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Alan Pendalton, equipment operator for Florida-based PAW Materials Inc., with PAW Materials president and CEO Richard Wohlfiel at a demolition site where Allied-Gator's MT Series Multi-Tool MT 40, shown between the two, played an important role.

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Practice makes perfect

PAW: Building a creative edge with the right tools, people, frame of mind

by Stephen Wagner

Raleigh, NC-based Progress Energy's concrete cooling towers — 47,000 square feet and 65 feet high.

When PAW Materials took on a project to demolish a pair of concrete cooling towers for a regional engergy company, they saw it a bit as business as usual. And it was, especially for a company that didn't start out to be so large, and so successful.

"We didn't start out to be a large company. That just happened by doing the right thing over and over," said PAW CEO, Rick Wohlfiel. "The company was named after my mother, Patricia Ann Wohlfiel. We started out as a trucking company just hauling with dump trucks in the Tampa Bay area."

Wohlfiel, 44, is actually CEO of three companies with about 80 employees that make up Florida-based PAW Companies — PAW Materials, which is a demolition and crushing company, the trucking company "which we still have," and Fleet Tech, which is a truck and RV parts and service center.

"We're in land clearing, we're into metals, we're into concrete," Wohlfiel explains. "We do a broad range of things."

PAW was born in 1983 with one truck and, according to the company website, "after a few years in the trucking business with not so new trucks, Jim Wohlfiel [Rick's father] decided to use his Navy experience as a heavy diesel mechanic. Besides keeping his own trucks on the road, he helped his fellow truckers keep theirs going by opening a garage."

A quarter century has passed since the company's inception and Wohlfiel says that one of PAW's more recent projects was the company's most unique and difficult.

"We had taken a large job with Progress Energy to take down their concrete cooling towers — 47,000 square feet and 65 feet high. And we had to save the foundation. So we had to bring them down conventionally," Wohlfiel recalls.

Progress Energy is a Raleigh, NC-based energy company with more than 21,000 megawatts of generation capacity and $9 billion in annual revenues. Its two major utilities serve more than 3.1 million customers in the Carolinas and Florida. Using the ramping method to demolish Progress Energy's tower No. 1 proved to be fraught with disadvantages for PAW.

An overview of PAW's Progress Energy demolition project.

"We didn't have the exact right tool for the job," he said. "We did one tower in '06 and the other in '07," Wohlfiel explained. "For the first tower we used a couple of machines that didn't have quite the reach or the correct tools. I determined that I was going to 'tool up' — look for a tool that would have the ability to reach the height that we needed, as well as the distance to keep the operator safe."

According to Wohlfiel, "I started searching the Internet to find a machine that was designed in a way that would work for our application. Also, I'm always looking for the duality in anything I buy so it will perform other tasks as well. When I go to purchase something, if it's a large investment, I have to make sure it will work for multiple applications, or I won't buy it. If it's too narrow an application, then I can't utilize it. Allied-Gator fit everything I was looking for."

"PAW was very unhappy with the efficiency of the previous tools they had to struggle with on the first tower," says Mike Ramun, Allied-Gator's sales and marketing manager, "and began to research, in-depth, tools that would increase the efficiency and profitability of the next half of the project."

"I began to work with Mike," Wohlfiel said, "and we began to discuss their tool. I liked that the plumbing was all far away from the work, the way they had the machine designed; it kept the hydraulics away from the work. I started working with Mike to find out a way to achieve the height that we needed and the ability to handle the material we were working with.

"We told the engineers that we had a 345 CAT excavator and we need to reach a height of 55 feet," he continued. "'How can we do this?' They suggested that we go to the MTR 40, which gave us the ability to go up and out on a 345. So that's what we went with. And they helped us design extensions for our excavator that would give us the reach that we needed. With their patented four-pin design, we could interchange those to go real long and shorten it back up. They were very helpful in coming up with something that, really, they had never done before — going this far out with a tool."

According to Wohlfiel, "the reach is 55-feet for the Allied-Gator tool on the 345 Cat. We didn't need to reach to the very top all the time. When we did, we used small amounts of dirt to ramp up on. The hammer reached about 48-feet high and we used a dirt ramp for it. The hammer is a D&A 130v 2,000 pound hammer sold by Aquip in Tampa. We used an Extendavator for the extra reach on our 325 Cat, which we bought from Paul Weaver Equipment Co., Inc. in Goodfield, IL."

Watching basic dissatisfaction turn to complete joy as Wohlfiel realized that with the right tools, the second tower was disposed of much more to his satisfaction. Then came the clean-up and disposal.

"The Allied-Gator MT Series Multi-Tool model MTR 40 was the only tool used for the mass removal of all concrete in the second cooling tower," said Ramun. "A small hydraulic hammer was also used on the lighter concrete components of the tower."

"When you're dealing with steel," says Wohlfiel, "it's a lot easier to predict the

One of the cooling tower's lower levels comes tumbling down.

way it's going to fall; easier to control. The tough part for us with this concrete structure was that it could be unpredictable. That's where you need the height and reach. You can work with a much shorter machine when you're dealing with a steel- erected building versus one with concrete which could fall either way. When concrete is crushed, it loses its integrity and just falls. That's why the 'reach' was so important.

Wohlfiel chuckles when he says that working for Progress Energy was like working for OSHA.

"Extremely safety-conscious people," he remembers. "They have everything calculated. They wanted to know, on paper, how I was going to bring this structure down, what measures I was going to take. They wanted the design of how far away from the building we were going to be. What was our plan? Contingency plan? If that didn't work, how did we plan to go about it? We were dealing with a failing building and there was a question of 'would it be handled the way we predicted it would be handled?' We were apparently very successful because we are able to bid with them on a lot of things now due to our success with this. No one ever brought down one of their concrete cooling towers before, so they had no prior information to give us as to how things went."

PAW recycled everything at its own recycling yard, located about 15 miles away, and sold it out as roadbase. They took the monument-sized pieces by truck to the yard, where it was then processed.

"We didn't want to have a lot of exposure at their facility with our crushers, so we got everything offsite as quickly as possible," Rick noted. "They're on an 'eight year/no accidents' run; not one recordable injury in eight years. We didn't want to mess with that number and have someone smash a finger or have something requiring more than first aid when we have crushers and equipment with moving parts there. That's just a lot more room for error. So they opted to pay us a little extra to have it all hauled away and not recycled onsite.

"We started recycling with beams that were 12-feet x 24-feet square, rectangular. We cut those and the densifier part of the MTR 40 would crush those down and cut through the rebar. Each column had eight rungs of 1-3/4 inch rebar. We also hauled concrete slabs that were four, five and six feet long — some of them up to 20 feet long — to the yard and crushed them further. Our excavators basically loaded up everything. But that MTR 40 did the whole tower, brought it down and processed it enough to go on trucks."

Rick Wohlfiel thinks that "the best thing we can do for people is to provide a creative edge to their problems."

"It is the company's slogan, 'We work diligently to please all our customers by being creative and skilled at what we do.' There's a professionalism about every person in the business," Wohlfiel says. "Everyone understands that they are a sales representative, from the operator to the project coordinator to the administrator to my job; we know that we're putting our signatures on everything we do. We try not to say 'we don't do that!' That's not going to happen. We want to help people figure out solutions to their problems, so they'll always call us back.

"We're a family business and we still enjoy each other's company."

Allied-Gator's MTR 40 Multi-Tool in action.

Using a berm to generate additional height for the Allied-Gator MTR 40 attached to a Cat 345.

Allied-Gator's new manufacturing facility

by Diana Barnum

Hydraulic attachment manufacturer, Allied-Gator, Inc. is undergoing expansion into a brand-new, state-of-the-art 469,000 square foot facility for their hydraulic attachment manufacturing operations. The company will be moving its operations across the road and into the new facility located directly behind their corporate headquarters in Youngstown, OH. The new location includes nearly 11 acres under roof and will enable the company to operate at peak performance levels across the board.

"Our group designed the site based upon extensive research and experience in the industry," said Mike Ramun, Sales and Marketing Manager of Allied-Gator.

With 40 times more capacity than their current manufacturing facility, Allied-Gator's new structure will provide plenty of space for its workers and operations, as well as the latest environmental upgrades and manufacturing equipment. The new building will feature geothermal climate control for heating and cooling, using water from the on-site, natural spring. The facilities will also house a variety of cutting-edge equipment, including five state-of-the-art machining centers and 22 overhead cranes with capacities ranging from 10 to 120 tons, the largest crane spanning 130-feet with a 336-feet long runway and maximum hook height of 45-feet.

The new site is designed specifically for Allied Gator manufacturing needs.

"We looked at what specific facilities and equipment our operations needed, and designed the facility beginning with the end products in mind in order to maximize efficiencies." said Ramun.

Historic Move

Allied-Gator was established in Youngstown, OH, in 1973, beginning its operations in a small brick building that measured approximately 30-feet X 30-feet. At present, their location has grown to incorporate over 240 acres including its present 24,000 square foot corporate office, completed in 1998.

Bringing It All Together

Allied-Gator's new location is made up of two main areas. Area A, scheduled to open in a few months, will house the warehouse, assembly, and both machining and heavy machining bays. Area B, targeted for completion by the end of 2008, will be home to plate burning, detailing, fabrication operations and heavy equipment modification bays.

Throughout this period of extensive change, the overall purpose and mission of the company remains firm. "Allied-Gator has a continued commitment to providing the demolition and recycling industries with superior products and innovative attachments," explained Mike Ramun.

More Info/Free Video Demos Online

For more information on Allied-Gator, Inc., 2100 Poland Ave, Youngstown, OH 44502; call 330-744-0808 or 800-624-2867; fax 330-744-3218; email info@alliedgator.com; or visit them online at www.alliedgator.com where they host a variety of free video demonstrations.

Allied-Gator's strengths

Allied-Gator manufacturers the patented MT™ Series Multi-Tool and patent-pending MT™ Series Mag Extension, as well as their patented Allied-Gator® Claw Bucket™.

Their product line includes:

1) The MT Series Multi-Tool ranging from sizes 800-52,000 pounds with a patented Power Link & Guide™ System that generates a continual increase in power throughout closure and enables greater operator control with fixed centerline cycling. The MT can be used with Allied-Gator's patented QuickChange™ Shear and Cracker/Crusher Jaw Sets.

2) The MT Series Mag Extension offers a cost-effective alternative to operating with a designated machine that acts as a material handler. It features Allied-Gator's patent-pending UCS™ Technology, also found in the MT Series Multi-Tool. When utilized in combination with the Multi-Tool, the Mag Extension allows users to perform demolition, processing, material handling and site clean up functions with the same machine.

3) The patented Allied-Gator® Claw Bucket™ increases site safety by securely transporting, sorting and loading materials with a powerful design consisting of two sets of tines and a guarded grid screen that work together to pick up and sift site debris.

Visit www.alliedgator.com for more information and to witness the power of Allied-Gator's innovative line of attachments.