Imagine a single pile of flat sheets of drywall stacked four times higher than the 776-foot IDS Tower in Minneapolis.

Imagine nearly $1 million worth of scaffolding consisting of 5,740 frames that, stacked on top of each other, would rise to over 3-1/2 miles into the sky.

Imagine steel studs and tracks that, laid end-to-end, would stretch out almost 900 miles.

Then imagine the enormity of using that stack of drywall, the studs and tracks, and the scaffolding, to build a project with walls a half mile long and 90 feet high, and you get an inkling of the tasks involved in the $10 million drywall contract for one of the world’s largest shopping malls.

The Mall of America—the Bloomington, Minnesota development which is the largest enclosed shopping mall ever built in the United States—was the challenge, and Minuti-Ogle Co., Inc., Minneapolis, was the creative company that tackled it.

“When the bid for the project was first issued, the developer didn’t believe one drywall company could do the job,” said Tom Panek, president of Minuti-Ogle. “We convinced them we could, but we had to stretch our creative abilities to fulfill our promise.”

Minuti-Ogle, which traces its evolution back 90 years in the drywall (and related projects) business, has survived due to unique management concepts, a major one being to encourage the creative input of all employees, at every level of work, and maintain open communications to benefit from those ideas.

The result is a harmonious team that consists not only of management, suppliers and clients, but also a skilled and dedicated group of union craftsmen and laborers.

“We knew a job of this magnitude could not be streamlined efficiently without the contributions of everyone involved, and without an effective communications system,” Panek said.

Some six months of planning—computer aided—went into the job before a single foot of framing went into place.
Above, extraordinary craftsmanship in drywall application is demonstrated in this multi-level view of the mall project. All of the curved surfaces and the sculpted ceilings are finished with drywall--part of the 2.5 million square feet of drywall required for the job.

Below, a jungle of scaffolding rising 90 feet into the air was part of the 5,740 frames of scaffolding required in the Mall of America project. Minuti-Ogle supplied almost $1 million worth of scaffolding to accommodate all of the trades involved in the job.

Since Minuti-Ogle was under contract to provide the scaffolding, careful sequencing of the scaffolding was required to accommodate the installation of electrical, mechanical, plumbing and all finishes--as well as the drywall. Consequently the scaffolding had to be continuously broken down, moved and reassembled, to keep up with the construction master plan.

“We decided to create a special team of twelve workers whose only function--but a critical one--was to continuously move a virtual mountain of scaffolding,” Panek said.

“To accomplish this, the project was broken down into four distinct areas--four major ‘streets’ within the mall--and the scaffolding needs within each street were closely monitored. This was done through a communications system that started from an on-site control center and reached through foremen on each of the streets to the individual tradesmen.”
The master communications system emits its signal from the IDS Center--tallest building in the area and a previous Minuti-Ogle project. The signal is received on two on-site frequencies, one for the four “street” foremen and one for laborers. The frequency for the foremen had an override capability for emergencies.

Included in the project plan was a weekly meeting between the street foremen, tapping foremen and various key members of management, to review progress on the master plan and find creative solutions to a multitude of problems that develop in huge projects of this kind.

A second meeting is held each week with the developers, to work out changes and variations suggested in the first meeting.

“Minuti-Ogle’s previous experience resulted in value engineering that generated a cost saving to the owner of about $250,000, without sacrificing the quality or aesthetics of the project,” Panek noted.

Other suggestions from a variety of sources up and down the communications chain resulted in many savings of thousands of dollars.

“Our top priority in this project, and any other we undertake, is quality and safety,” Panek said. “Quality involves cooperation and communications from top to bottom of the organizational structure, taking in about 210 skilled carpenters, lathers, plasterers, drywall applicators, tapers and laborers.

“Safety results from careful attention to detail in all phases of the project, as well as strict compliance with city building codes.”

Despite the many complexities involved in construction of the largest enclosed mall ever built in the nation, Minuti-Ogle is ahead of schedule to complete its massive task by February 1992, six months before the mall’s scheduled opening in August 1992.

The Mall of America--the largest indoor amusement park under skylights--will house four major department stores (Bloomingdale’s, Macy’s, Nordstrom and Sears), over 400 spe-
We're building Mall of America and proud of it!

Left, curved bridge surfaces and handsome columns, fabricated by the skilled craftsmen of Minuti-Ogle, are part of the aesthetics of the Mall of America—largest enclosed shopping mall ever built in the United States. Right, Minuti-Ogle's workers show their pride in working on Mall of America.

Specialty shops, the seven-acre Knotts Camp Snoopy, a 1.2 million gallon walk-through aquarium called Underwater World, a 14-screen cinema complex, and a variety of restaurants and nightclubs. The complex also includes parking surfaces capable of holding 13,000 cars.

Developer of the project is Melvin Simon & Associates, and the construction manager is PCL Construction.