

Bail Bonds Company Owner Is A Business Survivor

■ Robert Miller Is A Study in Patience and Business Perseverance

His businesses have survived a hurricane. They survived a fire.

Where many people would see these disasters as a sign to get out of the business world, Robert Miller saw opportunity to make things even better.

Miller, who owns Orange County Bail Bonds (1043 Civic Center Drive West) is a Southern California native. But he went on a multi-city whirlwind tour of entrepreneurial nightmares—none of his own making—and lived to tell about them.

"I sold my interest in a nightclub in Long Island, N.Y. at the end of 1995," Miller begins the story. "I went to St. Thomas with a little bit of money in my pocket. There were payments that were going to be coming in for the next several years from my former partner."

Then the first problem. "Three months later, the

checks stopped coming from him," Miller says. "He had lost the whole business. So I went to work in the restaurant business again, and then ended up buying a Jeep dealership there."

"Three months later, the checks stopped coming."

That business was a success until 1989, when Hurricane Hugo wiped out much of the island. "The biggest part of my business was Jeep rentals," Miller says. "Tourism stopped for over a year. Actually, FEMA kept me alive for about six months because they rented every one of my Jeeps for those in the crisis and for the FEMA disaster people who were down there."

Miller finally closed the business a short time later, but found opportunity in

another company wiped out by the hurricane. The owner of Mountain Top, a tourist destination frequented by cruise ship travelers seeking souvenirs or a "World Famous Banana Daiquiri", wanted to shut down and not rebuild. Miller struck a deal with the owner to become a partner, rebuilt Mountain Top, and restored it to the prominent tourist hot spot it had been since the 1950's.

While on the island, Miller married and had a son.



Seeking better educational opportunities for his family than St. Thomas could provide, Miller moved back to California.

He opened Orange



County Bail Bonds in 1996, in a building also housing a number of attorney's offices. He eventually bought the building in 2001.

In November, 2004, the second floor of his building was completely destroyed by fire, and arson was suspected. "The first person they look at when it's arson is the owner of the building, of course," says Miller. "All they had to do was take one look at my insurance coverage and they stopped looking at me. I had the worst insurance policy. I didn't realize how bad it was. It was one of the worst business moves I had ever made."

It took nearly two years to rebuild, with Miller operating Orange County Bail Bonds

from a parking lot trailer. The business, however, didn't suffer, and the building is better than ever.

"It is basically the same-sized building we had before, right down to the square inch, but it's all retro-fitted and meets new earthquake standards," Miller says. "It was built in a green design, so you've got the florescent lights and special insulation. My power bills are dramatically lower than the old building; the old building had no insulation at all. So we got a better building."

And, hopefully, no more disasters.

Orange County Bail Bonds provides discrete bail services 24 hours a day. For info, go to www.bailall.com.