

## **Bridge Busters Founder's Story – The Foundation for Success**

Jim McConnell is a natural born trouble-shooter. Fittingly, his path to becoming one of Ontario's most respected authorities for professional demolition has been hard and full of obstacles.

Son of a firefighting father, Jim learned at a young age that success is reached by persistently battling through challenges. His vocational foundation started taking shape when his dad bought a small hobby farm for horses north of Toronto. Jim instantly fell in love with mechanical equipment and working outdoors. He knew his future career would include these elements.

McConnell was repeatedly taught the importance of hard work, the value of an earned dollar, and that nothing was ever going to be given to you. Jim bought his first piece of equipment at the age of 15 - a well-used farm tractor costing \$1,500 that he and his father equally split. However, when its engine was nearly shot it became the young owner's sole responsibility to fix. McConnell drove his failing machine to his high school automotive shop where he re-built the motor. "Students could see this country hick coming from a mile away," the now middle-age man admittedly laughs, humbling adding, "They never missed a chance to remind me of it." But McConnell was keenly focused on end results and not fancy appearances. The determined teenager and his tractor were once again sweetly humming by 3 a.m. on winter mornings earning money plowing snow from drives around Buttonville.

At the age of 17, McConnell left school to devote himself entirely to crop farming. The ambitious young entrepreneur rented 50 acres of his own land and soon found out the hard way that being self-sufficient was one tough row to hoe. He then passionately pursued a farm hand position - going everywhere and calling on everyone - before a veteran Stouffville farmer finally took Jim under his wing and showed him the ropes about successful operations. But as much as he loved the agrarian life, financial reality soon hit him – it was incredibly tough to survive in the GTA on a hired hand's income. A practical career move was needed.

Jim gravitated to big rigs and the trucking business during his twenties serving as both a cross-Canada owner/operator and vehicle mechanic. These hands-on experiences would prove invaluable throughout his professional evolution.

At 27, McConnell ventured into the earth moving business by starting with a used drag line. Counseled by a well-respected veteran in the field, Jim later added a 35-ton excavator and bulldozer to his equipment arsenal. He clearly saw the opportunity to serve as an independent sub-contractor and was undeterred by existing 16% loan interest rates. "When you are prepared to work, you don't let obstacles stop you," he plainly states.

Comfortable and competent at the controls of big equipment, McConnell quickly became a soft-ground excavation expert. To effectively dispose of brush, Jim next purchased a motorless grinder that he mechanically restored. With a tendered joint-bid, he then procured a lucrative land clearing contract with the City of Scarborough that would not only cover his expanded equipment investments, but also promisingly secure his financial future. The political landscape then abruptly caved in on him. Surrounding GTA boroughs amalgamated with the City of Toronto and his signed contract was cancelled in its infancy. Financially crushed, McConnell began the difficult process of professionally starting over.

Purposefully motivated, with immense help from others and inspired by his former father-in-law's advice to maintain a 'foundation for innovation', Jim progressively re-built his business acquiring more

used equipment, personally repairing and retrofitting machinery, and becoming directly involved in diversified projects including home renovations, structure demolition, and gravel pit stripping.

The pivotal turning point in McConnell's career was a random inquiry from a businessman involved with bridge removal. To keep pace with growing project demands, he asked if Jim would be willing to sell one of his refurbished DP machines. That expressed need planted the seed for McConnell to investigate potential opportunities within the niche demolition market. Jim quickly discovered there was no competition for this specialized service and the existing monopoly resulted in greater project costs and delays for developers. With a solid decade of versatile construction experience under his belt and a "whatever it takes" attitude, McConnell was professionally ready to go all in on demolition.

Whatever Jim may have lacked in terms of an initial project portfolio and boardroom polish, he more than compensated for with his enthusiastic outreach and innate problem-solving skills. He proactively scanned the trade news, tirelessly worked construction company phones, and competitively bid on any bridge project he could find. From project to project, his dynamic breadth of practical experience soon enabled him to intuitively identify common critical control points and expedited action plans to safely remove compromised or unwanted structures. McConnell literally and figuratively then wrote the book on structure dismantling, by developing in detail the engineered procedure template that now serves as the industry standard for bridge demolition.

After 20 combined years of sustained construction business experience - including his now decade-long run exclusively specializing in professional bridge demolition - Jim McConnell has assuredly arrived at his distinguished place within the construction/deconstruction industry. Today, McConnell is an industry trusted and recognized demolition expert who provides both professional counsel and valued sub-contractor services on multi-faceted development projects through his solely-owned Canadian company.

With an impressive proven demolition record that includes above ground and in-water structure elimination, he and his Bridge Busters team are more than field tested and technically ready for their next operational challenge. The completely confident and ever straight-shooting McConnell leaves no doubt about his tactical unit's capabilities on any sized project, "We can take down any target, guaranteed."