One of southwest Connecticut’s newest office spaces is steadily taking shape. The architect’s rendering pictures a striking complex, a pair of multi-storied parking garages supporting twin glass-and-steel office towers with elegant sweeping curves – and the imagination can see that completed project even now as crews assemble structural steel and work to wrap it in its final facade.

The Towers at Merritt River will be home to numerous businesses in its 600,000 SF of Class A office space when it fully opens in January of 2005. The larger tower will rise eight stories, the other seven; each will rest upon a five-story garage with 770,000 total S.F. of parking. In all, construction of The Towers will consume over 41,700 CY of concrete.

The project goes by the no-nonsense short-hand “Buildings 801 and 901” to Senior Project Manager Dave Katz and his construction management crew, which includes Project Manager Mike Skapcynski, Superintendent George Givens and Project Engineer Andrea Focareto. O&G is acting as concrete contractor as well, with Superintendents Richard Grustas and Frank Gentile, Project Engineer John Humes, and key field crew Dennis Carey, Frank Scalo, Gerry Meskun and Don Schultz.

And no-nonsense describes how Katz and crew have attacked this high-stakes project. The team has brought to bear O&G’s considerable 40-plus-year record in office building construction, and fast-track development in general, streamlining the workflow, exploiting engineering advantages and successfully meeting rigid timetables regardless of the obstacles. The client is the real estate development firm Building & Land Technology of Norwalk, led by Carl Kuehner. In prior projects, O&G has rubbed shoulders with B&LT when they performed as general contractors and O&G supplied them with redi-mix concrete. With a hands-on background in construction and an active management style, the client is always pressing to have O&G do everything possible to meet or beat the schedule.

Teamwork: With tight management and a capable team, O&G has met the owner’s expectations as the Towers at Merritt River takes shape; “We’ve all pulled together,” says Dave Katz, Project Manager.

Katz and crew have risen to that challenge. For instance, expeditious completion of the 801 garage so that steel erection could begin on the 801 office tower above it, which already has lease commitments, was essential. Says Givens, “Failure just wasn’t an option for us. We got the job done with help from top-notch subs like CECO and Patriot Steel, and of course our own excellent concrete crews.”

Acting as CM and concrete trade contractor, O&G worked six days a week to form and pour 15,000 SF of garage slab every four days. This effort resulted in the completion of the 801 garage two weeks ahead of schedule.

But sometimes bad follows good – and
When timing is everything

From highways and bridges to office parks and schools, state agencies and private owners alike have relied on O&G when they need their projects built with the highest levels of workmanship AND in timeframes that sometimes seem impossible. O&G has earned repeat business from numerous clients who have come to appreciate both the skill and the “horsepower” the company brings to bear. Here’s a sampling of recent ambitious projects, all of which O&G completed ahead – in some cases very much ahead – of schedule.

I-95 over the Yellow Mill Channel
FOR CONNDOT IN BRIDGEPORT, CT
Actually two projects, the first was a bridge and interchange reconstruction effort completed one full year ahead of schedule, in November of 1999, even while including $3 million of work beyond the original project scope. The second, simultaneous project for highway reconstruction was assumed from another contractor and completed $1.5 million under budget and three months early in December, 2000, amounting to $19.6 million of work done in just ten months.

Church St. Extension, Bridge Over New Haven Rail Yard
FOR CONNDOT IN NEW HAVEN, CT
This project to span the entire New Haven Rail Yard including new entrance and egress ramps on either side finished five months early in December, 2003. Value engineering at bid time and the construction of a massive truss that would be lifted into position helped beat schedule; the project also came in $500,000 under budget.

Gampel Pavilion Renovations
FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT IN STORRS, CT
The first Gampel project for additional stadium seating, in the mid-’90s, was scheduled to occur over two summer breaks. O&G proposed that by adding just two weeks to the first summer schedule, it could deliver the entire project a year early, which it did. In the second project, during the summer and fall of 2002 with a firm finish date in mid-October, O&G began an ambitious demolition, renovation and relocation effort, completing $4.8 million of work in six months, a week ahead of schedule.

UConn Waterbury
FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT IN WATERBURY, CT
The original start date for this $22.3 facility construction effort was October of 2001, but due to land acquisition and remediation delays construction did not commence until February, 2002. While granted an extension to December, 2003, O&G was able to compress the workflow and hold to the original August, 2003 delivery date, making the buildings available five months ahead of sched- ule for the start of the school semester. Additionally, O&G value engineering lowered the total project cost by $1.5 million even as it allowed the University to add numerous additional features.

Merritt Parkway Interchange
FOR CONNDOT IN TRUMBULL, CT
This project for the construction of a new interchange between Routes 111 and the Merritt Parkway began in August, 2001 with a targeted completion date of August, 2004. Through a combination of value engineering and the cooperation of CONNDOT and the interchange designer, O&G developed a revised staging plan and, with tight project supervision, the project was completed in August, 2003, one year ahead of schedule.
bad weather this past December and January crept in on the heels of the crews’ stellar performance. Spells of bitter temperature mixed with snow and ice have required the steel erector to work whenever the sun shines, whatever the day, seven days a week. All along, concrete work has been proceeding on the five-story garage that will be the foundation for the second tower.

Because of O&G’s “do whatever it takes” approach, the customer confirmed its confidence in the company and awarded O&G the final portion of the project: the second tower, Building 901. With the award, of course, came renewed urgency for completion of its garage foundation. Mike Skapczynski is quick to give credit to the flexibility and responsiveness of his support staff in the trailer. “Having a staff on site that’s this effective has allowed us to keep pace with a lot of design changes that developed as the tenant’s needs emerged,” he says.

Katz looks back with pride at the accomplishments of his team and envisions continued success right through to project completion in 2005. “The owner has pulled together a team with a lot of the right experience for this project. Other members of our design team – Perkins Eastman Architects, Weidlinger Associates and Collective Design Associates – have worked very well with us, accommodating all the changes that have come in. We’ve all pulled together and, I think, rose to a new level.”
For 40 years, up until last September, Bill Buys drove a truck for O&G, starting with a trailer dump but quickly switching to a low bed. Wide and heavy loads were his specialty, and “every day was a school day” says Bill. “I like to say that I graduated from the ‘University of O&G,’” he laughs. Bill looks back with fondness on his career with the company, having had fun along the way as he worked with some great folks. He was especially appreciative of the steadiness of his employment: “The checks were always there. Some guys I know who worked at other construction companies didn’t always get paid on time. O&G was great that way.” When his wife Barbara retires in a few years, the couple plans on traveling. For now, he catches up on projects around his Harwinton home, and enjoys time with his four grandkids, a treat he wasn’t often able to enjoy as a working man with a young family. Carrying on the family tradition is Bill, Jr., a driver, and son-in-law Fred Howe, a foreman for O&G. Our best to you, Bill!

“I never had a bad day at O&G,” reflects Steve Shuhi on his career as a driver for O&G. And he had a lot of days with O&G – Steve joined the growing firm back in 1961. “I think when I joined there weren’t more than 120 employees. I started when the trucks were red and white!” he chuckles. In his 42 years of driving big trucks for the company, Steve maintained an accident-free record, racking up over a million-and-a-half miles by his estimation as he delivered materials and equipment to construction sites across the state. He started with an old gas-powered tractor and retired from the wheel of a new Kenworth: The days were long at times, starting at 5 AM and ending after the sun went down, but Steve always liked the job and the fellows he worked with. “There isn’t a better company to have worked for. I earned a good living and had an excellent life.” Now Steve spends his time with family, doing some woodworking, keeping an eye on his rental properties and housesitting for good friends. Well done, Steve!

Last October Drew Vacca began enjoying life as a “retired guy” – that is, until he came back to work a two-week stint in December to resume one of his favorite jobs since he joined O&G in 1994, that of good-will ambassador. It was Drew’s pleasure to play Santa on the company’s behalf, delivering Christmas turkeys to homes bordering O&G facilities, and delivering candy and other “goodies” to loyal customers. Drew liked that, and liked everything about his job with O&G. “They were the best people I ever worked for,” he says. “I liked the free reign in my job.” Drew developed his position into a sort of superintendent of buildings and grounds for all of O&G’s plants. He would check cleanliness and neatness – everything from common areas to lawns and flags – to guard O&G’s reputation for maintaining its facilities in tip-top shape. With wife Rose Marie, Drew will split summers and winters between a 20-acre riverfront property in Maine and a home in sunny Florida. Sounds like you have it pretty well figured out, Drew!

“We’ve got some long timers retiring now!” observed Ron Visini, and he’s on that special list with about 45 years under his belt. He worked all around the state, splitting his time between building and highway projects. Ron started as a mechanic but became an operator in short order, running mostly cranes and backhoes. His most recent assignments were the Milford Rail Station and I-95 reconstruction. “I was always moved around. It kept me from ever getting bored. Ninety-eight percent of the people I worked with over the years were good guys. And O&G always had work – if you wanted to work, you could work.” Though just recently retired, Ron’s taking to it well. “My wife Jean’s got me doing some painting now, but I’ll enjoy retirement twice as much this spring when that’s done and I can get outside.” Ron’s looking forward to gardening and traveling, and cheering his grandkids at the ballfield. Thanks for the years, Ron!

Bill Woolsey turned in the keys to mixer 236 at the end of July and has spent a lot of time “hanging loose,” as he puts it, enjoying his new-found freedom. With a sharp memory for dates, Bill can rattle off the details of his career with O&G, beginning in Torrington in 1970, moving to Waterville for a few years after an acquisition, to Danbury for 19 years and then to Southbury, driving there for almost 11 years. While he’s driven a number of different vehicles, Bill says, “I always liked driving the mixers. I’m a mixer guy.” And he did it well, with a clean driving record for the 33 years he drove for O&G. When he retired, Bill and his wife hopped in the car to drive across America, spending six weeks on the road. “It was real nice,” he says, “and this is a bi-g country!” He’s keeping his hands full with seven kids and 11 grandchildren, all of whom live nearby. He’s also making a habit of meeting with “the guys” – fellow O&G retirees and some who are still working – to share a cup of coffee, swap stories and reminisce. Enjoy, Bill!
Retirement? Not Hardly!

Gene and Tracy “tie the knot” and start a new life together

Just when most retirees hang the “gone fishing” sign on the door and stroll off into the setting sun, Tracy Yurchik and Gene McKeon have actually found themselves “ramping up.” They decided it would be the perfect time to turn their friendship into a marriage and embark on a brand new life together. And on October 17, in front of fifty close friends and family in a pine grove in New Hartford, the two became Mr. and Mrs. Gene McKeon.

To be accurate, though, Tracy was still punching the clock as an Equipment Records Coordinator at South Main until the end of February when she retired after 30 years with O&G. Gene, on the other hand, wrapped up his 50-year career with the company on December 31, 2003, and has kept himself busy planning for their future.

Tracy likes to observe that Gene retired four months shy of 50 years’ service, and she retired with 30 years and four months, making their combined employment with O&G a neat and tidy, and impressive, 80 years. (Gene recalls that his father started work with the phone company at age 14 and retired there 51 years later: “I guess you’d say we’re just people who don’t stay in one place very long!” he laughs.)

When you hear Tracy describe Gene’s courtship the fondness she feels is obvious – and you can also see how some of us always have a little of that teenage awkwardness left inside. “He’d just come over to my house and hang out in the kitchen, and he’d lean against the counter and start talking about all kinds of things and I’d think, ‘WHAT are you DOING here?’ But you know Gene got married young and was married for 38 years before his wife passed away, so he never really learned the dating game. He was so SHY! He had to learn how to make small talk with me.” It obviously worked.

As Gene and Tracy reflect on their years with O&G, one story rolls into the next, recollections of a company that started small and their part watching and actively participating in its growth. Gene recalls chasing O&G trucks through Torrington on his bicycle, when the fleet was just a few vehicles painted in red and white. He recalls driving one of those trucks a few years later at the age of 15, and the MVD examiner who recognized him (“I’ve seen you somewhere around, kid. Don’t you drive O&G’s trucks?”), ending the driving test to just hand McKeon his license so he’d be legal. He remembers when one woman ran the office for the whole company, and logging a million-and-a-quarter miles

company, and logging a million-and-a-quarter miles as an Associate Equipment Director. He recalls tireless workers and tireless foremen, both then and now, and a company that couldn’t have been a better place for him, led by a family with a strong work ethic dedicated to their employees and to everyone’s success.

The retirement roast thrown this fall for Gene with over 300 in attendance attests to his contribution to the company and to the high regard management and fellow workers hold him in.

But that was then. This is now and the McKeons have big plans. They’ll be heading off soon for a two-month tour of Australia, a sort of extended honeymoon. This summer they’ve planned a trip down the Rhine River in Germany with their old friend and former boss, Sonny Savanella, and his wife Ruth. And after that they want to visit the few states Gene hasn’t explored yet out West – maybe even let their faithful dog Sam tag along – and then tour the Canadian Rockies.

We wish the very best for you newlyweds – a long life of joy together and happy trails!

You want it WHERE?

O&G has always delivered materials to out-of-the-way and unusual job sites, and this past summer it was Dan Gladstone’s turn to truck mixers full of concrete over the water to an offshore pour. A driver with the company for 14 years, Gladstone had done this type of haul before and looked forward to the variety. On four different dates coinciding with the lowest monthly tides, he pulled out of the Stamford/Davenport Redi-Mix plant with a full load specially formulated for aquatic applications. Gladstone and Mixer 144 would drive onto a waiting barge in Greenwich and take the half-hour trip to the site where an offshore dock was being constructed. Each of the four pours went smoothly and another unique materials provision job entered the record books.

(clockwise from top left) Mixer loaded at Grass Island in Greenwich; Gladstone at sea; the offshore construction site set to pour redi-mix concrete.
On the Move A Sampling of New Projects at O&G

University of Connecticut Co-Generation Plant
Storrs, CT
O&G has teamed with Select Energy Services, Inc., to build a co-generation/chilled water facility in the heart of UConn’s Storrs campus. This new addition to the existing Central Utility Plant will generate an additional 6300 tons of chilled water and approximately 25 Mw of electrical power. Electricity and steam generated from the new facility will meet the existing and future requirements of the University and will enable the campus to become self-sufficient for all of its electrical and thermal needs. The addition encompasses a 15,000 SF primary floor, an 8,000 SF second floor and a 7,000 SF third-floor mezzanine. This design-build project has an aggressive schedule which requires the facility to be fully operational by March, 2005. Select Energy Services, which holds the contract with UConn, hired O&G as the Building Contractor and Construction Manager; O&G is also self-performing site and concrete work. The Engineer is NGS (Northeast Generation Services) and the Architect is URS Corporation. Total project cost is approximately $50 Million. Work began in September, 2003 and will conclude in March, 2005.

Weston Schools Upgrade Program
Weston, CT
The Town of Weston School Building Committee has selected O&G/A.P. Construction-Weston, a Joint Venture, as Construction Manager for their school upgrade program. O&G/A.P has been working with Fletcher-Thompson, Architects, represented by Joe Costa and the Owner’s representative, Harold Mindel, during the two-year preconstruction period. The work encompasses additions totaling 110,000 SF at the high school, a new 114,000 SF intermediate school as well as sitework, including utilities, a severage treatment plant, ballfields and a new football field with artificial turf and synthetic running track. Weston’s schools are all located on a single campus, necessitating intensive planning to minimize disruption to all of the students and staff. The School Building Committee has been very involved in the design and planning of the project and all anticipate successful construction. The new intermediate school will be ready for occupation when the school year starts in September, 2005; all work at the high school will be completed by December, 2005.

Open in Storrs: The University of Connecticut’s Information Technology Engineering (ITE) Building incorporates cutting edge communications technology throughout. This $27 Million, 150,000+ SF project joins numerous other O&G projects either completed or ongoing as part of the state’s campus development initiative.

Truman School CSO Tank
New Haven, CT
This $7.9 Million project consists of the construction of a large, underground, cast-in-place concrete storage tank measuring 240 feet long, 140 feet wide and 32 feet deep, which will hold up to six million gallons of storm water before it is sent to a local treatment facility. Work includes the initial installation of eight dewatering wells some 72 feet deep to facilitate construction and a water treatment system that will process the water from these wells at 550 gpm before discharging it into existing catch basins. The foundation requires 45,000 CY of excavation, the removal of 4,000 tons of contaminated soil, the installation of 336, 12x53 tension piles to a depth of 60 feet, and a two-foot-thick slab on grade. The tank’s perimeter walls will be one-sided concrete cast in one lift against the tension piles; the tank top will have a cast-in-place concrete slab for its roof and will be backfilled and paved over for a parking lot. Miscellaneous site improvements will also be made. The project began in November, 2003 and will conclude in the Fall of 2004.

Underground Utilities to the Yale Engineering Research Building
New Haven, CT
In mid-February O&G began work on an underground utilities corridor that will carry steam and chilled water piping from Yale University’s main generation plant to its new Engineering Research Building (ERB). The corridor will make use of the old Farmington Canal bed to route the utilities. Besides providing heating and cooling to the ERB, the project will close a chilled water loop in this sector of Yale’s campus. The project, valued at $3 Million, faces some unique obstacles. Access is limited by the ERB construction site in the middle, and other boundaries are quite restricted between existing structures. Dewatering will be required as well as extensive trench shoring and rock removal. The walls of the old canal will also have to be protected and left intact. In addition, precautions will have to be taken not to disturb an AT&T transcontinental fiber optic which runs parallel and as close as three feet to the corridor. Consulting engineer on the project is WM Group Engineers of New York. Work will conclude in January of 2005.

Project 114 New Haven/East Haven
New Haven/East Haven, CT
On September 19, 2003, O&G was awarded the $41.8 Million C1 [DEFINE] contract, the second of six projects making up the I-95 New Haven Harbor Crossing Improvement Program for CONNDOT. Work involves replacing four bridge superstructures and widening their substructures, and constructing two box culverts, a cast-in-place box culvert extension in the Farm River, six retaining walls, extensive utility relocations and the reconstruction and widening of approximately 1.6 miles of I-95. The scheduled completion date is November, 2005. The project was designed by Close, Jensen & Miller and will be inspected by Vollmer Associates.