



A Hutterite Colony in Manitoba used ratchet straps and custom-sewn canvas to enclose this former 120-ft. dia. slurry tank.



Project manager Paul Hofer reduced the slurry tank's 23-ft. high walls to 18 ft. and cut out holes for an entrance door and overhead door.

By Dee Goerge, Contributing Editor

Lower Cost Method To Enclose Slurry Tank

After running a story about a Minnesota man who converted a Slurrystore into a storage shed with an engineered roof (Vol. 35, No. 2), a slurry tank conversion in Canada caught our attention. Instead of wood trusses, ratchet straps and custom-sewn canvas were used to enclose the former 120-ft. dia. slurry tank.

The roof cost just \$15,000 but they did

have some problems with it over the winter. So changes are being made.

"It didn't winter very well. The seam let go on the rim," says Paul Hofer, who managed the project for the Netley Hutterite Colony in Petersfield, Man.

He explains that the idea came from a colony in Alberta that did a similar conversion on a smaller tank for grain storage. Hofer's colony wanted to convert their unused tank to store wood and other material for their cabinet-making business.

They removed the top ring of steel to reduce the 23-ft. high walls to 18 ft., cut out holes for an entrance door and overhead door, and put a stiffener ring around the top of the exterior. Inside, after pressure washing the walls and floor, they installed a 50-ft. tall, 20-in. oilfield pipe at the center. Using 2-in. pipe, Hofer welded a 5-ft. dia. frame to the oilfield pipe to attach to 43 2-in. ratchet straps. The other ends of the straps were attached to the top of the tank walls at the joints between the panels.

They ordered a custom-made one-piece 12-oz., canvas tarp with three layers at the center for extra strength. Rings on the canvas were hooked to the boom to raise it to the center and unroll it in two directions. Hofer and his crew tied the canvas to a center ring on the roof, unrolled the canvas about halfway down and spread it out before letting it roll down the rest of the way.

The lower edge of the tarp was secured with 1-in. ratchets to the stiffener ring. The rim turned out to be the weak point where the wind caught and tore the canvas loose.



Inside, he installed a 50-ft. tall, 20-in. oilfield pipe at the center. A 5-ft. dia. steel frame is welded onto top of pipe.

"We will redo it and have it sewn twice and reinforced with strapping," Hofer says. A stiffener ring will also be added to the inside of the tank.

If he were to do it again, he says he would have the canvas come down a couple feet on the wall, even if it looked wrinkled. He might have also lowered the center pipe 10 ft. While the steep pitch is good for shedding snow, it might not catch as much wind if it were a bit shorter.

Finally, Hofer suggests installing the roof when it's warm to get a good taut roof with the ratchet straps. He notes that the ratchets can be tightened whenever needed.

He is hopeful that the modifications will do the trick and that the repurposed slurry tank will provide 12,000 sq. ft. of storage space for the colony for many years to come.

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A boom was used to raise canvas up onto frame, and then the canvas was unrolled in 2 directions to form the roof.

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May-June, 2011

He Wrapped An Olds Around A Cottonwood Tree

"I saw a car in a junkyard with a tree growing through it, and I thought it looked kind of cool," says Noel Johnson, who decided to "grow" his own tree car for his front yard.

He found a 1950's Oldsmobile back in the woods at a neighbor's place and traded some labor for it.

"The biggest challenge was getting it out of the woods," Johnson says. It didn't run so he and his friend Matt Menzel pulled it out with a tractor and skidsteer.

It took about a day to take off the front end of the car and remove the engine, transmission and other parts to make the tree fit. Then they pulled the car up around the tree and reassembled the grill and front end.

From the nearby highway, the tree looks like it grew up through the car. People are always stopping to take photos, Johnson says.

He got the "yard art" he had imagined, and he made a few other people happy too.

"I gave away all the parts we took out," Johnson says. "It was recycling at its finest."

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Noel Johnson "grew" this tree car in his front yard. He took the front end off a 1950's Oldsmobile and pulled the car up around the tree, then reassembled everything.