


# CONNSTRUCTION

SOUTHERN NEW ENGLAND'S CONSTRUCTION JOURNAL

WINTER 2004 • VOLUME 43 • NO. 4



## Beating the Odds Manafort Brothers Inc.

- The 2004 Construction Career Days
- The Center for Infrastructure Expertise
- CCIA's Individual Insurance Plans



# Beating the Odds

***With the fourth generation of family at the helm, Manafort Brothers Inc. is going strong***

By Vicki Gervickas



*The Manafort family at work. Standing, left to right: Jim Manafort, Jr., Justin Manafort, David Manafort and Jason Manafort. Seated, left to right: Bill Manafort, Lauren Manafort, Frank Manafort and Jon Manafort.*

**But facing tough challenges is all part of a day's work for the Manafort family.**

**C**onsider the bleak statistics: 70 percent of family businesses never make it to the second generation, and a stunning 90 percent go bust before the third generation gets on board. But facing tough challenges is all part of a day's work for the Manafort family. Not only have they beaten the odds, they've demolished them. Over 85 years and counting, the family business

**Meriden Power Plant, Meriden, Conn.**  
*Mass excavation and rock removal for a large power plant. Poured concrete for all building and equipment foundations.*





car precast parking structure; a 2,700-car cast-in-place, post-tension parking structure; a 900,000-square-foot fillgree parking structure and podium floor; and a foundation package for a 10,000-seat arena.

#### Building on Success

The key to success in this demanding arena, says Jim, can be summed up in a word: people. "I believe we're a good employer," he says. "We financially compensate our people and we make them feel like part of the team. We respect their knowledge and their experience and we allow them to bring that to the table. We strive for constant communication." Evidence of this is shown by the tenure of Manafort employees, many of whom worked with Jim's grandfather. "We realize here that our success is not through the individual Manafortos - it's through the whole team, and we respect that and acknowledge that." He also stresses the importance of good training, particularly in the management ranks. "We emphasize the safety aspects and the documentation required to do a quality job. We spend a lot of time discussing these things and actually enforcing the need for these efforts. We have good senior-level management - project managers, project engineers, the vice president of engineering - who really do their part when it comes to those requirements on the job."

From its beginnings in demolition, Manafort Brothers has diversified to keep up with the times. Jim says about 20 percent of the business remains in demolition, with road and site work comprising 30 percent and concrete superstructures carrying a large load at 50 percent. The company divides its projects half and half when it comes to public versus private work, though Jim emphasizes that repeat business from long-standing relationships in the private sector form a solid backbone for the company.

The family is optimistic about the business for the upcoming year, citing a good backlog of work, while acknowledging the daily challenges faced by everyone in the industry. "The biggest challenge we all face," Jim says, "is the variables in our industry. The price increases on materials, the weather

always has an impact, differing conditions - it's not a very straightforward type of business. There are a lot more environmental issues on sites that we didn't deal with years ago, and the documentation requires a much larger support staff."

#### Establishing Partnerships is Key

The Manafortos consistently look for new ways to tackle these challenges, whether by keeping up with the latest in technology or by joining with their peers

*"It is a very positive thing to look for solutions together, whether it be health issues, working with government agencies, it just makes sense that we do get together."*



**EAST PBE INC.**

**EAST PBE, INC. IS A CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT DEALER THAT CAN GET YOU WHAT YOU NEED IN JUST ONE STOP.**

































**ASSORTED ATTACHMENTS (GRAPPLES, PULVERIZERS, STICK SHEAR, UNIVERSAL PROCESSOR) \* BACKHOE LOADERS \* DOZERS \* EXCAVATORS \* FORKLIFTS \* GRADERS \* HAUL TRUCKS \* HYDRAULIC HAMMERS \* RECYLING EQUIPMENT \* ROLLERS \* SCREENER \* SKIDSTEERS \* TRAILERS \* UTILITY VEHICLES \* WHEEL LOADERS \* AND MORE**

**EAST PBE, INC.**  
**283 Pane Road, Newington, CT 06111**  
**Phone: 860-665-7470**  
**Website: www.eastpbe.com**



**"We realize here that our success is not through the individual Manaforts – it's through the whole team, and we respect that and acknowledge that."**

has grown from a one-man demolition firm into Manafort Brothers Inc., one of New England's leading construction companies, and the fourth generation is going strong at the helm.

#### **Strong Roots**

James Manafort immigrated from Italy to Connecticut and, in 1919, founded the New Britain House Wrecking Company. He bought old homes, tore them apart board by board, then salvaged and recycled the lumber. James'

four sons, Anthony, Frank, John and Paul, grew up working in the business and after their service in the war, returned to the business in 1947. They expanded operations and renamed the company Manafort Brothers, Inc. The company quickly became one of the leading demolition firms in Connecticut. As the company continued to develop and grow, the third generation of Manaforts learned the construction business.

By the 1960s, that third generation, James, Frank and Jon, had the skills to take on leadership positions. They further expanded the company's capabilities into excavation, site work, concrete construction and waste removal. Now a fourth generation, Jim, Jr., David, Lauren, Jason, Justin and Bill, is heavily involved in the company's day-to-day operations. Jim says, "I think diversification has helped us beat the odds. Everybody plays a certain role, and though we're all involved in the different ends of our business, everybody runs with their division. We try not to step on each others' toes and we all have the same goal as managers in the company and making right decisions for the future."

The division of labor has occurred naturally for these six. Jim serves as president, Bill deals with all aspects of accounting, Lauren handles contract administration, Jason, waste management, David, the construction arm and Justin, the demolition department. Though most of the firm's work is done in Connecticut, they will go where the work is, and have handled many large projects throughout New England, including decommissioning of a nuclear power plant in Maine and demolition at the World Trade Center site in Manhattan.

Local projects of note include a parking garage at the University of Connecticut Storrs campus that provides capacity for 1,100 cars and 60,000-square-feet of retail space, as well as the podium superstructure for the Mohegan Sun Resort's underground parking facility, which has a 4,000-car capacity. One of the firm's proudest accomplishments is pouring 200,000 cubic yards of concrete in less than 24 months to construct five projects: a 34-story, 1,200-room, cast-in-place post-tension hotel; a 2,700-

# Rest easy



Get Value Added Services from E.J. Prescott and **there's no need to worry** about inventory, labor costs or emergency calls ever again.

Call 1-800-EJP-24HR

Pipeline Specialists



Everett J. Prescott, Inc.

Water • Sewer • Drain • Gas

in the industry, which is why they recently became CCIA members. "The association offers a lot of services to companies, and we decided now was the right time," says Jim. "We're still learning about all the benefits, and we're confident we'll make them work for us." Jim also cites the advantage of industry insiders coming together to discuss common goals: "Until you can get in the same room with everybody and discuss it, you don't know if they have the same issues you do. It is a very positive thing to look

for solutions together, whether it be health issues, working with government agencies, it just makes sense that we do get together."

Believing in the importance of giving back to the community, the family is also active in civic affairs, and provides support to local charities and events, most notably the Central Connecticut Association of Retarded Citizens.

Looking to the future, the fourth generation is not quite ready to commit the fifth generation to the business. Jim says

with a laugh, "It's not an easy business. Construction is by far not an easy business. There are a lot of ups and a lot of downs and so it's a lot of work." But, he says, as the next generation completes their schooling, and perhaps spends summers working in the business, as their predecessors have, they may develop the same love of the industry that has fueled their parents, grandparents and great-grandparents. Jim concludes, "If their hearts are in it, and this is what they want to do, we'll say go for it." 