

Meet the man in charge of dismantling the old Jamestown Bridge

By Sam Bari

For Project Superintendent John McNulty of Cashman Equipment Company of Boston, the average workday starts at 6 a.m.

Cashman is the general contractor hired to dismantle and dispose of the old Jamestown Bridge. Unless McNulty is out of town, he opens the gates to the project every morning. Here, offices are set up in trailers and heavy equipment is stored safely behind cyclone fences, away from the curious and mischievous. He spends the first hour of his day catching up on unfinished business and preparing for the work that lies ahead. The crew will start arriving at 7 a.m.

"I'm the first one here in the morning and the last to leave at night," he says. He is obviously dedicated to his work. A firm handshake and generous smile offset his construction tough, no-nonsense demeanor. He has a hard job working with tough men in an unforgiving environment. His personality is right for his chosen profession.

McNulty knows his business. He has been involved in marine construction and demolition for over 20 years. That's why Cashman Equipment, one of the

most experienced contractors in the industry hired him. He is knowledgeable, experienced, and the men in his charge have confidence in his abilities.

He is also the safety officer, responsible for the well-being of every man working on the project, in this case, as many as 35 on any given day. He watches as they work together, walking back and forth on narrow girders at dizzying heights some 150 feet or more above Narragansett Bay. Each man wears a harness attached to a lifeline by a thin cable, just in case the unthinkable happens. They, too, are the best at what they do.

The crew is comprised of highly trained, handpicked specialists. They belong to a union that has little use for the inexperienced or the inept. The closely-knit fraternity of skilled tradesmen works together with precision in conditions that most would consider dangerous to the extreme. To McNulty, safety is the first con-

sideration, and he runs the job by the book. Since the project started last September, no serious injuries have occurred, and that's the way he intends to keep it — accident free.

This project is special to McNulty, who hails from Newport, and is a graduate of Rogers High School. He grew up with the Jamestown Bridge. He remembers the building of the Newport Bridge when he was a boy. To play a major role in dismantling the deteriorating Jamestown span is almost a nostalgic experience for him. The many times that he crossed the structure throughout his life, he never once thought he would be in charge of its ultimate demise.

This week is crucial to the success of the project. Preparations must be completed for the arrival of Scott Gustafson, the blaster from DemTech, the demolition experts headquartered in Dubois, Wyo. Last week, four days of bad weather postponed the dropping of the center span for a week.



John McNulty

The Fay Company of Pittsburgh, Pa., is a subcontractor that Cashman Equipment hired to dismantle the superstructure of the bridge and prepare it for explosives set by their subcontractor, DemTech, Inc., the blasting experts. Steve Langeluttig is one of the Fay Company's project superintendents. His crew has been partially cutting the girders to ready them for the 75 charges that Gustafson will place after he arrives. Installing the charges takes three days, and the weather must be favorable for the task or McNulty will be forced to postpone the first explosive event again.

While Langeluttig and crew are completing their work, McNulty prepares for a 300-ton ringer crane that is arriving on a barge in the next two days. After the explosion, the behemoth crane will be used to lift the fallen steel from beneath the chilly waters of the bay. McNulty is responsible for putting it in position so it can do its work.

When a large general contractor involves two subcontractors for a major project, everything must proceed with the precision of a well-made clock or the budget and schedule will suffer. It takes a tremendous sense of organization,

the ability to adjust to conditions when necessary, and the discipline of an Olympic athlete for the duration of the project. McNulty possesses those attributes.

The general contractor manages the project from beginning to completion. If anything goes wrong, they are responsible. The burden of responsibility primarily rests on McNulty's shoulders.

On Tuesday morning, the center span of the old Jamestown Bridge will drop into Narragansett Bay and be nothing more than a memory recorded in a few history books. When McNulty closes the gate tonight after a 12-hour day, he can feel confident that the bridge will fall with dignity.

After the center span drops, the retrieval of the fallen steel begins. For approximately six to eight weeks, divers will be connecting huge sections of steel to cranes so they can be placed on barges and hauled away by tugboats. Then McNulty will have men below as well as above the water. He is in charge of the day-to-day operations until the last section of concrete drops into the ocean to form an artificial reef, and the old Jamestown Bridge can only be seen in photographs. Without a doubt, John McNulty and his crew of experts will get the job done.



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