus. But the idea of heading the now 88-year-old *kamaaina* firm was unsettling to his son. "I wondered how a small businessman like myself could make things work as the CEO of a large, complicated business," he recalls.

Then Tim remembered the summers he had worked on the docks, when his dad asked him to fill in for stevedores who called in sick. The young Punahou student had spent hours packing and moving heavy boxes of lumber, wire and other cargo into the steamy holds of ships. He had pulled his weight then, and had won the grudging approval of other seasoned workers on the pier. "I always felt I had to uphold the Guard family's reputation," says the now 48-year-old. "I didn't want anyone to say that Jack Guard's son was dogging it."

In 1984, Guard accepted the MH&R offer, and wound down his executive search business (he later sold it to Chuck McKeon, who now operates it as Guard McKeon & Associates Inc.) Guard was named vice president of JBG Corp., the holding company named after Jack B. Guard and formed after his death primarily for tax purposes. Since then, Tim has been promoted to president and general manager of MH&R and, in December 1986, he and partner Jim Haynes of Maui acquired a controlling interest in JBG. In 1987, they completed a 100-percent purchase of the company from four separate trusts and more than 80 individual shareholders for \$1.3 million. Last year and primarily from its stevedoring services, JBG hauled in \$17.4 million to capture the 188th spot on this year's Hawaii Business Top 250.

Since taking over the helm, Guard has spent \$2.5 million for equipment such as

Headhunter-turned-CEO Guard: "There's no textbook on how to run a stevedoring business."