

# A CLASSIC SUCCESS STORY

**Article written by: Famous Martial Artist & Hollywood Stunt Legend Kim Kahana Sr.**

You may not recognize my name or my face, but if you've ever watched TV or a feature movie the chances are you've seen me, Kim Kahana Sr. I'm the guy going over the cliff, flying through the bar room window, crashing a car and falling off a horse. Subjecting my body to whatever the Hollywood screenwriters and Directors can dream up for their action shots.

**SO WHO IS KAHANA THE HOLLYWOOD STUNTMAN?** To Understand, it is essential to understand Kahana the man.

I was born in the Hawaiian Islands on October 16<sup>th</sup>, 1929. My father was in the U.S. Coast Guard and was an instructor in Judo and Aikido teaching to the general public as well as my family. At the age of 4 ½ I became very proficient in both these arts. In 1934 my father was transferred from Sand Island, Hawaii to Osaka, Japan taking me along with him where I studied under Sensei Hanna Fusa for about 3 ½ years earning my first black belt in Judo at the age of nine years old. Then in 1937 my father was transferred back to Hawaii. There I was able to see many different styles of martial arts such as Filipino-stick fighting, Kung-Fu, and Karate. I was very active and liked to fight in and out of the ring. I enjoyed contact. My first style in Karate was Shotokan, but after studying for a year it became a little too rigid for me so I made the decision to switch to Kempo and then to Shorin-Ryu. By this time I had developed a good mix of martial arts under my belt. I was also very interested in the art of the Samoan Knife and Fire Dancing which I learned from some of my Samoan friends. In later years I became a Samoan Warrior under the training of Freddie Letuli and traveled around the world performing.

As a boy I became very restless. I wanted to go to the mainland and see the country. At the age of nine I stowed away on a ship bound for San Francisco, but out to sea I was discovered and brought back to Hawaii. After witnessing the bombing of Pearl Harbor I stowed away again and this time made it to San Francisco. From there I hitchhiked and hopped trains across the country to my Uncle in New York where he was working in a band with Xavier Cugat. He taught me how to play the drums which was the start of my career in show business, playing drums and dancing the Samoan Fire and Knife Dance.

Years later during the Korean War I enlisted in the U.S. Army and became a member of the Airborne Ranger Unit. The Korean War was about survival. In fact I clawed my way out of a grave after an enemy firing squad had left me for dead becoming one of the country's most decorated soldiers of the Korean War, having received the Silver Star, two Bronze Stars and two Purple Hearts. I later also recovered after a grenade explosion had left me blind for two years and permanently sightless in my left eye.

After the Army I moved to Hollywood and began working as an extra. I also began picking up work as a stuntman after I realized that these guys were getting paid a lot more for what I had been doing in Korea for free. At least it seemed that way in my mind. I did not know how to ride a horse, so I went to such legendary Hollywood cowboys such as Yakima Canutt and the family of

John Epper. My vast career has spanned over 300 movie and TV credits which can be viewed on Wikipedia and IMDb.

The idea for a stunt school came to me in the 70's when I noticed that the profession was being overrun with young daredevils who were killing themselves and injuring others. These daredevils who encouraged daring feats by those with more guts than common sense. I didn't want to stop the newcomers from coming, but I did want to make sure they knew how to do their jobs without killing themselves or someone else. So 1972 I began the Kahana Stunt School for those who were already in the stunt business. Two years later I opened it to the public and the school was the first to offer organized instruction. Up to that point stuntmen had learned on the job from industry veterans, many of whom didn't care for the idea of me giving away what they considered trade secrets. So with that, I resigned from the Stuntman's Association of Motion Pictures and continued teaching at the stunt school [www.kahanastuntschool.com](http://www.kahanastuntschool.com).

In this line of work you meet many people. Some come and go and others become like family, like the Zaino's. It was March of 2009, Danny and his wife Theresa Zaino called me for an interview with their Martial Arts Entertainment Radio network. After the interview I invited them and their family to come up and see the Kahana Stunt School. I was very intrigued and interested in meeting another martial arts family. When the Zaino's came to tour the stunt school I was very impressed with their children Tony, Joey and their little sister Dominique who was only 14 years old at the time. Danny asked if I could give him some advice with a documentary he was doing about his family. We talked for several hours and before they left they invited my wife Sandy and I as special guests to their Martial Art Hall of Fame Awards Banquet in Clearwater, Florida. Their kids were performing a special demo with their "Team Americas" formerly known as "National Team Pepsi Show Team". They were very impressive.



**Kim Kahana Sr. with Chuck Norris,  
Benny "The Jet" Urquidez & Family**



I was also surprised as I received a Recognition Plaque for “Best Stunt Coordinator”.

Over the past six years the Zaino’s have not only become an extended part of my family they have excelled their talents far beyond what I could have ever imagined. This is why I offered to assist them and become the Director of their online television show, Director of their family documentary film “Born to Compete – the Zaino’s”, which is now in the editing stages and recently made the decision to become their official manager. Besides the obvious, their similar family values and work ethic, it is still quite amazing to me to see their family and reflect on how my family was so much like theirs with so many similarities to include both myself and Danny having long careers in the martial arts, with me over 60 years and Danny over 40 years. Danny and I both served in the United States Army and both were stationed in Korea. I from 1950 to 1953 during the Korean War and Danny, a DMZ Military Police Veteran serving from 1979 to 1981.

Both of our families are in the entertainment business. The Kahana’s are long standing in Hollywood for our famous stunt performers, actors and second unit directors. The Zaino’s are the new generation in Hollywood with their own online media network to include TV, Radio & Magazine in which Danny is the Executive Producer & Host of “Martial Arts Show Biz TV”, an online martial Arts & entertainment reality based news show starring the Zaino Family. Theresa Zaino is the CEO and Operator of “Action Entertainment Talent Agency” A fully licensed and bonded SAG-AFTRA franchised agency located in Jupiter, Florida. As for the Zaino children, Tony Zaino is a graduate of Palm Beach State College in film production; Joey Zaino is a graduate of the Kahana’s Stunt & Film School and a student at the Florida State University along with sister Dominique Zaino who is in the FSU prestigious media and communications Program. They are all actors and entertainers currently assisting the Kahana’s Stunt & Film School and helping with on going projects.



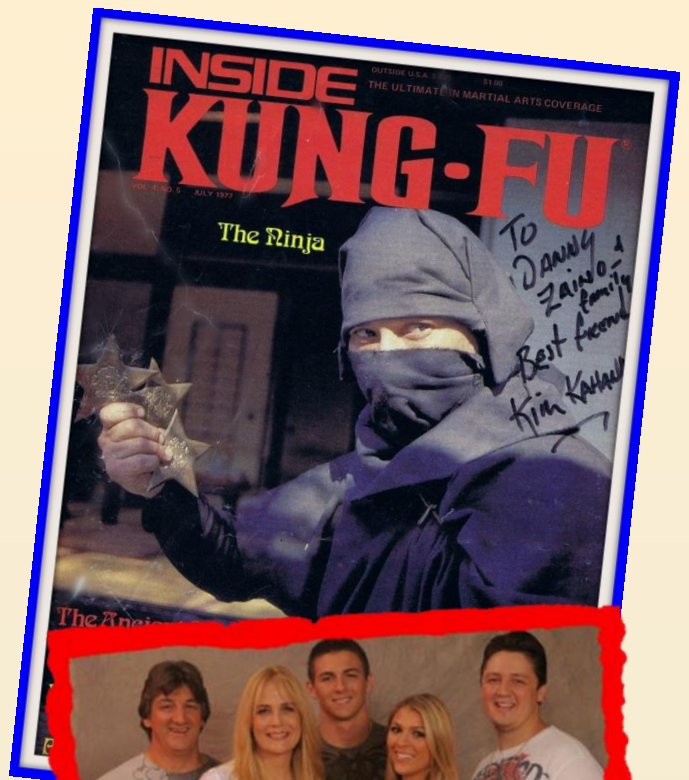
**Tadashi Yamashita and  
Kim Kahana Sr.**



**Kahana Stunt School - LA**



Today, the Kahana name is still active and working in the business. I'm still coordinating, rigging, and directing. I stay active in the field, motivated to continue by the stunt students and their families. I am doing more projects every year on my 100 acre ranch in Central Florida. The ranch is world renown for movie companies to use for their productions as well as teaching actors and stunt people to learn their craft. In fact now the Kahana Stunt & Film School has started a Junior class for stunt career oriented kids ages 10-17. Our Junior students predominantly have advanced martial arts or gymnastics background. I also continue to work with the Zaino's on a daily basis where our companies "Stunt Action Coordinators Inc." [www.kahanstuntschool.com](http://www.kahanstuntschool.com), "MASBT, RADIO & MAGAZINE" [www.masbtvnetwork.com](http://www.masbtvnetwork.com), and "Action Entertainment Talent Agency" [www.aetalent.net](http://www.aetalent.net) have on going film projects year round for people to come, learn and train from all over the world. At 85, I'm still kicking and I don't plan on stopping or slowing down any time soon.




**Dominique Zaino – Fire Stunt**



**Joey Zaino – Car Explosion**



**Florida Training**