

WEIGHT-LIFTING CHAMPION



The seven-yard bucket on this 95ZV loads tandem dump trucks in two passes and side-dump trucks in three to four. The Port of Longview sand pit is one of three pits owned by Tower Rock, a sister company of Tapani Underground.

Tapani Underground, a family-run, commercial and residential general contractor, has built their business by figuring out unconventional ways to get things done. The goal has always been to come up with a fresh, bid-winning approach — and then match the right people to the right equipment and then challenge them to succeed.

On the ‘right people’ end, a youthful second-generation management team has attracted a creative and hardworking group of foremen and workers...and on the equipment side, Tapani focuses on tough equipment that can do more than advertised.

Four years ago, while looking for a tough loader in the 6-yard range, Mark Hervi, Tapani’s equipment manager, found a Kawasaki 95ZIV, discounted to make room for the new, at that time, introduction of the ZV Series. The loader proved itself immediately on an interchange project that required 200,000 cubic yards of dirt moved at the Port of Vancouver, Washington. “We bought it without a lot of research, but it looked tougher than most, so we gave it a try,” notes Hervi. “And we could see right away the loader could really produce.”

BOULDERS NO BARRIER

Although the 95ZIV performed admirably loading dirt, rock, sand, and other more run-of-the-mill jobs, its true strength was revealed a few years later during a jetty rebuild job. The Columbia River’s north stone jetty, located where the mouth of the Columbia meets the Pacific Ocean, had taken a real beating over the decades. The Corps of Engineers required huge stone boulders be used to repair the damaged barriers.

As each boulder was created and shaped at various quarries, it had to be weighed and stockpiled. This was when the 95ZIV revealed its true capabilities. The loader, rigged with a scale, was able to balance each massive boulder in its bucket. The weight was then spray-painted on the boulder and the loader would move it to the appropriate stockpile. The boulders



With sturdy steel construction in the frame rails, Tapani’s 95ZIV was able to hold and maneuver massive boulders without resorting to an extra counterweight. The boulders ranged in weight from 5 to 23 tons. The 95ZIV handled over 54,000 tons of boulders without any major component failures.

ranged in weight from an impressive 5 tons to a whopping 23 tons. When the stone dust settled, the 95ZIV had flawlessly handled over 54,000 tons of boulders, earning the admiration of everybody at Tapani.

“We really tested that 95 — trust me,” says Leigh Tapani, Vice President. “With all the stress we put on that loader, we didn’t have any major components failures. And we still haven’t today — even with 12,000 hours on it. Just the normal wear and tear. We continue to use it on lots of projects and it is performing very well.”

CAN-DO ATTITUDE

Challenging their Kawasaki to performance extremes is typical of the Tapani attitude. Although their name indicates an expertise in excavation, heavy construction, and utility work, they like to challenge themselves and expand their boundaries beyond the typical site prep or highway job.

“The whole key is getting the right people with the right attitude,” says Tapani. “Give us an opportunity and we’ll see if we can make it happen.”

This can-do spirit has led them to bid on a wide variety of jobs — like the jetty project — as well as expand vertically. Since the company’s foundation in 1983 by the husband and wife team of Iner and Beverly Tapani, the company has added about 160 employees (including four of their children in management) and two sister companies — Tower Rock, their sand, gravel, and quarry branch with three pits, and Tapani Trucking, a fleet that not only handles the needs of Tapani, but works with outside companies as well.

“Because we are a family-oriented company, we’re not looking to expand our territory,” says Tapani. “We’re interested in more vertical integration. We look at where we’re spending our money and see if we can keep it in house. That’s how we ended up with a quarry pit and a trucking operation. And we’d like to be the company that’s doing the 20 million dollar plus projects. Bigger road jobs. Bigger and tougher sewer jobs. More challenging work.”

THE MORE THE MERRIER

“Although we bought that first Kawasaki without having done a whole lot of research,” says Hervi, “now that we own two, we’ve been satisfied with them.”

Yes, two. Based in part on the performance of the first 95, Tapani purchased a 95ZV in 2005. This one is used primarily at their Port of Longview sand pit. There, they have the lease to sell, load, and haul the wet sand constantly being dredged from the Columbia River by the Corps of Engineers. The sand is heavy and partially mixed with a variety of soils and clays.

The seven-yard, 348-horsepower Kawasaki 95ZV is solely responsible for keeping a steady stream of tandem dump trucks moving with two-pass loads and side dump rigs loaded in three to four passes...to the tune of a four-minute cycle per truck.

“We’re usually running 25 trucks matched to the one loader with a short enough run that there is almost a constant stream of trucks to be loaded the entire 10-hour shift,” notes Tapani.

“When we bought the second Kawasaki, we were sure about the loader’s durability and overall capabilities, based on the amazing performance of the first one. But, we could only expect and hope that it had outstanding speed and digging performance in a fast-paced load and carry operation,” says Tapani. “But now, with over a year’s experience, we know we made the right decision. It’s smooth and fast. And our operators like it because it’s comfortable to run.

“Our Kawasaki experience has been positive all the way through — with the machine, with the dealership, and with the salesman. Triad Machinery is interested in making sure everything we’ve bought from them is fully supported.”

Tapani Underground, Inc. is serviced by Triad Machinery, Portland, Oregon.



Leigh Tapani, Vice President, with Mark Hervi, Equipment Manager

