

Biography of:

Max C. Onichak, NCARB - Principal Architect- Engineer- Developer.

While attending St. Charles grade school at North Hollywood, California, Max's teachers saw that he had a talent for drawing, so his parents enrolled him in Samsel's Art School in 1948 along with his regular schooling. At Samsel's, Max was trained in various art media including oils, watercolor, pastels, charcoals, collage and learning the fundamentals of color, composition and good design.

After graduating from St. Charles and Notre Dame High School, Max attended Valley State College where he continued his math, chemistry and art studies prior to enlisting in the Air Force. As an Airman, Max was stationed at Spokane, Washington and Casablanca, Morocco where he began private flying lessons that took him to the Mediterranean countries including Gibraltar, Majorca and Lybia. Max also received a Top Secret Clearance and medals of commendation while serving his country.

Upon receiving an Honorable Discharge in 1960, Max was hired by McClure & Adkison, Architects & Engineers, one of the most renowned architects in Washington State. M&A led the Miesian Style, a 20th Century Neo-Modernism design of philosophy where "Less is More" coined by the architect Meis von der Rohe. Max became involved in the design of public buildings, schools, churches, apartment buildings and custom homes. Royal McClure was also a teacher of architecture at the University of Idaho. Along with McClure and Tom Adkison, four of the employees of the firm were licensed architects who also tutored Max, one of which had previously worked with Frank Lloyd Wright. Another architect of the firm, Moritz Kundig, is a Fellow American Institute of Architects (FAIA). Being very intrigued by all of this, Max took courses in architectural engineering and design at Washington State University while still working with the firm.

After two years with McClure & Adkison, Max left for his home town of Encino, California where he was hired by Johnson & D'Agostino, Architects & Engineers; and in just two years he became Assistant Chief Draftsman in charge of land development, multifamily and single family residential projects for Land Developers and Builders such as Larwin, Paul Griffin, Ray Skinner and others. During this time, Max took a trip to Arizona to visit Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin West and Paolo Soleri's Acosanti, two of the great architects of all times.

In 1965, the J&D partnership dissolved and Max decided to go with Ralph D'Agostino who was a structural engineer. Max wanted to be involved not only in building design but also in structuring buildings. While Max was absorbing vital structural information from D'Agostino, he also attended a Structural

Engineering class for two years taught by William Porsh, a structural engineer, at Los Angeles. If that wasn't enough, Max attended other colleges and private classes in order to prepare himself for the California Architect's State Board exam along with private flying lessons at Van Nuys Airport.

During his time with D'Agostino, Max became Director of Design of such projects as a six story Office Building in Burbank, a Seaside Resort for Chevron Oil, a Planned Unit Development for M.J.Brock, Condominiums at Carpinteria, Sound Recording Studios for Herb Alpert and the Tijuana Brass at A&M Records and Glen Glenn Sound at Paramount Studios in Hollywood. Also, immediately after the San Fernando 6.6 magnitude earthquake in 1971, D'Agostino assigned Max to observe and sketch portions of the structural damaged buildings to see whether they could be repaired or demolished. Although this was very precarious and hazardous since there were many aftershocks that followed the quake, Max jumped at the opportunity which could never be found in books or classrooms.

In 1971, Max passed the 36 hour intensive California Architects State Board exam that took place over a period of several days at the University of Southern California. Max passed the written part of his exam. After his oral portion of the exam was completed several months later, he was awarded his license to practice architecture in the State of California. Upon receiving his license, Max moved to Santa Barbara, California offering building design and structural engineering services.

From 1971 to 1989, Max founded Architects Studio as his architectural firm and Architectural Engineer as his structural engineering firm. Building design was slow in the early seventies, so Max acted as a structural consultant for engineers Peter Ehlen, John Oeltman, Robert Karman, and architects Stan Riffle, Jack Warner, Jerry Bailey, Michel de Camaret, Gilbert Garcia, Henry Hastings and Claus Dallmark. One of his own projects was a so-called unbuildable hillside acre he purchased to design and build his home. This property did not have a sewer to hook up to nor was a septic or cesspool allowed as a result of poor soil conditions, nor was there suitable soil to allow for a conventional foundation system. Max solved the problems by extending a sewer line that was about 500 feet further down the road. Since the house was downhill from the street, he resolved the sewer problem by providing an ejection pump that would allow the sewage to be pumped up to the new sewer. The foundation was solved with concrete caissons that had to extend down into bedrock and tied together with concrete grade beams designed by Max. This project made headlines in the Home Section of the Santa Barbara News-Press in 1976.

During this same period, Max was approached by his long time friend and fellow architect, John Scheidemen, to pursue a National Council of Architectural Board (NCARB) certificate in order to obtain his licence in other states. It was Motel 6 that needed an NCARB licensure since they had projects throughout the country, but John did not want to pursue that position. However, one of the requirements to be certified was to have a college degree in architecture. Max had attained many college credits but had no degree. However, Columbia University offered a degree in architecture provided that the applicant had attained a certain level of study, sufficient college credits and accomplishments pertaining to the sought-after degree. After review by CU, they required additional courses to be taken, which Max was able to do at Santa Barbara City College, some of which were Environmental History, Philosophy and Computer Science. This was another blessing for Max since computer aided drafting (AutoCAD) was in it's infancy stages and most architects were pretty much set on the old school of drafting and design. Upon completion of the requirements, including CU's Bachelor/Masters Program, Max received his degree in architecture. Shortly thereafter, Max received his NCARB certificate and was able to provide architectural and engineering consultation for Motel 6 who had projects in Texas, Tennessee and Iowa.

In 1989, Max and his wife, Elaine, an Australian, purchased a 2nd home in Kailua Kona, Hawaii and fell in love with the Islands. Max decided to extend his practice to Hawaii and received his Hawaii Architect's license. This was another venture that he pursued in order to diverse his practice where he eventually decided to stay and work. However, Max still maintained his license in California since he wanted to provide structural engineering for his architect, design and engineering clients and also to follow up on previous and new projects. Max designed and engineered several projects while in Hawaii as well as in Alaska, Iowa, Australia and other places that can be seen on his web site: www.ArchitectsStudio.US.

Testimonials:

Dr. Thomas Hearn - letter to Max's parents: "I would like to express my appreciation for the beautiful oil painting of a horse's head that is my good fortune to now own, particularly so because it was painted by your son. For many years I have studied horses and at the writing own five, and I definitely feel that your son has captured something in the horse's expression that few artists have ever done."

Charles Makepeace, 1st Lt, USAF: "If you (Max) work as hard and as precise as you have for us here in the Classified Files Office, your future success is certain."

Gary Zimmer, AIA: After Zimmer's departure as manager for D'Agostino & Associates, "I was very pleased with the way the projects were being completed and final results all to the credit of Max Onichak."

Joseph Moticha, AIA: “Max’s caliber of performance is excellent with always a good sense of professionalism. All work from him has always been very thorough and well thought out and executed.”

Stanley Riffle, Jr., AIA: “Max always gives 100% to perform an excellent task. In fact, his suggestions through his consulting have often changed my mind since his way is more experienced and economical and has resulted in the Best projects my clients could expect.”

Serifo John Menegon, AIA: “Max, you are a diamond in the rough, and if you keep on designing and engineering as you have been doing, you will become a very rare diamond.”

Dr. Brad Bringgold: “The way you have attended to our wishes specified on the residential questionnaire pleased us very much. We went through our wish list and were surprised how well your plans covered it. The elevation drawing really made an impression.”

William Wyland: “Wyland Galleries Hawaii, would like to extend our sincere congratulations to Max C. Onichak, NSAE, Principal Architect-in-Charge, on the completion of our newest addition at Waterfront Row.”

Lee T. Nakamura, Esq. - In response to Max acting as a expert witness to a multi-million-dollar law suit as a result of the 1992 “Iniki” hurricane on the island of Kauai: “I was particularly impressed with the way you reduced a very complicated situation, which required highly technical analysis, down to very simple terms which a jury could easily understand that helped my client to win the case.”

Hamlet C. Bennett, AIA: In response to Max’s design for Dr. Vogel’s home at Mauna Lani, Hawaii: “The overall proportion of your home is excellent due to the long low pitch of the roof. Also, the unique viewing deck and atrium makes a creative solution to the inherent problems of interior lots and adds interest to the roof design as well...I think this is a very innovative design.”

Dr. Gary Robinson: “I want to express my appreciation for your guidance with my project. Your depth of knowledge and experience is priceless.....”

Hawaii Business News: Max C. Onichak, Principal Architect for Architects Studio, was in the top 10 Leading Neighbor Island Architects for 20 years.

