



# “White Gold”

*Gets a Tint of Orange in Georgia Operation*

COLOR ME ORANGE.

Mass Excavation/Mining

*“We started out in 1958 as a clearing and excavation company,” says Billy Jackson Sr., CEO, W.F. Jackson Construction Co., Inc. “When we first started working with the kaolin companies in the area, a good year for us was removing two million yards of material.”*

*Hold on — did he say “kaolin?” What on earth is that?*

### **CAN YOU DIG IT?**

Kaolin, or “white gold,” doesn’t get a lot of airtime on cable business shows, but it’s one of the pervasive commodities in industry. It’s an ingredient in such diverse products as toothpaste, insulation, porcelain, paint, and paper.

Nearly three-quarters of the kaolin reserves in the U.S. are located about 100 miles southeast of Atlanta. A number of techniques are used to mine it, but Jackson’s company uses excavators and haul trucks. Small wonder that removal of overburden at kaolin sites has become the mainstay of the Sandersville, Georgia-based operation. This year it moved about 19 million yards.

### **MAKING A GOOD THING BETTER**

To get overburden off in sufficient volumes and at the quick pace demanded by the economics of the business, Jackson relies upon 45- and 80-metric-ton excavators. “Our excavators are really the workhorses of this operation,” notes Jackson.

“We recently took a fleet of a dozen excavators out of service because they had exceeded what we felt were their maximum hours and replaced them with Hitachi units. Our decision was based on a good relationship with our dealer, a fair purchase price, and Hitachi’s reputation as a solid performer in this environment. We now have 15 orange excavators: 11 EX450LCs, two Zaxis 450LCs, and two Zaxis 800s.”

Jackson adds that, while the machines themselves are invaluable, the modifications they have made to those machines have also played a key role.

“One of the first units we ever used in this application was a standard machine reconfigured as a mass excavator. It had a Jewell short stick and a larger capacity bucket.

“In our business, we get paid by the yard, so we felt it was definitely worth it to sacrifice some radius to increase volumes. We liked the performance of the Jewell stick so much that we started to reconfigure all our machines in the same manner.”



Today, almost all of Jackson's 450-sized excavators have mass excavator front ends and five-yard buckets. Overburden is loaded into haul trucks that have also been modified to increase load capacities from 55 to 65 tons (about 35 cubic yards of material). It's then stockpiled for site reclamation.

After the kaolin is exposed, the excavators load the same trucks with the clay, which is taken to a central collection site to be "blunged," or converted to slurry. It's then pumped to a main processing facility.

### CALLING ON THE BIG BOYS

Besides their 450s, Jackson can bring in larger machines when the situation calls for it. When it's crunch time, a Zaxis 800 with an eight-yard bucket can equal the production of two Zaxis 450s, but with less manpower.

"That's not always feasible," says Jackson. "But it's a nice option when we really need it. However, we mainly rely upon our 'smaller' machines, and the changes we've made, to make them perform better for us.

"When making a purchase, we try to weigh all the factors: economy, service and support from the equipment dealer and manufacturer, acquisition cost, repair costs, and so on. METRAC and Hitachi have done a fine job for us. It's good business to align with quality suppliers. We've worked hard to get where we are, and working with these suppliers to make the best use of our resources will keep us here."

*W.F. Jackson Construction Co., Inc.  
is serviced by METRAC, Inc.,  
Macon, Georgia.*

**Jackson's fleet of 30 excavators has taken on a decidedly orange hue, and now boasts 11 EX450LCs, two Zaxis 450LCs, and two Zaxis 800s.**



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