

REAL ESTATE

# EXECUTIVE

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## Trevor Benn, Honolulu Realty, Inc.

An Unstoppable Force

National Feature  
An Agent's Base of Operations  
Home vs. Office

# contents

VOL. 2, NO. 6

JULY 2005

3

**Countrywide Brings Home Loan Expertise to Kihei**

4 COVER STORY

**TREVOR BENN,  
HONOLULU REALTY, INC.**

An Unstoppable Force

11 FEATURE

**YOUR BASE OF OPERATIONS: HOME VS. OFFICE**

Do you need the structure of going into the office every day, or do you prefer a 30-second commute to your home office? Agents talk about what they like—and don't like—about working from home, and the tools that help them succeed no matter where their base of operations.



## DEPARTMENTS

2 from the publisher

9 the business of real estate

14 around the country



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## ON THE COVER

**Trevor Benn, Honolulu Realty, Inc.**



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# Trevor Benn, Honolulu Realty, Inc.

## An Unstoppable Force

By Rose Estrada

George Bernard Shaw said, “*Youth is wasted on the young.*” Well, Shaw never met Trevor Benn. You might want to write that name down and remember it, because you will definitely be hearing it a lot more often.

This 30-something, awe-inspiring “go-getter” is quickly etching a place for himself among the lofty ranks of the local real estate community. With a personal sales volume of \$20 million for 2004, and an impressive \$50 million plus currently, he has just scratched the tip of the proverbial iceberg. In fact, for the first quarter of 2005, Benn was ranked number one in sales. It is not difficult to see why Trevor is doing so well in this service-oriented profession. He enjoys working with people, and likes meeting folks from all walks of life. His clientele is extremely diverse; he works with the first time home buyer to the millionaire investor. Moreover, Benn possesses the uncanny ability to relate to each client easily and effectively.

As you speak to Trevor, you immediately recognize that you are dealing with an experienced businessman whose charisma and genuineness shine through. There is no doubt that Trevor is a serious professional; he can look you straight in the eye, give you a firm handshake and break down the latest market trends and statistics — but you also catch a glimpse of another side of this multifaceted individual. It becomes quite apparent that Trevor can easily breeze into a room, crack a joke or provide some witty repertoire, right away lightening the mood of any situation. Within a few minutes of sitting across from this refined and polished gentleman, you find yourself at ease and intrigued by the stories he tells about his childhood and current real estate happenings.

Trevor understands local real estate — supply and demand, cause and effect — he knows his business. Although Benn works throughout Oahu,

**Trevor at his downtown office.**



PHOTO BY MARK SCHECHTER

Trevor with wife, Rae, daughter, Malia, and son, Tyler.

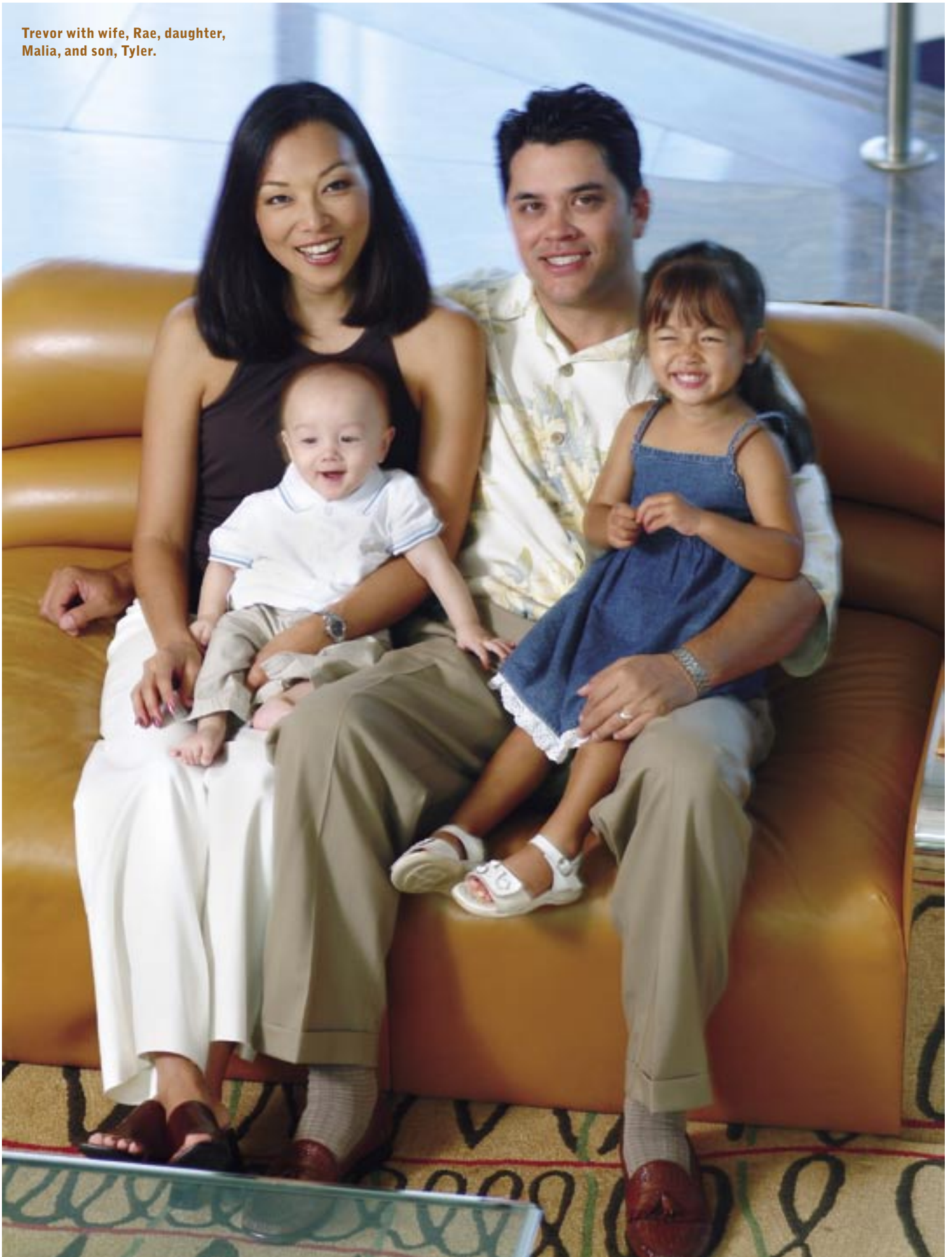


PHOTO BY MARK SCHECHTER



PHOTO BY MARK SCHECHTER

**Trevor and his wife Rae. Even with their demanding schedules, they make family a priority.**

he finds himself specializing more and more in the quickly changing and ever-evolving metropolitan areas of Honolulu and Waikiki. As you walk with him through the busy streets of Waikiki, he explains the future for real estate in this bustling area as he sees it. The astute Realtor knows that the landscape of this integral segment of our economy is changing. He also understands that the real estate industry itself is changing. Trevor seems to be charged by all that is happening; his real estate career seems poised to thrive in this fast-paced arena. “We are in an extremely competitive business. All you have to do is open the Sunday paper to see that,” states Trevor, “Technology has increased efficiencies in all aspects of our business, and this has brought fundamental change to the way we deliver our services. But no matter where you position yourself in the marketplace, you have to do your absolute best for your clients, and that’s the measuring stick. That’s how we judge our success.”

In real estate, the highest form of flattery comes in the form of “referrals.” In Trevor’s case, his business is referral-based. He has garnered the reputation for “getting things done right and honestly.” Benn relentlessly aims for total and complete client satisfaction. Perhaps it is this solid work ethic and impenetrable integrity that has allowed him to break into the inner sanctum of high-financed commercial projects, management and residential investments. He has quickly earned the respect and confidence of all those he works with. “I can confidently say that no other real estate

professional exemplifies the degree of savvy, compassion, integrity and honesty as Trevor,” says T. Michael Hogan Jr., founder of T.M. Hogan, Inc. “I have referred Trevor to some of our principal investors from the mainland, all of which have had the highest praise for his abilities.”

Honolulu Realty, Inc. operates two offices in town. Benn serves as the broker-in-charge for Honolulu Realty’s downtown office located on River Street. The firm’s second office is on the main floor of Nauru Tower.

As broker-in-charge, Trevor provides a positive environment which encourages teamwork and fosters success. He leads the agents in his charge with the same level of respect he would appreciate. Benn also takes his role as mentor seriously. He leads by example, and continually strives to learn and grow professionally.

Benn’s credentials and professional designations include that of Realtor (R), Graduate Realtor Institute (GRI), Accredited Buyer’s Representative (ABR) and Electronic Professional (ePro). As for recognition and accomplishments, Trevor was nominated for the 2003 and 2004 Aloha Aina Award-“People’s Choice.” He was the recipient of the 2004 *REALTOR* magazine’s “30 Under 30” Award. This honor is awarded by the National Association of Realtors (NAR) and *REALTOR* magazine to 30 of the nation’s exemplary Realtors all under 30 years of age. Most recently, Benn was selected and honored as one of *Pacific Business News*’ 40 under 40 award recipients. This recognition is bestowed upon 40 of Hawaii’s best and brightest businessmen and women all under the age of 40.

Where did it all begin for Trevor Benn? What drives this unstoppable force? And who helped foster this man’s entrepreneurial spirit and mold the strong sense of ethics and integrity? The youngest child of Charles and Liana Benn, Trevor was born in Ann Arbor, MI. As with many Hawaiian families residing on the mainland, a strong sense of family and the longing for home drew them back to the islands. After completing his doctoral studies, Charles Benn moved his family back to Oahu; Trevor was a year old. Benn got his first taste of business at the age of 6, by working at the family’s small take-out restaurant, the Royal Kitchen. Along with his older brother Jason, Trevor recalls many a day working in the family restaurant. “In the restaurant business, holidays are the busiest,” laughs Trevor. “While everyone else is relaxing and spending time with family, we were at the restaurant yelling at each other!” Benn clearly understands what commitment and follow-through is all about. He is not unfamiliar with hard work and the concept of reaping the fruits of your labor.

Trevor has a knack for vivid storytelling. He tells a story of growing up in the family business. “It was Super Bowl Sunday, and my brother and I were anxious to go and watch the game with our friends. Mom told us that as soon as the Char Siu for the maunapua had roasted, we could leave.” Benn starts to laugh as he remembers what happened next. “Well, brilliantly, we figured that if it took one-and-a-half hours for it to cook at 350 degrees, it would stand to reason that at 500 degrees it should take about half the time, right?” He continues, “Needless to say, after throwing away 400 pounds of burnt pork, we didn’t get to see the game that day.”

Benn’s childhood, however, was not all work and no play; Trevor fondly remembers growing up in his grandmother’s home in Pacific Heights. He tells of playing with all the cousins and kids on the block. “It was a lot of fun!” says Benn. “Back then we were all about mud-ball fights and building tree houses . . . now my younger cousins who live there just play video games all day. I tell them ‘you know we live in Hawaii right? You know people save up all year just to spend a few days in this sun? They just laugh at me.’”

**T**revor has always been a self-starter. When he formulates his goals, he immediately follows up! He draws upon his past experiences and uses every available tool to move forward.

— Donavon Dela Cruz, Chairperson, Honolulu City Council

In the Benn household, when it came to the subject of school, the value of a good education was always emphasized. Trevor remembers his father, an author and adjunct professor at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, and his mother, a civilian personnel manager at Hickam Air Force Base, wisely telling both he and his brother that education is the one thing you can never lose.

Trevor graduated from Iolani School, one of Hawaii's top preparatory schools. He went on to attend University of Oregon, and later returned to Oahu, where he attended the University of Hawaii at Manoa and earned his bachelor's degree in finance. Benn excelled throughout his post-secondary educational career. He was awarded the Financial Executive Institute Scholarship and was inducted into the Golden Key National Honors Society.

With degree in hand, Trevor Benn was well on his way into the high-powered world of finance as a stockbroker. But words of wisdom prevailed — his uncle insisted he have something to fall back on. In 1995, while attending college, Trevor earned his real estate license by taking night classes from Ken Chong at UH. He went into real estate part-time from 1995 – 2000, and eventually went full-time with the firm of Honolulu Realty, Inc. in 2001.

How many men are fortunate enough to have attained this level of success at such a young age? Benn looks away, smiles and says modestly, "I got lucky. I don't have any secrets or special connections. We worked hard to get here, and I know it can all disappear as fast as it came. So we continue to work hard and hope to take it to the next level." Trevor has attained the all-American dream — a successful career, a supportive wife, a beautiful family and the respect of his colleagues and clients alike. But whatever he sets out to do, Benn always remembers that a balance must be maintained. He recalls words of advice given to him by a senior executive in the company he formerly worked for. Prior to Benn leaving the company, this older, wiser man told him he was about to share the secret of life with him — "*Balance. Balance in all things.*" Benn strives to do just this — find the balance in all aspects of his life. For a successful and driven man such as Benn, it may be easy to lose sight of what is truly most important in life. Trevor makes a concerted effort to not forget those things which are precious and enduring — his relationships with the people he loves.

Trevor's wife, Rae Ifuku Benn, has been a strong support behind the scenes. Rae, the former controller of Hawaii's largest long-term care provider, has cut back and tailored her work schedule to fit within her husband's full schedule and the demands of their young family. Married five years, the couple has two children: Malia, 2 and Tyler, six months. The two complement each other well.

Benn and his wife were classmates at Iolani School. Shortly after he asked Rae to their senior prom, they began dating. The two carried on



PHOTO BY MARK SCHECHTER

**Trevor works with buyers from all areas of Oahu.**

a long-distance relationship after graduation. Rae stayed on Oahu and attended the University of Hawaii at Manoa, while Trevor went on to college in the mainland. "Our phone bills were outrageous!" says Rae.

Rae has a deep respect for her husband and all that he has accomplished. She also recognizes her husband's efforts to play an active role in their family life and in their children's daily routine. "Regardless of how busy his schedule is, there are certain things he insists on being home for," says Rae. "Trevor tries to be home in time to have dinner, bathe the kids, and tuck them in. Spending quality time with the children is extremely important to him."

When you ask Benn what he attributes his success to, he will immediately tell you that it is due to networking. "The friendships I developed in school and maintained over the years have proven invaluable," says Benn. Those relationships have led to such deals as the Bay View Golf Course. Benn helped the Japan-based owner find a buyer for the property, enabling them to avoid insolvency. This sale not only earned Trevor the confidence and trust of the local and Japanese business sector, but it also rapidly opened other doors for him as well. In the latter part of 2004, he closed the Cannery Building in Iwilei, an industrial property with approximately 90,000 square feet of leaseable space. Then, in early 2005, he sold two hotels — the Ohana Waikiki



**Trevor puts his client's needs first. Their success is his success.**

Surf, consisting of 303 units, and the Ohana Waikiki Surf East with 102 units. He currently has several other large commercial properties in negotiations, including other Waikiki hotels.

There are many people behind Benn's success — his parents, his wife and his mentors. One of these mentors was Mark Mugiishi, M.D., who serves as an Iolani board member and basketball coach. "Doc taught me to focus on the things I excel in and foster those skills," says Benn. "You can't be good at everything, so don't try to be." He also credits his Japanese business partners (who shall remain unnamed), for the valuable lessons taught on how to conduct business with Japanese-owned companies. But the greatest credit he reserves for his wife. "It wasn't long after college that I came to the conclusion that I was unwilling to work in a traditional 'job,'" says Trevor. "When you tell your wife you want to enter a career that has no salary, long hours and lots of expenses, and then she responds, 'Sure, go for it,' then you know you've got the right one." He laughs, "She's smarter and better-looking than me too!"

It is important to Benn that he align himself with people who are like-minded, goal-oriented individuals. He is interested in helping other young entrepreneurs. Benn was instrumental in bringing together an investment partnership of local businessmen. Together, they formed the Toro Capital Group. Trevor also sits on the board of several companies, including: Sandalwood Mountain Properties, a real estate investment company, Parallel 21, Inc., an Internet consulting company and Royal Kitchen, Inc., an eatery and investment company.

Benn also understands how important it is to give back to your community. You have to sit back and wonder where he finds the time to do it all. Besides being active at Iolani School as his alumni class representative, Trevor is a strong supporter of the American Heart Association. For the last two years, he has served as part of the Heart Association's general committee for the "Black Tie, Blue Jeans" annual fund-raiser. Again, in step with maintaining "balance," Trevor finds time for the things he enjoys to do for himself, which almost always leads to the golf course! "Golf is one of those activities that demands your attention, so as long as you switch off the cell phone, you can give your mind and body a break from work for that time," says Trevor.

So what does the future hold for Trevor Benn? "Development. I think the natural progression is to look into developing, but timing is everything, and I may need to wait it out for awhile," states Trevor. By the end of your time with Trevor, there's no doubt that he will accomplish all that he sets out to do. His energy and enthusiasm is contagious. He exudes professionalism and integrity. He is an astute businessman who understands the fine nuances of negotiation. Trevor Benn provides the best customer care possible to each and every one of his clients. His flexibility, versatility and expansive knowledge serve his clients well. Benn seems to be at ease in any setting, and has an uncanny ability to reach people. He folds his clients into his network, and leverages those relationships to get them what they need. He is an *unstoppable force*. Trevor Benn can and will do anything he sets his mind to. ■