

Jane Onaga, founder owner of Amazon Construction Co., on site at the Alexander Young Building in downtown Honolulu.

Amazon Construction Co., Sitework Specialist Formed by Hawaii's First Woman Contractor

Jane Onaga has spent the last 16 years carefully cultivating a rapport with her peers in the construction industry. Today, she is the sole owner of Amazon Construction Co., specialists in demolition, sitework and excavation, and has set a precedent in becoming the state's first woman contractor.

"I'm a stronger person now and I'm more independent," Onaga said. "I really enjoy my work and I find it challenging because there's so much to do."

Onaga's youthful looks belie her 40 years of age, and the fact that she is a mother of five children. "I guess I owe it all to my energy and ability to keep active, because I believe in working hard and playing hard."

The construction industry did not beckon Onaga in the earlier years. After graduating from Kaimuki High School in 1959, she found herself at a crossroads in her career.

"I had planned to open a beauty shop or a restaurant when I got out of beauty school," Onaga said. "But I somehow ended up in the construction industry, and my husband and I started Onaga Trucking."

It was during her 16 years with that firm that she acquired the experience and contacts that have helped her to make a success of her own company.

Since forming Amazon Construction in August of this year, Onaga added, she has garnered the admiration, support and respect "of all contractors."

Despite the current economic outlook for Hawaii construction industry, Onaga said she feels fortunate that her company contracts work on a daily basis.

To date, Amazon Construction Co. has contracted several jobs in Honolulu including the removal of the remains of the Alexander Young Building; the excavation of the Punchbowl Crater; demolition of the fire station at Hickam Air Force Base; and site work at Ft. Ruger.

"We've been very busy in the past four months," Onaga said. "I had been waking up at 4:30 or 5 in the morning and wouldn't quit work till about 7:30 or 8 at night. I usually put in a long day. I would like to find time to travel later on."

Onaga employs five persons to support her work at the company. They are: Robert Tote, engineer; Jack Sato, estimator; Robert Chang, utility man; Jerry Dose, utility man.

"These people have been a lot of help to me," Onaga said. "When word got around that I formed Amazon Construction, they came to me and told me they wanted to help. We all wear different hats around here."

Amazon Construction Co. is housed in a modest office on Mookaula Street in the heart of Kalihi. Onaga said the company has a yard near the Honolulu International Airport, which is essentially a material service facility.

"We have topsoil and coral and the like there," she said. "We also rent our equipment from independent truckers. We have 25 trucks."

Since starting the company in August, Onaga said she has become a member of three organizations. "I've become a member of GCA, AGC and CILO. I'm gaining some recognition in the community and amongst other people in the industry. I'm proud of it."

"My next goal would be to eventually set up a foundation for orphans. I was an orphan, but I fought for my right to be doing what I'm doing today."

—George Furukawa

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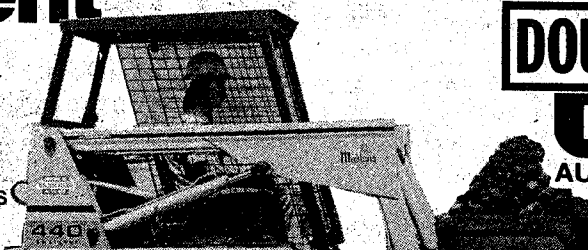
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