

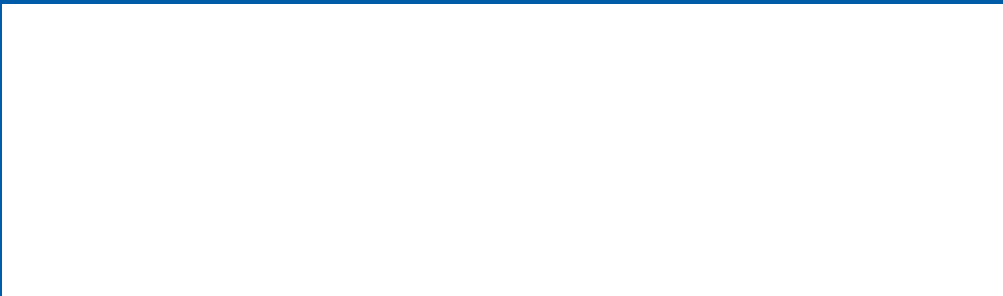


UTILITY &
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West Bay Construction Celebrates 25 Years In Construction



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WEST BAY CONSTRUCTION, INC. COMPLETES 25 YEARS IN CONSTRUCTION

BY: ZOE BALDWIN

After completing a quarter-century in business building everything from playgrounds to storm drains and water-mains, West Bay Construction Inc. of Absecon, NJ has established a stellar reputation as a small but mighty firm capable of any challenge. We spoke with Frank and Linda Corradetti about their recent milestone, reflecting on the past 25 years of accomplishment for a firm that started with a, “Why not?”

“I started off working for a contractor in Washington DC and then I came back to NJ and began working for Ole Hansen & Son, a general contractor,” Frank tells me. “I thought I was going to be set for life there. Ole Hansen was a local bridge builder – a well-established company in its third generation – and I figured I’d be there for another 20 years but the owners decided to go in a different direction and close the heavy construction business. I was in my thirties and I had a young family, so I bounced around a little bit until opportunity approached me.”

Frank had a partner when he first started, but he stepped back relatively early, leaving Frank with a big decision on his hands. “So, I talked it over with Linda – you need to have the support of your family! We knew it was either now or never and jointly decided it was worth the risk. And when you’re young, what do you have to lose? In your early thirties, worst case scenario I’d have to go back to working for somebody else. And that’s the Ameri-



The West Bay Team (L-R): Frank Corradetti, Linda Corradetti, Justin Ramogasse, Kevin Blevin, and Bob Jones (Elsamarie Corradetti working remotely due to the Coronavirus Response)."



West Bay installed a meandering porous walkway along the park banks of Lake Lily in Cape May Point

can Dream, right? Be your own boss, open your own company... they just leave out how hard the work is!”

And work hard they did. The young firm began its legacy tackling storm drain, watermain, and sewer work, completing twelve projects during its first year in business. As Frank says, “It takes a lot in the beginning. We started out of our garage, where you work all day, you go in to eat dinner, then you go back out to the garage and work all night.”

“When it first started, we had three kids and the youngest was only three,” Linda says. “I was a stay at home mom at the time and involved really in an ancillary way, helping here and there.” But business picked up quickly and Linda joined the firm full-time. “I could do it from home which was great, and then we moved to a little office right down the street from where we lived so it was relatively easy to balance the work and home life.”

“I don’t know anybody who succeeds in this business without putting in the time,” Frank adds. “It’s a lot of stress and it’s a lot of effort, but it’s really satisfying and we’re just fortunate enough to still be here doing the same thing 25 years later.”

Frank and Linda are both engineers by training and graduates from Rutgers University, Frank with a degree in civil engineering and Linda with a degree in material science. Linda credits that background as a key ingredient to West Bay’s success. “I think you have to be able to think outside the box,” she tells me. “Our youngest daughter is an engineer as well, and she and Frank are very much outside-of-the-box thinkers. Having an analytical mind is half the battle.”

The newly minted firm took its name from its first location in Somers Point, which is on the west side of the bay separating the barrier islands from the mainland. They also adopted a light-

house logo as homage to the shore communities in which they perform much of their work. "It's a little different out here. We do a lot of work on the barrier islands and along the shore in Ocean, Cape May, and Atlantic Counties, so we're used to working in wet and sandy soil conditions, and that's a nice advantage."

After several years establishing their presence in the utility construction community, West Bay branched into military con-



West Bay installed concrete foundations for three new compressors in the background and the new fueling canopy at the NJ Transit Howell Bus Maintenance Garage.

tracts. "We were doing a lot of work at the Coast Guard Base in Cape May County where their training center and boot camp are. We've also done a good amount of work with the Naval Facilities Engineering Command (NAVFAC) out at Lakehurst which is now part of the Joint Base MDL. Once you start doing the military work, you learn how to expand into the different bases," Frank explains.

One of the first projects included the construction of pump station foundations in Wildwood for the Coast Guard (USCG). Later, the company successfully completed a bulkhead repair where they drove steel sheet piles for the USCG Station Indian River in Delaware. West Bay would go on to complete a wide array of projects for USCG, including demolition, concrete work, fence installation, and a gymnasium rehabilitation, among others.

To support Department of Defense efforts at the Joint Base, the firm has also completed playgrounds, constructed parking lots, performed pavement rehabilitation, installed airplane tie-down anchors and grounding rods as well as a brick paver walkway with a custom made US Air Force emblem, milled and paved taxiways, and constructed fuel containment structures to contain spilled fuel from escaping into the environment.

West Bay has also performed design-build projects for the military including two playgrounds, an animal control fence system, and a complex rehabilitation of an inert warehouse which was used to store non-explosive equipment at Naval Weapons Station Earle.

Military work kept West Bay busy for a number of years into the late 2000s. As Frank explains, "Things were going well for a while but it started getting very competitive. The military budgets began getting tighter which basically affected the way the military allotted the work.

We decided to change direction and went back to our bread and butter which is utility work."

West Bay pivoted back and began building their capabilities in pipework. "We just finished a challenging project in Brigantine which was storm sewer installation and road reconstruction. We also just completed a project with AE Stone, Inc. for Delaware River Port Authority at the Woodcrest Speedline Station. The AE Stone scope of work included the reconstruction and repaving of the parking lots and upgrades to the station utilities. West Bay was brought in to perform the sanitary sewer improvements which included gravity sewer, force main, and pump station construction."

In addition to their expertise in utility construction West Bay has carved a niche for themselves in the field of recreation, producing everything from design-build playgrounds to bocce ball and tennis courts. In fact, they just finished up a small project for the city of Cape May Point in which they built a special porous asphalt walkway along the lake in a park.

"We initially got qualified to do school work, and it seemed schools always had money for recreational improvements. We would go after site projects and there was always a playground or park equipment with it, so we got our people certified to become playground installers," Frank explains. "You have to be certified, so not just anybody can come in and do it. The work is a little different and we like that."

Tackling a diverse array of projects allows West Bay to keep it local, which they prefer. "When we were a young company, we were really looking to grow our capabilities. We were fortunate in that we didn't really have to travel too far. We travelled when we had to, but for the most part we tried to see what we could do in the area. At the time Atlantic City was going through a great growth period, so there was plenty of work locally. When things got a little tougher, we started doing the military work."

Those military contracts brought the firm up to Lakehurst, which is about an hour away, "We generally try to stay in that radius," Frank elaborates. "In addition to our work at the shore, we've done a fair amount in Gloucester, Camden, Burlington, and Sa-

"And that's the American Dream, right? Be your own boss, open your own company...they just leave out how hard the work is!"

- Frank Corradetti



Sea Isle City met the needs of the growing popularity of Bocce by adding a fast draining state of the art court.

lem Counties - just last year we did a nice inlet job with R.E. Pierson Construction, Co. for the City of Camden. For us, it's about seeing what we can do in the area more so than trying to specialize in one thing and traveling all over the country with it."

According to Frank, it's this diversity of projects that keeps the work interesting. "We're a small company, and I've worked with small companies and I've worked with big companies, but what it comes down to is that I like the ability to pick interesting jobs - something that's a little different." One such job was a project for NJ Transit working with Nicosia Contracting International, LLC and Clean Energy Fuels Corporation. The project was improvements to a compressed natural gas fueling station at the NJ Transit Howell bus garage. West Bay handled all the structural and civil work including pouring of compressor and canopy concrete foundations and underground utilities.

"The bus garage was a challenging job. Construction was completed in stages keeping existing equipment operational while maintaining service and operations of the bus facility. Many of the projects we're involved with are structure rehabilitations where you're constantly working around older structures. Every project is different and being the size contractor we are, we can go after unique and different projects that interest us. We work with a lot of different generals, and we also do work as a general - and I like it that way! If it's within our capabilities I'm not afraid to try it." Frank says.

Right now, West Bay has a few solid projects on its plate, including the one featured on our cover, which highlights a temporary access road and bridge the firm is building for Joseph M. Sanzari, Inc. that connect to a dredge disposal area just outside Atlantic City. They're also working with IEW Construction Group, Inc. on a Delaware River Port Authority job over at the Commodore Barry Bridge doing deck repairs and will also be working with

them on Ben Franklin Bridge repairs upgrading the cathodic protection system.

Most of the projects the firm builds are from public owners, but looking to the future, Frank sees growth potential in the investor-owned market. "We were recently prequalified with NJ American Water, which is exciting. We had previously done work for them as a subcontractor through Henkels and McCoy, Inc. and now we're actually starting to break into that market." "We've also been looking forward for the gas tax to kick in so there will be more bridge rehabilitation projects.

Frank also sees a future in design-build options, "I'm a licensed engineer, and West Bay has the capability to do design-build. I think one of the benefits of a design-build is that you get the experience of a contractor in the design phase. Whatever you design, you have to build, so you necessarily keep that in mind during the process. At the same time, you need to have the economics of it down to keep it affordable for the owner. In that way, you have the opportunity to use the contractors' experience during design to build an economical and functional project. I think it's a viable option that should be used more often on public projects."

It's easy for Frank and Linda to see a bright future for the firm since they have surrounded themselves with a dedicated, capable, and flexible team. "Frank and I are kind of that old-time mom and pop organization, and everybody pitches in to do a lot of things," Linda says. "Our whole operation is set up so that we're all working together and aware of what we're all working on. You can't have a gap if somebody's out - especially now with the coronavirus - you must have a system in place where someone else can just pick up where you left off. We don't have the luxury of redundancy like a bigger organization."

**"Frank and I are kind of that old-time mom and pop organization, and everybody pitches in to do a lot of things."
- Linda Corradetti**

"We've been lucky to have a lot of good people working with us and I've got a supportive family," Frank adds. "Linda has been right here with me the whole 25 years, and we've been fortunate to have talented field people we can rely on. A few have been here for many years like Superintendent Kevin Blevin and Foreman Bob Jones, and we're grateful for key people like that who've stayed with us."

Looking back on the past quarter-century of hard work and perseverance, the Corradettis have much to be proud of and even more to look forward to. West Bay's local focus, eye for detail, and talent for challenge will serve them well as they take on the next chapter in their growing legacy.

UTCA congratulates Frank, Linda, and the West Bay Construction Inc. family on this milestone and wishes them all the best in the years to come.