Lloyd Koos used a plasma cutter, welder, and a lot of ingenuity to transform several 6 by 30-ft. underground fuel tanks into beams and rafters for building this 60 by 60-ft. steel shed.

“It took a number of years to come up with a design. I ended up with a good, solid building, and it was cheap,” says Koos, LaMotte, Iowa.

Koos cut strips of steel lengthwise from the tanks. He then welded the curved strips together in pairs - with the concave side of each piece facing inward - to create strong yet relatively lightweight oval-shaped steel “beams”. Larger strips were cut for columns, and smaller strips were cut for duty as cross beams and rafters.

“The columns are tapered, so they’re larger at the bottom than at the top,” explains Koos. “The rafters have a wood 2 by 8 sandwiched between the curved steel strips with one edge open for attaching roofing.”

Koos invested in a plasma cutter to cut out the steel strips. To ensure an accurate cut, he attached a set of wheels to the cutter. Once a chalk line had been laid, he simply rolled the wheels down the line and made the cut.

Open ended columns were set on concrete footings with 3 ft. of rebar extending out of them. The open ends set over the rebar. Beams were laid across the columns and welded in place. Rafters were then welded onto the beams. Once everything was squared up and welded in place, Koos cut holes in each of the columns and pumped cement inside them. When he finished, the holes were patched shut.

“Anybody with basic farm mechanic skills can do it themselves,” says Koos, “but none quite this big,” he says. “It’s really not all that complex, though. We had to do a little experimenting to get the angles right for cutting the pipe. Since we were cutting several pieces alike, once we got the angle and length set, we used that as a template to cut more. While one of my sons ran the saw, I welded.”

Side panels and gates were made from 2-in. round galvanized steel pipe. The rear panels are made from 2-in. square steel tubing, with a poly shield on the inside. “We ended up making the gates a little heavier than we’d intended, so we had to order more steel to build a parlor that will rival any commercially-produced parlor. Remember, you get paid the same for your milk regardless of how many cows you have.”

“Do-It Yourself Home-Built Milking Parlors”

When Tom Wencl decided to go from tie stalls to a milking parlor for his 68-cow dairy herd, he decided to explore building his own. While looking at factory-built parlors on other farms, the Blooming Prairie, Minnesota, dairy farmer heard about Vance Haugen, an Extension agent in Crawford County, Wisconsin. “He’s helped several people design and build their own parlors,” Wencl says. “After talking with him, I knew I could do it myself. He even had plans and helped me put together a parlor that would fit where I wanted it.”

Wencl built a double 8 stall-stall parlor. “By drawing up our own plans, we were able to make use of existing milk transport lines and milkers,” he says. “We had been milking with five milkers into 2-m. high lines. We moved the high line to the center of the parlor and bought three more milkers. Now we just swing the eight milkers from side to side from the center line.”

Once he had his plans together, Wencl ordered steel and began clearing out one end of his old tie-stall barn where the parlor would be built. With help from his sons, Wencl removed 12 tie stalls - six on either side of the center alley - to make a 28 by 32-ft. parlor area. They also had to remove some of the support posts for the haymow above the parlor.

“They’ve tackled some big projects before, but none quite this big,” he says. “It’s really not all that complex, though. We had to do a little experimenting to get the angles right for cutting the pipe. Since we were cutting several pieces alike, once we got the angle and length set, we used that as a template to cut more. While one of my sons ran the saw, I welded.”

Side panels and gates were made from 2-in. round galvanized steel pipe. The rear panels are made from 2-in. square steel tubing, with a poly shield on the inside. “We ended up making the gates a little heavier than we’d intended, so we had to order more steel to build a parlor that will rival any commercially-produced parlor. Remember, you get paid the same for your milk regardless of how many cows you have.”

“Have You Renewed Your Subscription?”

Don’t miss our next issue! Check your mailing label on front of this issue to see when your subscription expires.

To renew, use the order envelope enclosed with this issue, or the order coupon on page 44.

Or call us toll-free at 1-800-834-9665.