

## Ava Doner: The only thing stronger than her will was her heart...



*Ava Doner, 2017*

Ava Doner affected everyone she met. With women, it was instant admiration. Smarts, moxie, elegance, resilience, pragmatism, and beauty, Ava Doner made women feel comfortable and welcome. With men, they were happy to be around her, too, but often took her skills and intelligence for granted. They were polite, until they found out that she was the one that *owned* the business and would be quoting them a price for work. She founded the only female-owned and run drafting service of its day. Her first two clients—Pacific Bell and Southern California Edison—stayed with her for more than four decades until the day she died. She even hired a male manager to make her male customers feel comfortable talking to a man about the work. Yet those same customers were always politely puzzled why some overly curious “secretary” was always looking over their shoulders, only to learn later that she was judging the scope and the cost of the job.

She learned to deal with men when she was a little girl and went to work with her father on tugboats out of San Pedro. She claimed the old salts as mentors, adding that their tutelage, “helped me in business because I knew how to deal with men after that.” Of course, her firm became renowned for delivering exemplary work and she gained admiration and respect from the even toughest engineers. Because of her work, her steadfast devotion to a woman’s right to choose her career, and her selfless advocacy in helping women—particularly young women—she won virtually every major women’s and civic award one can win in Southern California. And that is why is she is honored each and every year at the WTS-LA Annual Scholarship and Awards dinner with the Ava Doner Memorial Scholarship Awards.