

1. Stella May Contracting, founded by Stella Miller, a construction icon in the mid-1990's is a shining example of strong American woman entrepreneurship. Now comes Harley Flack, an African American male with aspirations to own a Heavy Civil Construction company, offers Ms. Miller an opportunity to sunset with wealth and class. What intrigued you about the company? The industry was what first drew my interest. Through due diligence and study the Stella May opportunity was brought to my attention. Stella May Contracting had a wonderful reputation in the construction industry throughout the Baltimore Washington Metropolitan area. It was a company with a solid balance sheet, coupled with deep seeded core values and principles. These included a corporate culture that was resolute and could withstand an aggressive growth trajectory like the one I wanted to lead. Why did you pursue it? I pursued Stella May Contracting primarily because of the people. There was incredible talent in all facets of the company, both in the field and in the office. Some of the talent was raw and other talent more developed. With adoption of some new technologies and process methodologies, Stella May Contracting could catapult to the next level. How did the existing back office personnel and field operational staff accept a Black man coming in as the new owner? During my first days and weeks at Stella May Contracting, people were waiting for the other shoe to drop. There was an air of skepticism or "what is going on here." People kept waiting for something to happen; someone to get fired, dismissed, or yelled at. When it never happened, people wondered even more as to what was going on. Was it easy to obtain financing? Getting financing was challenging. It was key that we had financial acumen and personal resources. Acquiring a company with size, equipment, bonding capabilities and the ability to continue to equate to a sizeable price tag. My years in the investment banking world along with other assets that I had corralled over the years were some of the personal resources that were required to get the deal done. This along with relationships with two great partners put us in a position to acquire Stella May Contracting from Stella Miller.
2. Using your acquisition as a new base line, would you recommend trading like this between other disadvantage business owned enterprises and why? Yes. I would strongly recommend trading and conducting business at this level. It is truly taking business for a diverse owner to the next level. This is a league where diverse entrepreneurs are very seldom allowed to participate. The landscape and network have challenges and hurdles but there are those who have been successful that are willing to share information and resources so that others might be successful. Individuals who may have an interest in acquisition, mergers or succession should contact others who have been successful and inquire as to their institutional knowledge for being successful. Partnering with groups like the Maryland Washington Minority Companies Association is also very helpful. Because of policies and programs from the 80's and 90's, several minority certified businesses were created. These companies are now vitally important to the business community; however, key stakeholders have often not prepared succession plans or mechanisms for sale of these companies.
3. Stella May Contracting initial construction business model started as a Heavy Civil trade and gradually moved to performing Wet Utilities, Electrical Transmission and Distribution and more recently Natural Gas Distribution. Those fields are extremely risky and potentially hazardous. Do you consider what occurred at your shop to be a natural discipline progression for a Heavy Civil trade or was it planned? What type of additional training of equipment, commodities like pipe, cable, and switch gear, as well as safety is needed to be successful? At Stella May Contracting the mission that was adopted when I became President and CEO was to "build it Safely, to Serve and to Shine." As a business leader, I believe in the concept of servant leadership. But as a major heavy civil construction company, we must first focus on safety. We have progressed from wet utilities into Electrical Transmission and Distribution as well as gas. This required a

conscientious investment on our part into these segments. First and foremost, as a part of that investment is our commitment to safety. Currently at Stella May Contracting we have a full time safety director and an assistant safety director, along with a compliance and quality control staff that oversee our safety program. We have a stand-alone safety facility and have implemented mandatory toolbox talks, safety calls and safety stand down meetings. We have successfully transitioned employees who were originally trained in wet utilities and migrated those personnel into gas. This has been through a very comprehensive training program and with important support from the major utility in the region, along with advocacy from MWMCA. There are volumes of training that personnel must successfully accomplish. These include multi-stepped training and OQ qualifications, along with special training related to pressure and pipe in the supply of gas.

4. We are now in the midst of the COVID-19 worldwide pandemic. How has that affected your shop as it relates to existing and future projects? Safety and Health training? Do you see an increase in operational cost and how should that be paid, especially with an ongoing project? Covid-19 has changed the way we as a nation will conduct business. At Stella May Contracting we employed systems to take most of our administrative functions remote. However, there are still some aspects that are very hands on and require team interaction. We conduct these tasks remotely when possible and utilize social distancing for meetings and gathering where we teams must meet to discuss or execute projects. The migration to doing business this way has some increased operational costs. Additionally, the State and local government agencies will likely turn to infrastructure programs to mobilize the unemployed and put them back to work. The vast uncertainty of funding for governments as well as delays in the regulatory/ certification space have meant that future projects will be slow and, in some cases, there may be uncertainty related to start dates. From a business and process planning perspective, these are very uncertain times we are currently living in and unfortunately there is no way for us as business leaders to fully prepare for such uncertainty. We must pay special attention tracking cashflow, project timelines and cost to completes. There are several other variables which will be more closely scrutinized including bonding and insurance provisions as clients will require these as prerequisites for certain new work moving forward. Also to be noted are those costs associated with remobilization for projects that were shut down due to COVID-19 safety concerns. Those additional costs typically can be covered through a change order to the existing contract. We at Stella May have also engaged a medical consultant to review our processes to ensure we are operating in a manner consistent with CDC guidelines, and have added a COVID-19 specific safety meeting to our weekly rhythm of meetings that all company executives must attend.
5. What type of future do you see in your industry beyond COVID-19? The future of the heavy civil construction, utility and power space moving forward is bright. With such a need for critical infrastructure improvements, this is an area where cities and federal governments will need to deploy dollars and resources. There are tremendous opportunities for diverse companies and strategic relationships among these companies to meet the requirements of local and state governments. Additionally, the Public Service Commission is stipulating that the local utilities maximize diverse talent for new and existing work. It is important that minority companies communicate, establish networks, and remain strategic to gain opportunities for the future. Pricing and volume of work will change but self-performing heavy civil work is not going to stop. There is some level of recession hedging in the utility and power space and that knowledge continues to drive us at Stella May Contracting to Safely Serve and to Shine.
6. How do you relax and unwind? In my spare time I love music. I especially enjoy playing the piano and reading.