



Managing a Build



Construction managers make jobs large and small smooth, from paperwork to the nuts and bolts

Photos:
1. Construction Manager Mike Inouye outside the main doors of Pier 2, Honolulu Harbor. **2.** Inside the harbor's new cruiseship terminal, Mike stands in what will soon be a baggage claim area able to handle 4,000 pieces of luggage.

There's a certain irony to Construction Manager Mike Inouye's job. If everything goes smoothly under his watchful eye, there's a chance his client might think there's no need to hire him for the next construction project. On the other hand, if the project runs into problems and Mike and his R.M. Towill team resolves them, the client will feel the Construction Manager is worth his weight in gold. Construction Management, or CM, is behind-the-scenes work, but millions of dollars can be at stake. Currently, Mike is involved in a \$23.3 million Honolulu Harbor Pier 2 renovation, the first of a three-phase project to turn a large warehouse into a world-class cruise ship terminal.

Construction managers not only perform inspection work that assures contractors meet the requirements and specifications of the design, but they also process all the paperwork associated with the job. CM deals with everything from the way tons of concrete will be laid to the color and brand of a paint. Everything must meet design specs in quality and construction. Sometimes, the contractor submits a "request for information" if specifications are unclear; at other times, there may be an unexpected problem like groundwater or soft soil. In either instance, the CM team must resolve the problem in a timely manner to prevent holding up construction.

Oddly, the paperwork can be the most difficult part of the job, according to Mike. Many projects are federally funded, and each type has its own quirks. Experienced construction man-

agers work through the peculiarities of each.

R.M. Towill Corporation (RMTc) pioneered private sector CM for State and County projects in Hawai'i. Up to the early 1970s, State of Hawai'i and County governments relied on their own employees for CM. However, in 1971, the Airports Division of the Hawai'i Department of Transportation had an urgent need for construction managers, but none were available internally. "There was a void, and it was a classic

marketing opportunity," recalled RMTc President and CEO Emeritus Donald Kim. "They were surprised when our proposal was lower than their internal fee."

Engineers like Mike Inouye made the transition to construction manager. Although there were few examples to follow, they used common sense and experience, and they learned that if the job was being completed to their own satisfaction, it was going to be acceptable to the client. Early on, RMTc took on CM projects others were leery of tackling—ones that looked like trouble. But

A Construction Manager's Creed
Be strong and loyal to the client and the client's interests.
Always be fair in dealing with all concerned.
Protect personal and company integrity by being truthful. Persuade when possible, but confront when necessary. Mediate in skirmishes but never lose sight of the end result.

—Donald Kim, PE,
President & CEO
Emeritus

trouble (and its resolution) is the bread and butter of CM. As a result, RMTc gained invaluable experience and knowledge from projects like the Honolulu Sand Island and Honouliuli Wastewater Treatment Plants, on which work continues today.

Late one day, Mike walked through the cavernous Pier 2 warehouse, pointing out where a top level concourse will be built to handle up to 2,500

(Continued on back.)

RMTC PROFILES

When it comes down to business, the staff at R.M. Towill directs all focus to the customer and their interests, but often people are curious to see the faces behind the work and to know something about the people behind the faces. In this issue of *In Motion*, we introduce two of our staff members, Gail Atwater, Marketing Director, and Chester Koga, AICP, Planning Project Coordinator, and tell you some interesting facts about them you'd probably never guess.

Gail Atwater: Saying it with Flowers

Visitors to our Honolulu office often comment on the weekly floral displays in our reception area. Their creator, *Junkakyo* (Instructor of *Ikenobo*, Third Grade) Atwater-san has spent the past eight years absorbing the fine art of *Ikebana* flower arranging. Gail is one of two Caucasian members of the 150-member Honolulu Chapter of the Ikenobo Society of the Americas. Over the past two years, she has supplemented her local study in the Ikenobo School, the most classical, with instruction in *Sogetsu*, a more modernistic school. On her way to becoming a "professor" of flower arranging, Gail traveled to Japan earlier this year to study at the International Headquarters of the Ikenobo School of Ikebana in Kyoto. While her husband visited the city's historic temples, Gail savored intensive 8-hour days of flower arranging instruction. In the evenings, they enjoyed watching the Japanese revel in the public parks during cherry blossom season. Gail creates floral displays for the main altar at Central Union Church as a volunteer. This year, she was also asked to make a special arrangement in honor of September 11 (*above*).

A native New Yorker who moved to Hawai'i in 1976, Gail's ancestors came from England to Long Island in the 1630s. Still a rather displaced person, Gail enjoys ice skating and knitting sweaters.

Chester Koga: Off the beaten path

Laos, Cambodia, North and South Vietnam, Siberia, Mongolia, Western China...although these aren't

the world's most popular tourist destinations, they capture the imagination of Chester Koga. An erstwhile Maui farm boy whose favorite place on earth is home, Chester has sought the unbeaten path for his vacation adventures, which have brought him unforgettable experiences. For example, on the steppes of Mongolia, a native *shaman* (healer) approached Chester, and through a translator proclaimed, "I met you in a previous life and we are going to meet again." During a two-night stay in a Mongolian *yurt* (tent), Chester's hosts killed a sheep in honor of his travel group. Each guest was encouraged to reach into the cooked carcass with bare hands to obtain their helping of meat. Asked what he enjoyed most about the meal, Chester replied, "The vodka was good."

Chester's most recent adventure was hiking the Milford Track in New Zealand. At one time, this self-taught naturalist and hiker could recognize the species of "between 1,500 and 2,000" plants in Hawai'i and could recite the Hawaiian name of about a third of them. Travels aside, Chester was one of the founding members of the American Planning Association's Hawai'i chapter.



Gail Atwater with an altar-piece she created for Central Union Church.



Chester Koga hikes the Milford Track in New Zealand during his latest adventure.

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(Continued from front.)

disembarking cruiseship passengers. He points out a snag: some of the ceiling tiles are slightly off-white due to a manufacturing defect. The defective tiles look OK on the ground, but show their true colors after being installed three stories up. But for the time being, it was quiet with construction halted for the day—not the usual state of affairs for Mike, who is also busy with other CM projects. Current RMTC CM projects total over a half billion dollars in construction. These include the multi-part, ongoing projects like the Sand Island Wastewater Treatment Plant, Department of Transportation statewide handicap curb ramps and Kalaeloa Airport at Barbers Point.

Although busy, Mike and other construction managers take it in stride. "I find the work interesting because every project is different, and resolving problems is a challenge," says Mike, but then adds with a little incongruity, "We like to make our lives routine—that means everything is running smoothly."



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