



## Save These Dates . . .

February 4  
CT's Construction  
Outlook, Part I: Central  
Region

February 18  
Social No. 2, Foxwoods  
Resort Casino

February 24  
CT's Construction  
Outlook, Part II:  
Western Region

March 23  
Technology Workshop:  
Remote Job Site  
Computing

March 30  
CT's Construction  
Outlook, Part II:  
Eastern Region

April 13  
Third Annual  
Construction and

## A Credit to the Industry 25 Years and Going Strong

The Construction Institute was born during a period of deep decline for Connecticut construction markets. In the mid 1970s OPEC formed a cartel and drove oil prices up five fold. People began talking about whether the future of the northeast was in peril. The pessimists among us talk about our “freezing in the dark”. The oil crisis brought on a deep recession that was particularly severe in the northeast. Due to the construction industry being recession sensitive, it experienced a severe collapse. It was at this point that a few leaders of our industry began talking about a group whose joint efforts could help lead us out of the recession. And perhaps for the first time, the construction industry began to think about a unified voice. Over the next twenty-five years, the Construction Institute would use that unified voice to help industry causes, stimulate growth and promote the construction profession.

The industry lost 20,000 jobs between 1973 and 1976 to the worst downturn in postwar history, but the doomsayers were proved wrong. The economy recovered and boomed during the 1980s. Construction employment doubled by 1988. All sectors of the construction economy were benefiting. The State's \$10 billion infrastructure program boosted the heavy and highway sector. The housing sector built an astronomical 25,000 units in 1985 and 1986. Office contractors built millions of square feet of new office buildings in urban areas. However, the cycle turned again in 1988, and the longest and deepest recession since the 1930s eliminated

strong, with more than 60,000 construction workers currently employed Connecticut. The Construction Institute has been a constant force for the industry across these cycles.



*Reconstruction of the Mianus River Bridge, January 1984*

When the Mianus River Bridge collapsed, the Construction Institute led the research team that evaluated the infrastructure needs of the State of Connecticut and played an integral part in the development of the

*(please see Credit to the Industry on page 3)*

*Ronald Van Winkle is Director of Community Services for the Town of West Hartford, and*

# Institute's Beginnings Linked to Connecticut's Economic Sustainability

The mid 1970s marked a severe economic decline for Connecticut and the nation. Fuel shortages, rising prices, and the Federal Department of Currency's crack down on the banking industry's questionable loan practices practically brought construction to a halt. Overbuilding in the 1960s exacerbated the problem. It was in these turbulent times that the Construction Institute was born.

In 1974 a group of forward-thinking construction people in

## Silver Anniversary

The year 2000 is a milestone for the Construction Institute. We are proud to announce that this year is the Institute's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary as an organization.

The Institute was established out of the need to have a non-partisan association for diverse professionals to work together to improve the construction industry. This has been accomplished through relationship building, professional development, education, and leadership opportunities.

This winter edition features three articles explaining the Institute's beginnings, accomplishments over the past 25 years, and the vision for the future.

We look forward to celebrating this silver anniversary at the Construction Institute's annual

Connecticut felt that the only way to address the complex issues facing the failing economy, the construction industry and their individual firms was through an unprecedented unified effort. The original group consisted of a cross section of construction related people. In 1975 they formally met on a quarterly basis as the Advisory Council to the Connecticut Society of Architects, the forerunner of the American Institute of Architects/Connecticut. Later, the group was represented by twelve men who identified their primary objective as making the public aware of the impact that the construction industry had on Connecticut's economy. They highlighted the large number of unemployed construction workers at the time and the massive impact the devastated construction industry was having on the State's declining economy.

The group organized meetings with leaders of Connecticut's legislature, whose only knowledge of the unemployed at the time came from monthly reports issued by the State Labor Department from figures reported by construction labor unions. The approach worked. It was through the work of the Construction Institute's forefathers that construction was redefined in the economic sense to include not only laborers, but also

construction industry. Soon the legislators wisely requested more solid information on the scope of the problem and its affect upon the economy. The result was a hard-hitting report noting that the construction industry represented the largest number of workers in the State, and that in order for the State to recover from the recession, it would have to work to

strengthen the construction industry.

Somehow, even with this important issue at hand, the construction group representatives found it difficult to hold effective meetings, as leadership and structure was

still tentative. Industry norms and tradition became a barrier.

The founding group, recognizing that working together depended upon mutual trust, solicited the aid of the president of the University of Hartford, Archibald Woodruff, a respected carpenter, and his associate, Robert Forrester. Together the group identified the need for a neutral place in which to meet and developed the concept of the Institute of Construction

*(please see Institute's Beginnings on page 4)*

*David LaRay, FAIA, an original*



Governor's program for reinvestment in the State's infrastructure. In the early 1980s *Operation Teamwork* was developed by the Institute to aid labor/management relations on the worksite. The Institute authored in cooperation with labor and management, an agreement designed to reduce problems on the worksite.

In the early 1980s contractor insurance costs were sky high. Some contractors were "going bare" because insurance coverage was unavailable. The Construction Institute led the charge to resolve these problems. The Institute held a conference to focus on solutions and published a white paper of its findings. When, again, in the early 1990s construction markets collapsed and many family firms were in jeopardy of failing, the Construction Institute met with the Governor to urge the release of authorized public spending and to move along projects in the pipeline.

While the industry has gone through enormous economic change, the Construction Institute has remained true to its original intent, i.e., to create a single voice for the industry. Like the industry today, the Construction Institute is stronger than it has ever been.



## The Construction Industry's Future

If predictions are accurate, the progress and advancements we've experienced in our industry over the past 25 years will be easily matched or surpassed before the end of the next decade.

We cannot govern the speed of this transformation nor can we restrict the volume of technological leaps. We can however, through quality education and effective communications, manage our level of sophistication, monitor standards, and promote sound ethics within our construction-related businesses.

By design, the Construction Institute assumes a leadership role in guiding the industry into the future. Since its inception, the Institute has championed learning and professional development by providing opportunities for all elements of the building and construction community to interact and exchange ideas regarding the most significant problems we face.

What surprises are in our future that would equal or perhaps transcend the challenges we've experienced in past years? The answer to this and similar questions would only be speculation.

However experience tells us that in any recession, construction takes the biggest "hit", and like the common cold, it is inevitable and with no known cure. What we must do is be prepared and continually work to keep our industry healthy.

In continuing its mission, the Institute will develop flexible goals to meet the demands of a rapidly changing environment. And it must continue to do what it does best, that is to keep you informed of current industry trends and developments and to provide the tools to help you to meet these challenges.

The Institute continues to promote professionalism in our industry and create strategic alliances with other industry-related groups. Our focus is on the pulse of Connecticut's construction environment, and our efforts are to simply improve the future. Your support and participation are invaluable to us and we intend to continue to fulfill your expectations. ▲

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# Institute's Beginnings (continued from page 2)

at the University of Hartford. The University provided the name, a meeting space, and a part-time executive director. Neutral ground now existed and all parties freely contributed, knowing that they were meeting at the request of a major university rather than just another industry representative.

More than a year went by, however, before the participants had enough confidence in each other to elect a chairman and establish a list of Guiding Principles. The membership began to grow to include owners, insurance companies, utility companies, banks, real estate people, maintenance companies and others who did business with the industry.

Today, the University of Hartford Construction Institute has more than 300 members providing research, educational and social events designed to better the process of construction. While all differences between the industry's components have not disappeared, the Construction Institute has certainly contributed to many improvements that have been made throughout the industry and it will continue to be successful in the years ahead. ▲

### *Credits:*

*Construction Institute anniversary icon on page 1 designed by Bligh Graphics.*

*Photo of Yale University on page 3 provided courtesy of Turner Construction Corporation.*

is published by the Construction Institute and is distributed to members and friends who are interested in sharing information, resources, programs and issues related to the construction industry. Articles, comments and suggestions are welcome and should be sent to Ms. Terry Casey, CI Update Editor, c/o On Target Marketing & Communications, LLC, 10 Westgate Road, Columbia, CT 06237-1335, 860-228-0163, email: [tcasey@snet.net](mailto:tcasey@snet.net). Articles may be reproduced with prior permission and appropriate credit to this newsletter.

The Construction Institute is a collection of diverse professionals working to improve the industry by sharing experience and knowledge, advancing relationships, and developing business leaders. Call 860-768-4445.



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