I know a thing or two about underground piping. During my summers through high school and college, I worked on drainage crews. I monitored the speed of multiple crews on countless job sites. I’ve developed notebooks of production rates for different pipe sizes at different depths. I’ve even developed formulas that calculate linear foot costs depending on depths, lengths of runs between structures, known obstructions, the water table and other factors. Simply by plugging in updated labor and equipment rates, I attempted to come up with one universal formula for working underground. Needless to say, it was in vain.

This is because, unlike most construction activities which happen to take place above-ground, underground piping takes place in the world of the unknown. Conditions change in a moment’s notice. Existing infrastructure under our roadways is largely an engineer’s best
At O & G it is important that each member of our team knows that every piece of innovation or reinvention counts, no matter how small it is. Everyone has to contribute regardless of their position in the company if we are going to remain competitive in the marketplace and expand in the long-term.”

— RAYMOND R. ONEGLIA, VICE-CHAIRMAN

Major Milestone in New Haven

Flying the Highway

Over a weekend that began on July 26, on a Friday evening, the last vehicles to ever cross the Southbound Q Bridge in New Haven made their way over and disappeared down I-95. Crews then jumped into the long anticipated business of “flying the highway” – shifting southbound traffic onto a pair of lanes temporarily set on the much larger and recently completed Northbound Q. Taking traffic off the aging southbound bridge was an important milestone in constructing the new Southbound Q Bridge and marked the beginning of the project’s third phase.

The joint venture teams of O&G/Tutor Perini and Walsh/PCL have been working together towards this milestone since the project began in 2011. O&G/Tutor Perini is primarily tasked with reworking the approaches to the new Q Bridge on I-95 along with the I-91 and Route 34 interchanges.

Concerns over rainstorms in the forecast for Sunday the 28th prompted the team to push the effort forward faster, wrapping up early Sunday morning rather than by the Monday morning rush hour as originally scheduled.

“This was a combined effort by all of the management staff and the workers putting in extra hours that got us to this point,” said John Gemetro, Vice President.

The project’s Night Superintendent is Pete Hinman. Although a 13-year veteran at O&G, Contract E is his first assignment to an overnight shift and it placed him right at the hub of the lane change event. “It was a fair amount of work in a confined space with lanes of traffic on either side of us. It was really just a matter of keeping the work going and being safe, and keeping the traffic moving safely. A lot of the reason it went so well was having the right guys on the job with the right attitude who could adapt on the fly – we had them.”

Bill Noll is the Site Superintendent on Contract E. He was responsible for planning and setting up the paving, trucks, crews and a hundred other details that weekend. He looks back on the effort, which included a 17-hour shift on Saturday. “It went really well. We beat the schedule. We thought we’d be off the road by Sunday noon but we were done by 8 AM. Everything just went to plan.” Project Engineer Joe Sefik was also a critical contributor to the switch, having drawn up detailed, timed plans for traffic patterns in close coordination with ConnDOT and Walsh/PCL. (Coordinating this high-profile event on a high-traffic road between companies and crews literally
required a minute-by-minute plan for who would do what, where and exactly when.

The day after the change was a perfect occasion, complete with perfect summer weather, for Governor Dannel P. Malloy, ConnDOT officials and other state leaders to gather at the Q and recognize the achievements of the past two-plus years spent in the field on this massive road project, the largest in state history.

ConnDOT Commissioner Jim Redeker opened the brief ceremony, held on the deck of the partially dismantled Southbound Q as traffic rumbled by on the new northbound bridge just a dozen yards away. “The complexities and challenges of a project of this magnitude are enormous,” said Redeker. “It’s a tribute to our people and partners that this work is progressing so well. This is a major success story.”

Governor Malloy spoke of the jobs associated with supplying and building the project, how the improved roadway will reduce the daily bottleneck for commuters and the improved safety expected. He grew expansive on what he sees as Contract E’s greater impact: “This project will go a long way toward modernizing our transportation infrastructure, encouraging new business investment and enhancing Connecticut’s economic competitiveness.”

Officials have reason to boast of the teams who deliver day in and day out. Contract E is now two months ahead of schedule and the entire Q Corridor Improvement Program is a remarkable $212M under budget. Work is scheduled to be completed in 2016.
Yale-New Haven Hospital’s new North Haven Ambulatory Center is now up and running. The project was a very fast paced, 100,000SF conversion of a vacant four-floor office building into medical and IT space. Carrie Riera and Hristo Miljovski co-managed the project, supported by MEP Coordinator/Superintendent George Parenteau and Superintendents Steve Baranello and Jim Hendrickson.
Could these two guys be O&G’s youngest fans?

Take heart: in a time when too many of life’s sordid stories steal center stage, out of the spotlights but very much alive are young people like the two we were privileged to meet on a humid afternoon this June. They are an antidote to cultural woes. These two youngsters, living miles apart and unknown to each other, are compatriots in their interest in O&G that began with a fascination with construction equipment. More than that, they have a focus and sincerity that is contagious.

In southwest Connecticut we met Griffen, freckled and sandy-haired, who answered the door in his O&G cap and safety green O&G “safety first” T shirt. He served us cold water in a blue O&G tumbler. Griffen explained how he decided to call O&G and explain his dilemma: he loved O&G trucks but had been unable to take any decent photographs of them because they were always in motion. Could anyone help? A tickled Lydia Babbitt, Administrative Supervisor at the Main Office, obliged abundantly, with photos and assorted logo’d paraphernalia.

Griffen’s mom, Elaine, explained that as a toddler anything with wheels – toys, dishwasher racks, it did not matter – would captivate Griffen. He’d roll whatever it might be back and forth, contentedly, over and over.

He has an email address that incorporates the model of his favorite heavy truck, the Kenworth T800. “When I really think about it now,” Griffen confides earnestly, “it was an O&G T800 that got me interested.” He’s got the operating sounds down cold – up shifting, down shifting, Jake Brake – and was happy to demonstrate. And he creates pencil drawings of big trucks: “My first ones, the windows of the trucks looked like house windows,” he just about giggles at his first efforts. “Now I’m much better at the shape, the curvature.”

At 13 and entering the eighth grade, Griffen has determined he will become a firefighter. It was, of course, fire trucks that first drew his attention. Or he may use his math skills and design trucks someday. Or design new Legos.

Back closer to Hartford, a young man named Austin is in full construction stride. Fuel was added to his fire the day his real estate developer dad, Steve, took Austin to an associate’s construction site where he was encouraged to try his small hands at operating a skid steer and backhoe. He was ten. At 14, in a similar scenario, he ran an excavator, backhoe and bulldozer.

Austin is 16 now. He has been at this “exploration” for some time, perhaps as long as 12 years depending on when you want to say the clock started. But for Stamford and Woodbury, he and his dad have been to every O&G plant, in some cases more than once. They always tote their camera when they go.

“Would you like to know how many photos I have on my computer?” Austin asks, referring to stacks of construction equipment photos he’s taken. “20,000,” he answers, before we can reply. “And 700 of those are O&G trucks and equipment.” He carries a business card that reads, “Construction Equipment Photographer.”

Other stats are equally eye opening, a barometer of this young man’s focus. In round numbers, he’s visited 100 ConnDOT jobs and checked into 575 construction firms in Connecticut, snapping photos and chatting with the people he meets.

“We’ve talked to many companies but O&G was most receptive,” says Steve. Vice-Chairman Ray Oneglia and son Brad, Assistant Vice President, made a point of meeting this father-son duo who made a habit of visiting their facilities. Austin presented a calendar he designed just for Ray, using shots he’d taken of O&G equipment around the state. Two fathers, two sons, parallel interests.

Not surprisingly, Austin has a plan drawn out for his future: graduate high school in two more years (that cannot pass quickly enough, we expect), enroll at Central Connecticut State University, earn a degree in construction management, work for others to build experience and open his own construction company.
Next Generation Rising

Working in every business area of O&G, the fourth generation of Oneglias is mastering the ropes of the family corporation

They range in age from 29 to 39 and represent a collective 52 years of direct experience in the trenches at O&G. Like their fathers, they were raised in and around the company, soaking in the corporate culture from the youngest ages. They worked summers as soon as they were able and began joining the full-time work force in 2002. Kara, Christina, Brad, Ryan, T.J. and Matt Oneglia are the up-and-coming generation – an almost unheard-of fourth generation of family managers in a family business – who will someday step into the places of their fathers. We pulled them away from every corner of the company to get them all in one room to talk about a range of topics concerning O&G Industries.

Did any of you think you’d be doing something different for your career other than being at O&G, or did you always expect to be here?

BRAD: We all experienced as kids our father or grandfather taking us around to a job site or a plant from almost the time we could walk. I think joining the company was always encouraged. I never felt any pressure but it was something I always wanted to do.

CHRISTINA: We’d go the quarries and I’d spend time making bracelets out of blasting wire. My dad had me start working the summer I turned 16 and I didn’t expect to like it. I worked in the Estimating Department. I was only going to be there for four weeks. I ended up telling him I wanted to stay the whole ten weeks of my summer vacation. I really didn’t anticipate loving it as much as I did. And a lot of those people I worked with are still here.

T.J.: I started working summers when I was 14, mowing lawns, working with maintenance guys, like Sam Richards, cutting grass at all the facilities. The next summer I started as a laborer and a carpenter’s apprentice. I was a carpenter’s apprentice for a bunch of summers. The last summer before I joined the Navy I worked as a surveyor with Tony Bazzano. Then nine years in the service. I always thought I’d end up in the Building Division since it was my father’s track. I don’t know how it came about but I believe my grandfather had the idea I should go to work for my Uncle Bob under Bill Stanley in the concrete and quarry business. I always knew that after the service I’d end up at O&G. My father wanted us all to go out and work somewhere else before coming into the business. He was thinking like three or four years and for me it ended up being nine.

KARA: My O&G experience started when I was a child and I’d spend time at Bogue Road. I used to tell my mom I wanted to grow up and be a ‘secretary’ like Sue Duffy, who now is and has been for years an Assistant Vice-President. I remember visiting Barbara Walton in Stamford when I was unable to go to school with a broken foot and Barbara still remembers my father tell the story of how it happened. After that I worked at Bogue Road at the scale house through my high school summers and then at the counter in Waterbury Mason. Now I get the opportunity to work with so many of the individuals I met as a child. I’ve had the opportunity to learn so much from their experiences. Not just learning product knowledge – the stories and “legends” they share about their experiences when they first joined the company are priceless.

You each are working in a different area of the business. How did you end up where you are?

MATT: Like T.J. said my dad wanted us to work other places first. Well, timing is everything and when I graduated from college I was presented the opportunity to work for O&G on the Braintree Power Project and I couldn’t say no. When the Braintree project ended, one
of our subcontractors there, Bond Brothers, offered me a position as superintendent. My time with Bond was invaluable. I saw how another large, family-run business operates and learned what they’ve done to be successful and in business for over 100 years. After Bond, I went and earned an MBA and now I’m back working for Ken Merz’s team in the main office, mostly on financial and accounting assignments.

RYAN: Heavy Civil is where the opportunity was for me. I work with my father and we happen to have a good relationship. I didn’t spend a lot of time thinking about other divisions. There was certainly enough going on there and it was exciting to me.

BRAD: Through high school and college I worked on road jobs in the trailer, and with my father being in charge of asphalt it was natural. After college he sent me to Bridgeport to work under Mr. Leverty, to oversee and deal with some of the things in Fairfield County relating to asphalt. It was kind of a natural progression. My father’s been doing it for decades at this point and while the job always entails wearing different hats depending on what’s going on, my focus will probably always be asphalt.

What is it about your work that gives you the most satisfaction?

KARA: When you make money for the company [she says as she laughs].

CHRISTINA: When you manage a project and it’s successful. Or when everything’s right and clean on a job site and when my managers visit the site everything’s exactly as it should be, it’s satisfying. Also when you’re working with clients who have good things to say about your team and it gets back, it’s gratifying – a lot of that is a reflection on the quality of our field personnel!

RYAN: True satisfaction for me is meeting tough deadlines, the challenge of mobilizing large groups of people and coordinating them together, and all the planning that goes into that and then seeing it in action. You also can see the final product. In Heavy Civil we generally do very large, very public jobs. People have heard about what you’re working on. You get to see and to some extent utilize the things you had a hand in putting together.

KARA: I appreciate the longevity of our employees. There’s a driver, Jimmy Duffy, who started the summer I was born and he’s still here 30 years later. People like Jimmy were watching us grow up and now we have a chance to work with them on a different level. A lot of them are encouraging and proud. People are happy to see that the family is continuing with another generation.

CHRISTINA: When I started, some of our managers and execs were relatively new. They’re still here 15 to 20 years later. It’s a good feeling.
In the Building Division the personnel structure is very different and there’s a lot of depth. Working on projects is definitely a team effort and it’s gratifying to work with all the people in the Division, whether it’s home office support or the execs, or other project managers and engineers or the field personnel. Our people are our biggest asset.

BRAD: There are people I worked with as a teenager and in my early twenties and now their sons or daughters or brother or cousin are working here. O&G is the Oneglia family, sure, but there are several different families in the organization long-term, sometimes third generation.

MATT: I was just thinking about this. I had a moment in the mail room yesterday. There were pictures of Ray, George and Francis hanging up. It gives me real satisfaction seeing them and remembering what they did. I can’t articulate it well enough but it’s gratifying to follow in what they created.

T.J.: I enjoy coming to work here every day because of the people who I get to work with. I believe we have the best work force in the business. Their dedication, skills and their knowledge impress and inspire me. O&G is a brand with an excellent reputation. We owe that to everyone who comes to work here every day and gives their best. In the Materials Division, striving to maintain and live up to that reputation is a huge motivator for me.

And looking at the flip side, what about your job gives you the biggest challenge?

Those of you who are managers now, a question about your management philosophy: do you respond to conditions or do you go out and try to get ahead of things?

KARA: Are we out there looking for issues or problems versus responding? I think both.

BRAD: That’s the nature of the business. With the pace being what it is, much of how we manage is reactive. You have many different sites, many different employees, many different owners that you may be working with. You try to strategize but in may ways you have to react to what’s going on. You just try to proactively plan as much as you can and then react as you need to.

MATT: It’s a little bit of both. I haven’t been out of the office to have had an impact in this area yet but little things like just driving to work every day, you might hear of or notice a potential opportunity and you follow that through.

KARA: There is not a whole lot of training in managing here but we all learned it growing up. I don’t remember being in a car with my dad when he wasn’t on the phone talking business. It was always work. There was always work talk. Growing up we certainly learned from their behaviors the things that caught their attention and the way that they did things.

BRAD: Whether we realize it or not we’ve all been trained since we were kids – around the dinner table, working summers.

As you look down the road, do you see the business area you’re in continuing as it’s been or can you forecast major changes or innovations coming?

KARA: We’re all open to finding new opportunities for our future and the future of the company as well as our employees. So many of our life-time employees have helped shape what we’re now a part of and I want to continue their success as well as the success of the family.

T.J.: We have to focus on the success of our core business and remaining competitive so that we are able to take advantage of opportunities as they’re presented.

RYAN: In Heavy Civil we do most of our work for the state government. The first and most important driver of change would be ConnDOT. The recent talk, for example, is that the state may try to do more bridge design-build, whereas typically they give you a set of plans and you bid it and the lowest price gets the job. But I would not expect many major changes.

CHRISTINA: In the Building Division especially, competition is tough. We are doing things to differentiate ourselves which is why we started the Special Projects Division. Innovation in the building world is pretty high right now. There’s BIM 3D technology, for instance. I’ve run one project using BIM tools and it was very successful. We are trying to differentiate ourselves by using innovative technology. We are making it part of our norm.

What aspects of the business do you want to build upon, and are there any aspects you would like to change?

KARA: In the Masonry Division the past few years we’ve focused on supplying materials to commercial jobs, calling on more architects, getting our materials in the specifications when projects begin being
designed. That’s a really good way for us to continue improving.

BRAD: The material specifications for asphalt seem to change every year. Just staying on top of that change to make sure you’re putting out a quality product that meets the owner’s requirements – that’s a constant battle and something we stay focused on every day. As far as things to change, no, I don’t have anything I’m looking to change in that regard.

What kind of place will O&G be in 20 years, when some of your children are entering the company?

BRAD: It’s one of those things, looking back 20 years ago if you’d asked our fathers that same question, or our grandfathers, I don’t think they could have envisioned where we are today.

KARA: I think sometimes when our grandfathers got older and drove around to our different locations and job sites they were amazed at how big it all got and how far the company had come.

BRAD: Who knows where the state of construction is going to be then, or more specifically the Connecticut construction industry. We don’t know where that’s going to be. There’s talk of public-private ventures out there now. We just need to stay on top of the trends and react accordingly and change the organization accordingly. We have the flexibility to capitalize on new projects and opportunities.

MATT: You look at our fathers, looking at the power business, if you’d asked them when they were 29 years old if they’d be in it....

BRAD: 25 years ago it wouldn’t have been in their picture of where we are now.

KARA: I think you’re totally right. We have to stay on track, look for opportunities and communicate as an organization.

RYAN: There are enough challenges in general and enough pressure to perform consistently I don’t necessarily have a specific vision that says, “We should be ‘here’ in 20 years.” I’d be very content if we are around and doing what we’re doing. I don’t say that because we don’t have goals, I just mean things can change quickly. The challenge with a big organization is to keep it healthy. We have to look down the road 20 years so we’re here in five or ten. Are the same core values our grandfathers had still here? Certainly! We have a very strong mentality that says, “Finish the job and do it right,” even if the economy and such go upside down and sideways.

T.J.: First, we have to remain in existence. Then, we need to be adaptable so that we’re able to take advantage of opportunities that we can’t even fathom at this point in time.

KARA: That’s been the culture since our grandfathers. We were raised in it. They took chances and worked hard, even though they could never really know where it would go.

What debt of gratitude do you owe all the family members who came before you?

ALL: Everything.

T.J.: They built a financially sound company that is able to weather tough times. They put in place the workforce that exists today and that we rely on for our success. They acquired the resources that are the backbone of the company. They focused on long-term success instead of short-term gain.

KARA: Besides the company building they also taught us that no matter how successful you become you have to work hard at what you do. We’ve all worked in various aspects so we would get a feel for what its like to do different jobs. None of us ever just became a “boss” without having to learn. All of us appreciate how hard this is going to be and how much work is going to have to be put into it. Our grandfathers were still working right to the end and that certainly is an example they gave us.

CHRISTINA: They taught us to be humble and to have respect. It’s about how you treat people and things and setting an example. There were so many “isms” we learned. My grandpa, Francis, used to always say, “Christina, you can step on people’s toes but don’t ever take the shine off their shoe.” There were so many “isms” like that that he taught us. He was the nicest, kindest guy. In little ways he would teach us how to treat people.

MATT: I’m sure you guys all have stories about your grandfathers, but when our grandfather died there was an old-time carpenter who worked for us, Jerry McGuire, who told us a story about one of the first jobs he’d ever worked on – when our grandfather Francis pulls up in the pouring rain and the crew is down in a hole in the mud and our grandfather got out. He was always very well dressed and put together but he just got right down in the mud to help with no regard to his clothes or his title. That’s a story that has stuck out for me about just how to treat people and about leading by example. It doesn’t matter who you are.

RYAN: My grandfather would say something like, “We built you a launch pad so when you take off don’t forget that you wouldn’t have been able to do that without the launch pad.” We still have that launch pad, something to start with.

BRAD: When you look at family businesses the percent that make it to a second generation is about 30 percent, and third generation it’s even less, and to make it to a fourth generation is very unique. We all take the opportunity we’ve been given very seriously because it’s not only us and our families depending on the company, it’s our employees and their families. We all take that to heart. T.J. mentioned keeping money in the company – it’s about survival in this industry and making it thru the lean times to be able to succeed in the good times. The things we do every day matter.

We all take the opportunity we’ve been given very seriously because it’s not only us and our families depending on the company, it’s our employees and their families. We all take that to heart.

BRAD ONELGIA
SAFETY
Right in Compliance

In August an Administrative Law Judge accepted a no negligence finding for a proposed citation from the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) issued to O&G, citing O&G’s rigorous pre-shift inspection procedures, which are an essential part of our overall equipment safety program. At the time the citation was issued, an inspector from MSHA was at the Southbury Quarry and came upon a parked excavator. Without following the company’s pre-trip procedures, the MSHA officer inspected the machine and discovered that the horn did not work, citing the company as negligent. O&G contested this citation, and at a pre-hearing conference before Administrative Law Judge Janet Harner, the company presented evidence regarding its pre-trip inspection program and the mandatory compliance required of equipment operators. T.J. Oneglia, Assistant Vice President in the Materials Division, explained to Judge Harner that, “If any defect is found affecting safe operation of company equipment, we require that the machine be tagged out of service and repaired before it is used. The pre-trip inspection is how we discover any safety defects.” She agreed with Oneglia that because of the procedures of the safety program, O&G was doing exactly what is expected of it and found no negligence. The effectiveness of our safety program is ensured when every employee follows company procedures, especially those designed to check our changing worksite and heavy equipment. Operator safety starts before any of our 1500 pieces of equipment begins running for the day.

ETHICS
Our Elemental Identity

“You’ll never get an ‘atta boy’ for shortchanging anyone,” Ray Oneglia, Sr., would say. That plainspoken wisdom from one of the company’s “founding brothers” sums up the O&G way of conducting business. For generations business has been about fair dealing all around: honest work for honest pay and doing the job right the first time around. That unwritten ethos was codified in 2007 when the company published a document that put on paper the ethical business practices that had already been the core of the company’s identity for decades. Dan Carey, Director of Human Resources, was on the team that developed the document. “O&G takes the stance that even if an action is legal but could be perceived as unethical, our answer is ‘no!’ It is our practice to go beyond industry rules and legalities and to lead through our conduct.” When the concise “O&G Industries Code of Conduct” was newly minted, all employees received a copy and were trained in its philosophy, specific policies and practices, and compliance. The Code’s principles are continually refreshed, keeping everyone focused on O&G’s reputation as a highly principled contractor, “ethical to the core.”

Rescuer
Training, teamwork and a quick response save a life

Marc DiBenedetto heard the scratchy call come across his radio as he was pulling out of his driveway on an errand: someone was in medical distress just four doors down from his home. In seconds he was there and engaged. The timing was providential.

By day, DiBenedetto drives a triaxle for O&G out of Southbury. He has been doing that for close to 13 years. For 18 years he has also been a volunteer in the Thomaston Fire Department where he now serves as a captain.

Fellow firefighter Chris Boulanger was already on the scene when DiBenedetto arrived. Boulanger had been at home when a frantic next-door neighbor ran to his house pleading for help – her husband had collapsed on the dining room floor. DiBenedetto and Boulanger let their training kick into gear, taking turns administering CPR to the non-responsive victim. Police and paramedics arrived and their neighbor was loaded into an ambulance. By the time he arrived at the hospital his heart had begun beating.

DeBenedetto looks back at what he and Boulanger did that evening as first responders with modesty. “I was just glad we gave him another chance to see his grandkids and his wife,” he said.

On August 6, at the conclusion of O&G’s company-wide monthly safety meeting held at Coco Key Convention Center in Waterbury, a surprised DiBenedetto saw the newspaper article about the rescue appear on the projector screen and heard T.J. Oneglia, Assistant Vice President, Ready Mix Concrete and Aggregates Division, call him forward. “Ray [Oneglia] and T.J. and Leo [Nardi] went out of their way to recognize me,” he said. “I was shocked and flattered that they’d do that.”

On September 21 Boulanger and DiBenedetto were also recognized with a meritorious service award for their life-saving efforts from the Connecticut State Firefighters Association at its annual convention in South Windsor.
PRODUCTIVITY
From Bid to Field

Acquiring new work, now more than ever, hinges on bidding a project “lean.” It’s true for the Building Division with its mix of private and public clients; it’s especially true for the Heavy Civil Division where nearly all work is performed for ConnDOT and, all else equal, is awarded to the lowest bidder. Bid success – and then the ability to turn a profit once a job is landed – is a function of first estimating how tightly a job can run by consulting a library of past performance data built job by job over the years and then performing with productivity that matches or better the estimators’ prediction. “Historical productivity factors, including manhour production, are at the heart of any bid,” says Walt Koziol, Vice President, who has been estimating in the Heavy Civil Division since 1979. After a winning bid, the team that is chosen to manage the effort sits with the estimators who put together the bid to learn the project’s bid strategy. Every manager gets on point and brings that message to the foremen and their crews in the field. Chris Tuomey, Vice President in the Heavy Civil Division, is an experienced project manager: “When we run a job we talk about the goals and targets,” says “Every team member at every level knows they can make a direct contribution to keeping productivity up by doing what it is they do the most productive way possible. We welcome any suggestions from the field for doing things the most efficient way possible.”

QUALITY
On Their Game

For the past year or so, down in Stamford at the company’s Davenport Street concrete plant, Yard Superintendent/Plant Operator Don Kennedy, Jr., has intently overseen the production and delivery of a unique, high-strength concrete made to demanding specifications. It’s a crucial element at the Gateway Garage at Harbor Point in Stamford, a parking facility that will one day support twenty-story business towers. The garage design calls for significantly narrower support columns so specifications require proportionately stronger concrete, capable of bearing 12,000 pounds per square inch (psi). The highest-psi mix Kennedy had turned out before was 10,000psi. The production and testing tolerances for high-performance concrete are much more stringent than for more typical formulations. “It’s rich,” says Kennedy of the 12,000psi mix, “more slag and higher total cementitious content. We use special admixtures to replace some of the batch water and that increases strength. Less water and more precise controls add to the overall time it takes us to complete a load.” As Quality Control Manager Jim Maher puts it, “Everything’s got to be done right, A to Z. We do our own QC testing, beyond what the customer hires through an independent source, so we can accurately determine the quality of the concrete we deliver.” Through close quality monitoring from batch thru delivery, O&G has provided more than 3,000CY of concrete with consistently outstanding results, with strength averaging over 13,000psi.

Marc DiBenedetto, a triaxle driver for O&G, serves as a volunteer captain in the Thomaston Fire Department. His skill and quick response, along with that of fellow firefighter Chris Boulanger, saved the life of a neighbor.
At the mega-project Contract E in New Haven, the business of pile driving – pounding and driving rebar-filled concrete piles into the ground – began in 2011. It will not cease until 2015. It goes on every working day year-round, regardless of mud or frost, sweltering heat or January winds.

Piles come first, before any bridge substructure can be built. The piles act as anchors, like giant concrete stakes that resemble oversize pieces of 4x4 lumber, measuring 16 inches square by 60 to 120 feet long, weighing up to 24 tons and driven to depths of up to 116 feet.

The machine at Contract E that delivers enough of what engineers call “kinetic energy” (read ground-thumping brute force) to drive them into position is the Model I-62 single-acting diesel pile hammer manufactured by ICE. It’s the largest hammer of its kind in use by O&G. It functions like a cylinder from a car engine, but with a seven-ton “piston,” or ram, delivering 165,000 foot-pounds of kinetic energy onto whatever it’s directed. Merely positioning and resting the 20-foot-long hammer onto the head of a pile can push that pile down a foot or more into the ground.

The hammer uses high-pressure fuel injection timed to compression. As the ram falls past inlet/exhaust ports, fresh air is trapped between it and the anvil resting on top of the pile and waiting to be struck. When the ram has fallen to within an inch above the anvil, that compressed air tells a fuel pump to spray diesel fuel into the compression chamber. When the ram closes the gap and slams the anvil, moving the pile deeper into the ground, the fuel ignites and bounces the seven-ton ram back upward about 14 feet to begin the cycle again. It all happens within a matter of a single loud second or so.

When the pile is being pounded into soft ground, the ram strikes the anvil once or maybe a few times before it stops and needs to be raised and cycled by a crew member. When it meets resistance in hard ground the ram fires repeatedly and rhythmically on its own.

Driving the piles is a crew that has been together since the job began. Two years into it, they work in nearly automatic ways, knowing who does what, who is about to do what and what comes next, knowing when things are going as they should, knowing when a fix or adjustment is needed. All heads are on a swivel, looking not just side to side but up and down. The crew comprises a pair of operators doing precise heavy lifting in their cranes, three carpenters handling the track the hammer sits in (the “leads”), marking the depth on the piles, positioning the pile plum on target and confirming finished depth, an oiler who runs the power pack that operates the guide rollers and sends diesel fuel to the hammer, and a crew foreman coordinating the operation. For safety and efficiency every man wears a head set, like a pilot’s head set, to be able to converse amid the banging of the ram on the anvil, the noise of the wind and local street traffic on the other side of jersey barriers, and the whining of interstate traffic as it flies by a dozen yards away. Noise and diesel smoke are their environment.

The men seem inspired by their own skill. That’s not to say they boast but that they’re energized knowing exactly how things go and how each man works. They joke and laugh as they hustle (no voices are heard over the din but big smiles erupt around the site as they respond to a comment over the headset). Among his other duties, Bob Nardi, Structures Superintendent at Contract E, oversees this crew. “These guys are productive. How many piles we do in a day depends on the ground and how tight the area we’re working in. Sometimes we’ll sit on a pile for an hour-and-a-half to get it in the ground. These,” he says, nodding to the pile driving thumping the ground about 50 feet to the right, “you’ll watch them go in in ten minutes.”

When this big job ends in 2015 they will have driven an impressive 215,000 feet of piles, nearly 2,600 in all.
ANOTHER ONE GOES INTO THE GROUND

In this sequence, one of the nearly 2600 piles that will be installed at Contract E is marked, put in precise position and driven about 60 feet into the ground – a process that took ten or so minutes but which, in tough ground, can take an hour or more. (clockwise from top left) Marking pile depth increments and rigging the 66-foot-long pile for lifting into the leads; some piles are 118 feet long on this project. Bill Hassig loading the pile into the leads and keeping a close eye on his crane boom clearances. Bob Goulet operating the pile driving crane and monitoring the hammer’s elevation. Joe Capozziello and Jason Hesses setting the leads over the pile location. Setting the pile into the leads; radio headsets provide crew communication over the noisy environment. Pile gate rollers used to secure and maintain alignment of the pile during driving. Luke Pelletier operating the guide rollers. Joe Capozziello checking for plumb after a few feet of penetration. The I-62 Diesel Pile Hammer, essentially a self-contained, one cylinder diesel engine, firing and pushing the 14,800 lb ram up 14 feet in order to drop onto the pile and drive it into the ground. Checking the final pile top elevation before stopping the hammer and moving to the next pile.
From its inception the Special Projects Group, a flexible arm of the Building Division, was intentionally a niche organization. Where the Building Division is equipped for intensive, long-duration, high-dollar-value, often high-profile projects, Special Projects is designed for customers with smaller jobs (no more than several million dollars but as small as a few thousand dollars) who want O&G performance and the security of knowing O&G has horsepower in reserve should the need arise.

Now a few years along, the Group is on track and developing a small projects client base. Growth is controlled and purposeful, focusing on excellence and repeat business. Roots for long-standing client relationships are in the ground and growing. The ability to perform larger jobs clients may one day need stands at the ready with the Building Division.

Just as important to the Division’s mission is its companion goal of making Special Projects a place where employees with skill and ambition meet with opportunities to develop personally. There is a feeder program of sorts: carpenters and laborers who have the drive and innate abilities learn on the job, are chosen to earn the right to progress into field supervision in the Group and, for those who want it, develop further into project managers who could ultimately be moved into the Building Division proper.

Aron Mednick, a veteran project manager and now Vice President of the Building Division, was one of the architects of the Special Projects Group. “With Special Projects we have two strategies – a strategy for culturing repeat business and bigger projects that can go to the Building Division, and a strategy for bringing along employees who want to work their way up the ranks. From the start we wanted to develop our people from carpenters to foremen to supervisors. We want them to have the chance to work their way up the ladder quickly. We want to give them opportunities more quickly to be in a field or project management position.”

Mednick encourages his staff to think of themselves entrepreneurially, as if they were a small general contractor operating under the O&G umbrella. “We want them to go out and solicit work, develop new business, provide customer service, estimate work, then manage it and close it out. They have to do everything. Special Projects will make them very well rounded.”

**Round Pegs for Round Holes**

Not every carpenter or laborer is cut out to become a supervisor. Some are happiest putting their hands to work all day, every day. Nor does every one wish for the responsibilities that come with managing others. For Mednick and his Special Project managers, spotting potential supervisors has a lot to do with spotting desire. “There are the guys who want to supervise a small crew. Then there are the guys who want to supervise a project. You have to figure out who would be best. You do that in part by gauging their desire,” says Mednick. “The basic knowledge of carpentry work or masonry work, people can learn. But the drive and the mentality to supervise people – you just have to have that in you.”

The company’s General Superintendent is Leo Nardi. His role is to furnish manpower and equipment to virtually all of the company’s worksites. Managers turn to Nardi when they need to add people or or shed some. With more than three decades in the field and a mile-high perspective, he provides supervisors with counsel and expertise, too. Every day he stops in at different projects. Sometimes he can offer a better idea, sometimes he’s there to simply validate the way the work is being run.

He and Mednick are of the same mind. “It’s guys who can think large scale on a small project who make the best supervisors. That’s not everyone. Maybe ten percent, for different reasons. Some guys aren’t motivated to want to do anything other than their trade. Some don’t want the responsibility, some want to be 9-to-5ers and go home. Other guys are looking to advance, they’re looking for job security. Some guys are just looking to be challenged. We give them special projects to be challenged on, and they hope as they go along they can get into the bigger projects.” As Nardi puts it, the superintendent or foreman is the “maestro” on a small job. He has a start date and an end date – “how he gets there is up to him,” he says. Its a considerable responsibility. “For Special Projects,” he continues, “I’m looking to supply people who think more independently than most.” He ticks off what special project workers must be able to master. At the top of the list is organizing people by trade, by day, even down to the hour so that nobody stands idle. They need to be flexible and know how to keep people busy and have work off the critical path, “leak-off areas,” to which they can flow staff if the job hits an impasse like waiting for the electrician or an answer from the customer. Another prerequisite is possessing a generalist’s understanding of most trades: not knowing how to do the work themselves but what’s required of the work to
facilitate finishing it, all the while interacting with people to get them mobilized, motivated and pulling in the same direction.

For Mednick, being able to clearly communicate is an indispensable skill. It sets supervisors and managers apart. “You’ve got to be able to get your thoughts across. If you can’t communicate your thoughts or desires or expectations there’s no way you can get the work done. If you can’t communicate your expectations or can’t talk to an owner about what their expectations are, then how can you succeed or how can you expect the people who are working for you to succeed?”

A good supervisor also “speaks” an unspoken language, understanding what a client or subcontractor or employee is saying on the surface but then interpreting that and responding appropriately. “Bulls in china shops don’t make it,” says Mednick. “Reading” people and situations leads to optimal working relationships, which leads to hitting the Special Projects bullseye: repeat business.

Callbacks for work come in large part because of the relationship the Special Projects supervisor has carefully built with the client supervisor. They have developed a rapport and met the client’s expectations for the project. “Earning repeat business is more than just reading plans and specs,” Mednick explains, “it’s understanding how the client’s facility works, how their people work and how we interface with them. It’s about the interpersonal relationships that are built. At one of the health facilities we’ve worked, their infection control person developed a great trust in our team and got to a comfort level where he didn’t have to inspect the site twice a day like they expected because we proved that we were doing everything to plan. You build a confidence and trust.”

Facilities people from different organizations in the same industry all talk. It’s a web of connections. A recommendation from one peer to another about the value O&G brings to a job carries a lot of weight. Word-of-mouth referrals are another powerful way Special Projects has gotten more work, referrals that were built bottom-line on performance and capped with strong working relationships.

**Open Doors to a Faster Climb**

One of the most important things the Group does to lead to its own self-sustaining, organic growth is giving the right kind of worker the right kind of opportunity. While just about any job anywhere offers workers the opportunity to learn, make themselves more valuable and advance, in Special Projects it’s a more intensive experience. It’s a quicker track: learn now. It’s a bit of baptism by fire.

Forcing someone into supervision when they are sitting unsure on the fence is setting them up for failure. But saying yes to the ambitious carpenter or laborer with the right potential and a growing interpersonal and project skill set is desirable. “Put him in a position where he can succeed, give him the right size task, with supervision and training from John Humes, Christina Oneglia Rossi or Leo Nardi, and then it’s a real confidence builder,” says Mednick.
John Humes, who heads up the Special Projects Group with a jack-of-all-trades flair, is a prime example of the opportunity the group presents. He was chosen for Special Projects for his years of general contracting experience before coming to O&G, his subsequent accomplishments at the company, his way with people and his see-the-big-picture ability. He is a bit of a hybrid now, shepherding the Group while estimating and managing projects himself. He sees that candidates for supervisory positions are given incremental challenges as a way of grading them: “Guys are tested along the way,” he says.

Health care is one of the business areas that has been suited to Special Projects. There have been many small renovations, often on a fast track, often in the middle of operational facilities necessitating an awareness of special containment procedures to maintain safety. (A small army of carpenters from which Nardi can pull has been specially trained in a union-sponsored qualification program for compliant working in health care settings.)

Christina Oneglia Rossi, a project manager in the Special Projects Group, has found herself lately working in these kinds of settings and appreciating the on-the-job training she has been receiving. For five years before Special Projects, she was a project engineer on larger jobs. During an interval away to start a family, she applied herself to earning a master’s degree in construction management and supplemented her core education with a few engineering courses that weren’t required but which added to her skills.

“I sort of fell into Special Projects. In January of 2011 when I first came back there was a BIM 3D project going on for trade coordination, so I did that.” (BIM, short for Building Information Modeling, is a way of representing and managing a facility’s life cycle with three-dimensional digital images.) When that project wrapped, she returned to the Main Office. “My desk was in the Special Projects area, and they pulled me in. John Humes pulled me in,” she laughs. “It’s ended up being great.”

Stepping into a project management role on a large Building Division project could have been overwhelming for Oneglia Rossi. Special Projects presented a right-sized opportunity for her. “With a smaller project you end up having to take on the project management role because you don’t have a choice – projects are run with minimal staff and there’s no need for anyone else to be assigned. So I ended up growing into that role pretty quickly. I had to.” It has been an assignment that models the Special Projects training ground paradigm.

Oneglia Rossi counts a few of the benefits for carpenters, laborers, foremen and superintendents: “Our field and supervisory personnel can start here and because they’re doing assistant-project-manager kinds of tasks, they’re running the software, they’re in the office, they’re getting to know the people who do the billing, the contracts – all of the office people that many of our field people on larger projects never get to meet.”

Oneglia Rossi and her crew are drawing to the end of a five-month, multi-phase health care project. She has relied on Jim Perazzella’s 25 years of experience, most of it with smaller firms and the last six with O&G, working both in the Building Division at Quinnipiac University and for Steve Torres in his Industrial Accounts Department where he did much the same kind of work he does now but in an industrial setting.

Perazzella was hired as foreman. He’s now a superintendent. He has worked on jobs of all sizes, comfortable in field work but seeing a day not too far off when he’ll want to transition from physical to cerebral
In New Haven, at the mammoth highway project named Project E, O&G will have poured almost 70,000 CY of concrete by the time the job is done.

With a range of formulations for different purposes, DOT engineers have specified each concrete for its unique performance characteristics. There is a pair of mixes named Class 40 and Class 50 concretes. They are a higher strength, higher durability formulation than most. They are perfectly suited to things like bridge columns: at Project E, three columns form a pier and a series of piers hold up the highway as it swings over New Haven streets. Each pier supports about three million pounds.

As concretes go, Class 40 and 50 formulations are the finickiest of the bunch to work with. They demand to be kept in a specific temperature range as they are mixed, delivered, poured and cured.

Concrete specs have become increasingly demanding over the years: special mixes, special admixtures to impart performance qualities, accelerants to speed curing, retardants to slow it down. Contractors failing to meet different DOT specifications face significant penalties and risk future work. So vital is quality control that on DOT jobs there are now three entities who monitor compliance: the DOT itself, the company who supplies the concrete and the company who installs it.

Inspectors hone in on two key aspects of the process: the amount of water used to make a mix and the curing process. Installers dislike drier mixes. They are harder to work with. Like stiff or thick batter, they resist flowing into position. Masons prefer to add a touch of water so the mix flows better. But even a little extra water can spell an invisible weakness in the final product and premature failure.

Curing is a science in itself. Proper curing prevents a cascade of unfortunate events that starts with cracking, which allows water to seep into the structure, which expands and contracts and creates more cracking and more water penetration, which starts corroding the rebar skeleton, which creates spalling at the surface – flaking, pitting, failure.

O&G turned to an outside consultant from the Midwest to come up with involved formulations for optimally making and curing the Class 40/50 concretes. Bill Stanley, Vice President, Materials Division, worked closely with them. "Our consultant engineered a detailed thermal control plan specifically for us. Massive structures like we’re pouring in New Haven generate a lot of heat that could lead to thermal cracking and an inferior product if we don’t work to the plan."

That plan specifies that the temperature of each batch of 40 or 50 concrete must hold at 60 degrees F from the plant in Bridgeport, in the truck travelling down I-95 and to the job site where it will be poured and then cure. In the summer city heat. Thirty loads a day at peak.

At the plant, crushed ice is swapped for a portion of the batch water – a neat trick to hold a cool temperature from plant to site. Additionally, the percentage of cement in the mix is lowered and fly ash, a byproduct of burning coal in electric power generation plants, is increased. This swapping adds strength and helps reduce the amount of heat generated in the curing reaction.

So how do thousands of pounds of concrete slowly cure to hardness, over a week's time, in the heat of the summer? Insulating wraps. They are placed closely around the forms to help hold temperature constant. (For gargantuan structures, like some of the Q Bridge supports, yards and yards of cooling tubes run deep within each form with cold water circulating through them to cool the core.)

But how do you know, in fact, that the temperature deep inside that 30-foot column of concrete you poured, that will be holding up thousands of tons of iron girders and paved highway, is where it needs to be? Electronic cubes, called temperature and maturity sensors. About the size of a salt shaker you’d use at a diner and resembling a battery, these digital devices ping out reports of the core temperature every hour of every day before they give up the ghost at around a month – long after just about any concrete would be cured. The sensors are activated and placed inside the form during the pour, their two
long lead wires running out of the form. Engineers, like Project Structures Engineer Kevin Bernard at Project E, can hook a meter to the leads and get an accurate temperature reading of the concrete deep in the core. Bernard and others dutifully collect the readings. “We keep a log. We’ll monitor until the core temperature drops to about 100 degrees. We watch that the differential between the surface temp and the core stays within about 15 degrees early on. The differential can go to about 40 degrees when the thermal cycle ends, around seven to nine days.”

Bob Nardi has been the Structures Superintendent on the project since it began in 2010. He’s overseen two pours of the Class 40 concrete — “The thermal control plan is a little less demanding than the class 50,” he says — and ten different Class 50 pours. “The only real challenge is temperature. We’ve got to keep it in the same range. The core’s the hottest and the outside won’t bake as much.” In the summer crews use insulated blankets; in the winters they relied not just on blankets but ground heaters too. “All the pours have gone well,” he says.

When the concrete is cured, the insulated wrap comes off the forms, the forms are stripped away and the concrete is ready to accept the thousands of tons of asphalt and steel they will carry for decades to come. Says John Gemetro, Vice President, “It takes a lot of effort to get it all just right.”

Top: In the foreground, formwork is stripped off a recently constructed pier cap upon which bridge superstructure will be built. The formwork had been supported on column jack heads still in place (yellow metal on piers). The pier cap in the rear still has its formwork.

Bottom: Carpenter Formwork Foreman Nick Carrieri (left, with Bernard) oversees the construction of all pier caps and columns at Contract E with a crew of five carpenters, a laborer and an operator.
It is, Richard Warren says, his job in a nutshell: helping people see the good O&G does in their neighborhoods. Tucked away in a no-frills office in Bridgeport at the company’s Bostwick Avenue operation, Warren juggles diverse duties, all of which relate to keeping O&G on a smooth tack. Appropriately he sits next door to what was the office of John Leverty, Sr., who for decades smoothed the waters as Warren does today. “The man was a master,” says Warren of his friend.

It was 1996 when O&G acquired the Genovese supply company in Stamford and Warren came with the deal. It was a part-and-parcel arrangement that has proven fortuitous.

He began summers in materials sales at Genovese, worked their sales counter and ended up in accounting full-time upon graduating college. He used his knowledge of their customer base to help O&G’s credit department integrate new clients. That was the beginning. But O&G saw the true “utility man” who had people skills and negotiating skills and a friendly, self-effacing way that put even difficult people at ease. So Warren got more random assignments.

His development was not unlike the route taken by others in the company, where a natural “can do” attitude was handed brand new challenges, leading to greater job opportunities and the evolution of a job description. (His card says “Facilities Manager” – it’s the best catchall he could come up with.)

About a year after joining O&G, Warren was sent into the land use arena where he learned to deal with matters that related to properties that O&G either owned, was looking to sell or wanting to acquire. His territory now is primarily O&G’s operations in southwestern Connecticut – Stamford, Norwalk, Bridgeport – and as far north as Danbury.

“I represent O&G on the boards of various neighborhood organizations. I’m a member of the Bridgeport West End Association which is a business group and the West Side Neighborhood Revitalization Zone. I’m also on the Stamford Waterside Coalition.” Though he’d be the last to use the term, he’s the company’s ambassador there, collaborating with city staff, other business persons and concerned residents to develop and execute strategies that improve life in the community. “My attitude is, ‘What can we do to help?’ ”

Paperwork is a big part of what he does. There are filing cabinets stacked with it, and neatly stacked and tiered piles of it lie across his desk and on makeshift cardboard platforms (read “boxes”) around the office. Organization is the job’s lifeblood. Property leases, contracts, DEEP permits, local land use permits, correspondence, documentation and meeting minutes are all filed away.

He rifles through one cabinet and puts his hands on a folder. It holds the releases, insurance forms and a parcel of other details surrounding the filming of movie scenes at the Canal Street facility in Stamford in 2007 on a Saturday when Sean Penn waited in the scale house and a crew of dozens took over the waterside to film a car chase. “Surreal,” he recalls. Warren was the behind-the-scenes go-between, ensuring that all the groundwork making it safe, legal and uneventful was in place.

As he did for the Italian fashion magazine that wanted to use an O&G quarry to shoot a new line of men’s clothing. He’d committed O&G to taking care of details – power, indoor facilities, moving equipment if needed – and felt obliged to be there that weekend to see that all was provided as agreed.

Warren has shepherded the preparations and paperwork for fireworks displays when cities like Stamford and Bridgeport asked to launch from company property. He’s been put on standby when nighttime rainstorms were forecast, ready to throw on a slicker and properly collect stormwater runoff for laboratory analysis by the DEEP. (His duties also bleed into environmental compliance.)

Something he has dealt with often is the thorny issue of gentrification. In urban areas with desirable shoreline, where for hundreds of years a revolving cast of industries have set up shop, companies are under pressure that seeks to ease them out so upscale housing and retail sites can take their place. “We’re a clean operation,” says Warren, “but near a neighborhood we appear messy. We’re sort of like the airport people decide to move next to but then don’t want the jets flying overhead.”

It’s a concern Warren mediates, stating O&G’s position while seeking to find middle ground, “snug our activities tighter” and move ahead. “I’m proud of having helped negotiate a noise variance in Stamford and development covenants in Bridgeport which secure O&G’s rights to continue existing industrial operations even as residential development approvals were granted adjacent to our sites.” It’s the kind of utility work he does so well for the company.
labor. Special Projects offers him a pathway. “Sometimes the super just oversees and sometimes he works, more like a carpenter/foreman. It seems like the small jobs you’re more of a working super. That’s what I do now. I’m more hands-on but I can’t last forever. I’ve been working with my hands for 25 years and to switch, that will mean a big learning curve.” He sees himself being made ready to move to the Building Division and a supervisory role. “Bigger jobs are probably where I’ll end up taking my tools off, starting to do more paperwork and supervising, those kinds of things.”

But for now, Perazzella and his team work away. They have learned each other’s ways and function smoothly together. Says Oneglia Rossi, “Obviously it’s difficult to always keep everybody busy, so sometimes people get reassigned to a larger job, but I would rather keep the people we have. They’re excellent.”

This is the second job Oneglia Rossi and company have done at the facility, the current one having started this summer. From the CEO to the client’s project executive, even the nurses, all reports have been positive. “That directly reflects on Jim and his team,” she says. “They’ve kept it really clean, everyone’s impressed with that, especially on the fourth floor where its very, very busy. We stay in our area, keep it clean and confined and follow the right safety codes. The project exec told me, ‘At the start I felt like I should come up all the time and check for the owner but now I don’t even feel I need to come up to your job site.’” Staff checks every day on safety compliance, negative air pressure to trap airborne contaminants and such things, but the project executive rarely visits.

Elsewhere in the Special Projects Group, another small crew supports a manufacturer, shifting from one task to the next or between a few that are progressing simultaneously. Adam Bova works there. He is a newcomer to O&G with just six months under his belt but he isn’t a newcomer to building. He partnered with his brother and ran a family general construction firm for 20 years, managing a crew of one to a half-dozen men. It made him a perfect fit for Special Projects.

He works as a carpenter now among the office spaces and the machines on the factory floor, rebuilding areas as the customer needs changes but his sights are set on moving up. “I’m still young enough to like being in the field but I’m definitely looking to move up. I know there are differences [between his old company and Special Projects] but this is what I wanted to get into.” As time marches on and field work becomes physically harder, he considers that he’d perhaps transition into office work like purchasing or estimating.

Bova works alongside Dave Olsen, who considers being the lead on small project after small project inside the same manufacturing plant and offices – as being “carpenter, foreman, superintendent all together.” Over his 18 years at O&G, “off and on” as he puts it, he has been assigned to his fair share of big projects, largest among them, at Quinnipiac University and the University of Connecticut. He also works on health care projects. Olsen’s diverse experience, outgoing personality and ability to motivate are assets for Special Projects. “Some guys don’t want to leave the hands-on. I like what I do, it’s a fun thing for me. I’m kind of looking forward to staying in the same field but doing less of the hands-on. I’d like to move deeper into field management. You have to be a certain type of person for it.” The Special Projects pathway can make that a possibility for him.

In Windsor, the Building Division is beginning work on another magnet secondary school for the Capital Region Education Council. Among the superintendents is Ron Richnavski. When a Special Projects assignment in Westport ended, he was promoted from foreman to assistant superintendent and shifted to the Building Division. His years of experience and his work as a foreman at the smaller Special Projects job in Westport had prepared him for the move up. He speaks highly of the support given him in Special Projects. “I learned a lot about logistics, organizing crews, doing paperwork, ordering materials – a lot of the office business. John Humes, Leo Nardi – everybody was more than helpful. Whatever I wanted or needed they went out of their way to help.” He’s continuing to grow professionally. His new position puts him around office staff more, interacting with project managers and engineers and participating in new kinds of work. “I’m excited, a little anxious, you know, and I hope I don’t disappoint anyone, but I do feel comfortable. We have a great crew here and I’m looking forward to this new job.” Richnavski has been made ready, tested and moved up.
Jim Zambero fielded an odd question five years ago when then-Chairman Ray Oneglia, Sr., made one of his frequent impromptu visits to the South Main maintenance facility Zambero oversees. “What’s with the new truck?” he asked. There wasn’t any new truck, Zambero replied. The senior Oneglia walked him outside and pointed. “That one right there!”

It was a ten-year-old Kenworth T300 that had been prepped, repainted and redecaled for another decade of service under the O&G logo. It shined, the handiwork of Don Drost, the man in charge of keeping all O&G equipment with wheels or tracks – “rolling stock” – fresh and sharp looking. “Holy cow that’s nice work,” said Oneglia.

Numerous other instances of Drost’s inspired handiwork prompted Oneglia to ask one day, “Jim my, where’d we get this guy? He cares about my stuff.” It was the ultimate compliment.

Doing things with excellence comes naturally to Drost. He paints a mixer like it was his own vehicle being readied for a show. (Restoring cars happens to be one of his passions.) But Drost understands business, too. He is able to balance the value equation: giving the company superior work while being practical about when good is good enough. “It’s not going to the Hartford car show” is Drost’s mantra when he catches himself getting carried away.

Drost is a man of steady habits. “In 40 years I’ve only had two jobs and one wife,” he smiles. On the job he’s steady, too – always occupied with the work at hand. With appreciation in his voice, Zambero says, “Whenever I come by the shop, he’s busy,” says Zambero. “We’ve had some good people here over the years but Don’s the best.”

Challenges are fuel to Drost. Painting big equipment like cranes and outsize loaders does not intimidate him. “To me, the bigger and tougher the better. People ask me, ‘Why?’ Then they see it when I’m done and they say, ‘Wow!’ Then they get why I like it.”

Drost has one associate in the paint shop. His name is Doug Owens. He is about 30 years Drost’s junior. Unofficially but more accurately he is Drost’s apprentice. They have a working relationship that began in 2010 when Owens, then a laborer with ambition to climb the ladder, came to Zambero asking to be moved into painting alongside Drost.

Before the slick O&G gold paint, the striping and the decals comes a truckload of prep work for every vehicle. That’s Owens’ territory. He has the unglamorous side of the job as he learns to prepare the canvases for Drost’s masterworks. He is often in a Tyvek jumpsuit splattered with road grime, crawling around vehicles fresh from the jobsite or highway as he steam cleans and degreases and sand blasts. Bit by bit Owens is also learning finish work by doing decaling and some of the painting. Drost sees in him the same built-in drive to do the very best work and he nurtures that.

The working relationship between the two involves a neat twist. Drost and his wife did not have children. Owens lost his father when he was young. Each fills a void in the other. Behind the banter and the jibing there is real camaraderie, a mentor who appreciates his younger charge and the protege who takes to heart not only job training but the life lessons that are peppered into the day’s work.

The company has another crew to paint its facilities (working foreman Wayne Stickney, with painters Jared Boccardi and Hector Vega) but Drost and Owens are the only vehicle painters. Together Drost and Owens restore miles of metal every year (in 2012, they applied 169 gallons of black, white, yellow and O&G gold paint, significantly more than many good-size body shops use) and they treat each vehicle like it’s their own.
Operating Engineer **TIM CUNNINGHAM** looks back on a long career with O&G – 33 years this past July – with enthusiasm you hear in his voice. “This company and the owners, they did a lot for me, keeping me working all this time. It’s hard to stay with a job these days but they always kept me working.” He joined O&G after four years in the Air Force servicing F-4 fighter jets followed by eight years repairing Mack trucks. In his 33 years with the company Tim had seen a lot of growth and had a lot of opportunities presented to him; he’s also taken his share of losses to heart. The 1985 passing of his immediate supervisor, Dave Pelizzari, at the Southbury garage where he worked as a truck mechanic was a particularly hard loss to take. Dave had been as much Tim’s friend and mentor as his supervisor. The passing of Francis, Raymond, Sr., George and Bob Oneglia were also tough: “Those guys were always good to me, they were fantastic people. You did your job and they took care of you, that’s it in a nutshell.” This July Tim decided that his body had had enough and it was time to put away the wrenches and spend time at home, something he delights in. Without grand ideas for retirement, without any particular passion or hobby driving him, he’s loving the pace of domestic life. A great day for Tim is puttering in the yard, tending to the house, running errands, cooking dinner for his wife – and not smelling of axle grease. He and Robin met at a bar where Tim worked nights as bouncer and bartender and have been married 29 “glorious” years. They have two grown children, a son who is a police officer, a daughter working in IT at a bank and a granddaughter who can do no wrong in Grandpa’s eyes. Thanks, Tim, for your steady service.

Quick to say, “I’m not really retired” though technically he did so this July and equally quick to say, “I love my job!” **BILL LUHRMAN** is happily keeping one boot in the working field even as he settles into retirement life. He recently took a call from Joey Damiano, who asked if he’d come back just to help out for awhile. “If Joey or Tony Damiano or Brian McEvoy ever ask me to do something I’ll drop everything for those guys.” Bill ran heavy equipment in a host of different O&G quarries and plants, from Bridgeport to Burrville, in his nearly 18 years with the company. Because he was able to operate various machines, he was made a utility man, sent to operate whatever was needed wherever he was needed and not calling any one location his worksite for very long. Bill remembers the time he spent at the New Milford Quarry and the irony of that assignment. When he’d worked for another contractor he had helped dig a quarry in Brookfield. As O&G extended Route 7 into Brookfield, it cut through a portion of that same quarry. “There I am, up in New Milford handing out the materials to fill it back in!” He appreciated the fairness with which he was treated working for the Oneglia family: “It’s in their blood – they treat the men good and the men are really going to work for them.” He now has time to play with his rotating stable of new cars and to travel. He and his wife of 26 years, Donna, “a Canadian import,” have four children and six grandsons, all in Connecticut. We spoke with Bill minutes after he and Donna returned from a Marine reunion in with Bill’s fellow Vietnam vets; Bill did a tour-and-a-half from 1966 to 1968 and then another four years back in the States. Thank you for your service to our country, Bill, and to the company.
That’s how many collective years this group of retirees, plus Vice-Chairman Ray Oneglia, have in the construction business. Oneglia gathered them together on the 31st of July for lunch at the Venetian Restaurant in Torrington: no real occasion aside from wanting to get together with some of the “old timers” (their words, not ours). Rainville, Savanella and McKeon each worked at least 40 years for O&G before they retired.

O&G’s Workforce Longevity
The company takes pride in the length of service of its employees. The statistics bear it out.

- Median years of tenure with current employer for US construction workers*: 4.3
- Median years of tenure for workers with O&G Industries: 10.84
- Years worked by O&G’s longest-term employee (Tony Damiano): 51
- Number of current employees who have worked at O&G for 40 or more years: 6
- Number of current employees who have worked at O&G for 30 or more years: 43


New Merritt Parkway wood-and-metal guardrail and extensive plantings will be installed as well. Because of the tight schedule and workforce restrictions placed by ConnDOT, crews will be deployed day and night. Work is being done in partnership with the ConnDOT District 3 Office and the advocacy group, Merritt Parkway Conservancy. Anticipated completion is October of 2015. Project Executive is Chris Tuomey, Project Superintendent is Craig Miller, Night Superintendent is Bill Hurley, with Project Engineers Mike Gemmell and Chris McPadden and Project Coordinator Brett Stackhouse. Michelle Gallante is the Document Control Specialist, Brian DePerry and John Machnicki are Quality Control Engineers.

Guilford High School
Guilford, CT

The joint venture team of O&G and Fusco Corporation has been chosen to build a new high school for the Town of Guilford. The $74M, 220,000 SF, three-story high school will be constructed on the campus of the existing school. Work is divided into two phases: Phase One, construction of the new facility, will be performed between August 2013 and June 2015; Phase Two, abatement and demolition of the existing school and sitework that includes new athletic fields, a bus loop and parking lots, will begin in July of 2015 and conclude in May of 2016. The existing school will remain in full operation during the construction of the new building just 25 feet to the south, presenting logistical challenges to the team. In addition, the schedule is aggressive, allowing 22 months from mobilization to a fully functioning new facility. The Project Architect is Tai Soo Kim Partners, Hartford. The O&G team is led by Project Executive Mike Brennan, Project Manager Dan Hetzler and Project Engineer John O'Donnell; Jeff Schull is General Superintendent for Fusco.

Boys & Girls Club and The Family Center
Bristol, CT

This fast-track project will build a 41,600SF Boys & Girls Club in Bristol to replace its aging facility across town. Work began this October and will be completed in just ten months, in August of 2014. The club is designed with two distinct areas: a fieldhouse and a two-story clubhouse. The clubhouse will feature recreational areas, a technology center, an arts and culture center and office space. The fieldhouse will be a full-size gymnasium with bleachers and various pieces of gym equipment. The clubhouse exterior will be brick and block while the field house exterior will be primarily architectural precast panels. Much of the funding for this $7.5M project was raised thru capital campaigns, with gifts from major donors that included ESPN, headquartered in the city. Bristol’s S. Carpenter Construction is a joint venture partner with O&G for this CM at Risk project. The Club is represented by its Executive Director, Michael Suchopar and Building Committee Members Morris Laviero and John Leone. Amara Associates, LLC of West Hartford is the architect. O&G’s Project Executive is Mark Jeffko, Corey Morin is Superintendent, and Mike Arnseault of S. Carpenter Construction is the Project Manager.

Charlotte Hungerford Hospital 4th Floor Renovation
Torrington, CT

The O&G Small Projects Division is back at Charlotte Hungerford Hospital for a second year in a row, working again with Moser Pilon Nelson Architects of Wethersfield. This year’s project is focused on the 4th floor, the hospital’s busiest: at any given time there are roughly twenty nurses and several doctors on hand. The business of the floor presents a challenge to complete the construction work on schedule, all the while paying mindful attention to the Hospital’s infection control policies by properly containing construction dust and debris. This five-phase project began in late July and is expected to be complete in late November. It consists of roughly $340,000 of small renovations and upgrades throughout the floor, culminating in the fifth phase which is the demolition and reconstruction of the central nurses’ station. The O&G team is led by Project Manager Christina Oneglia Rossi with Superintendent Jim Perazzella and Carpenter Levi Weir. As the team moves into the larger renovation areas more O&G tradesmen are expected to join the project.
Wethersfield High School Additions and Renovations

This is a 36-month, five-phase, renovate-to-new-while-occupied project that will give the Town of Wethersfield significant enhancements to its current high school. Four building additions involving all major trades will create a new gymnasium and a new elevator and will expand the Media Center and music areas. Temporary classrooms will be built in the existing gymnasium as swing space to accommodate the areas being taken offline for construction throughout each phase of the renovations. This will be a LEED-Silver Certified project. Construction on this $74.8 million effort began in mid-September and is scheduled to conclude at the end of September 2016. Wethersfield High School Principal, Mr. Tom Moore, has assisted O&G’s Preconstruction Manager, Lorel Purcell, and the Architect, Quisenberry Arcari Architects represented by Rusty Malik, during the planning and design stages. Work will be overseen by Project Manager Rob Martinotti, Superintendent Brian Pracuta and Project Engineer Eben Curtis.

CREC Academy of Aerospace and Engineering

The Capitol Region Education Council is transforming a former commercial building into a state-of-the-art magnet facility for its Academy of Aerospace and Engineering to serve 735 students in grades 6 to 12. The new facility comprises four pods: middle school, high school, aerospace/engineering wing and assembly areas. Housed in the pods will be fabrication and manufacturing labs, computer labs in aerospace, engineering, physics, chemistry and biology, and supporting project rooms, storage and independent study spaces. Exterior designs and treatments evoke the school’s mission, with a contemporary “airfoil” form, Hubble Space Telescope-inspired walls, and surfaces suggesting the lunar landscape. Renovations include converting “A” and “B” buildings to classroom space, selectively demolishing the “C” building to make way for a new auditorium, orchestra room, storage rooms, bathrooms and lobby, and replacing the entire “D” building with a new gymnasium, cafeteria, locker rooms, vestibule and electrical and mechanical rooms. The project, valued at $73M, began in May of 2013 and will be completed in August 2015. Project Architect is Friar Associates, Inc., of Farmington. The O&G team is led by Project Manager George Graikoski with Project Engineer Ryan Benoit and Superintendent Dennis Roy. Louis Rosenblatt was Preconstruction Manager.

Merritt Parkway Bridges Rehabilitation and Route 15 Safety Improvements

This $56.8M reconstruction and improvements project is in effect a continuation of the work O&G successfully completed on the Merritt Parkway in Trumbull and Fairfield in 2011. The same O&G team has been reassembled to reconstruct another 6.5 miles of the historic Merritt Parkway – actually 13 miles considering that both north- and southbound lanes will be rebuilt. Plans call for the roadway to be milled and paved and the edges widened by several feet with a reinforced gravel/grass shoulder. Twelve overpasses will be restored to their 1930s, art-