

A "mentor" helped her advance in job market

By Linda Lord-Jenkins
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Esther Combs says she received little encouragement from counselors or teachers in high school to advance her job future but found such encouragement in the job market.

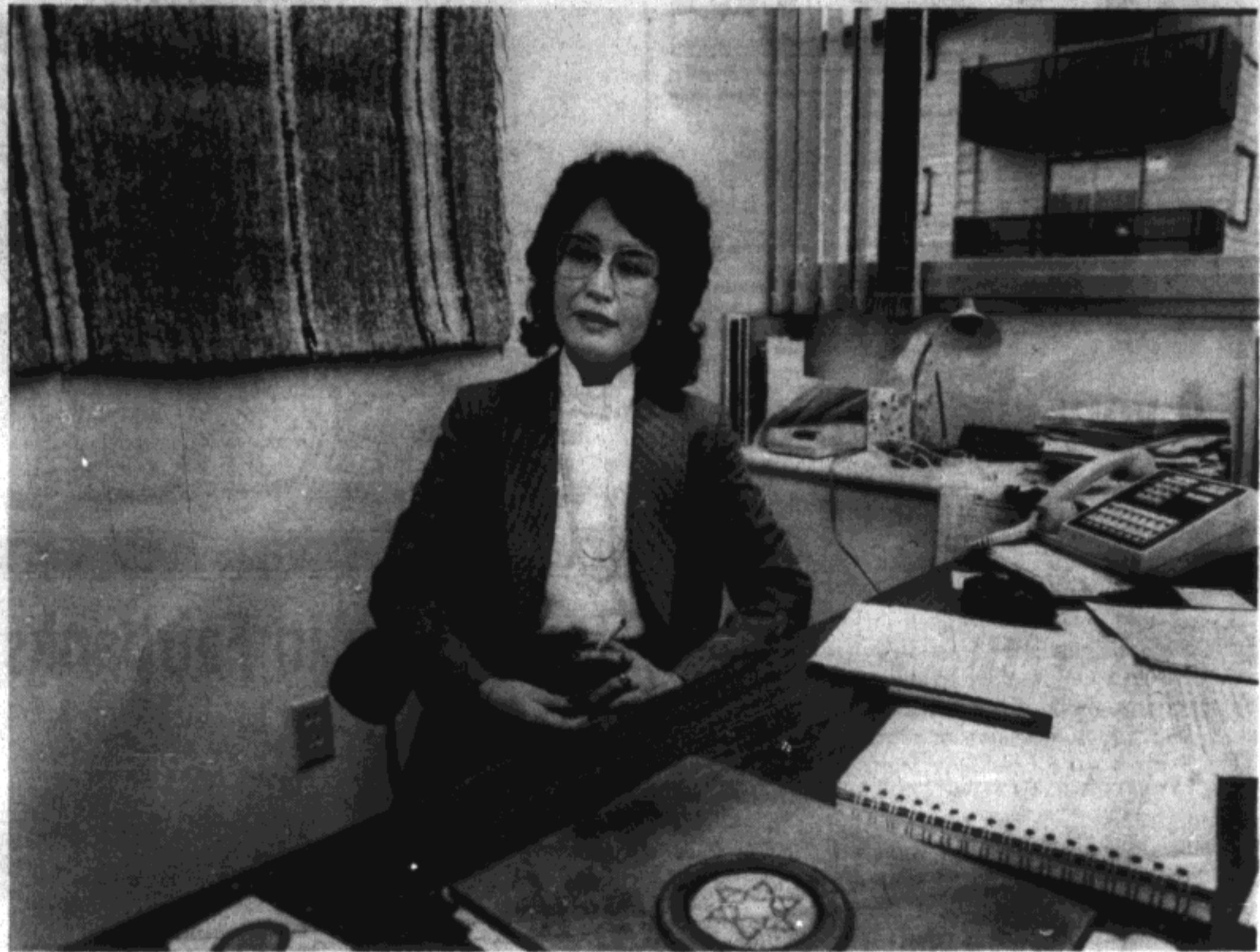
Combs, former deputy director of the Cook Inlet Native Association (CINA), who recently was named Executive Director of the new Cook Inlet Tribal Council (CITC), says she was encouraged by a white male supervisor with the Federal Aviation Administration to apply for her first managerial job in a position with the FAA.

After she became involved in CINA, following the passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, she started working for a man she now calls her mentor — Robert Rude.

Rude hired Combs as his executive secretary with the promise that she would have the opportunity for advancement. "I wanted to work for a Native organization but executive secretary was the only job open." She took the job and soon moved on to social service program work in the organization.

"I guess you could say I had a mentor in Bob Rude. I work for him now, (at CITC Rude is president), and he's still pushing me. I never had so much opportunity as I have had in these Native organizations, with him," she says.

She says her opportunities also resulted from the smaller



Esther Combs, executive director of the Cook Inlet Tribal Council, believes women are harder on themselves than are men in regards to job qualifications.

PHOTO BY BILL HESS

less-structured organization that CINA, and many Native organizations, are.

"In an organization that is small and growing, there is more opportunity to grow into the job. It certainly happened to me at CINA."

Combs feels that women

and men have widely different expectations of themselves and their job performance. And those differences may affect their job advancement a great deal.

"Men go into a new job expecting to be trained and oriented for three to six months."

"Women go into a job expecting to be able to do it immediately, to have all the

knowledge and know the whole job.

"The pressure I put on myself is really not necessary. The reports I did I felt had to be totally accurate. I have to tell myself to relax now."

Combs says she sees a great difference between herself and her daughter in many things but she still advises her to look beyond immediate job ex-

pectations.

"She talks about being an office worker or a teacher and I always tell her to look beyond that, to envision herself as a manager or a school principal.

"But the difference between her and me is that she is years ahead of where I was . . . She sees herself able to do any job. I was more cautious."