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Dueck's Mechanical booming 35 years after inception

By Colleen Swifte

Dueck's Mechanical Inc. located in Whitemouth, Manitoba, is now in its 35th year of business.

Company Owner/President LaVern Dueck started the business in 1989 when he was just 20 years old. Dueck, a welder by trade, grew up on a family farm which gave him invaluable experience in welding and repairing equipment.



“ We built our first shelter within the first year in business. Then the next year we built thirty and so on from there. These shelters were becoming a rage and we figured we might as well capitalize on it

- LaVern Dueck , Company Owner/President



Just a few months after starting his business he began designing and manufacturing fabric covered steel structures designed for a variety of uses. He chose the trade name “Diamond Shelters.” Dueck’s 3 sons, Zachary, Nicholas, and Alexander have all joined their father in business and are very much hands on in every aspect of it.

HISTORY AND GROWTH

“Dueck’s Mechanical started out repairing automotive and farm equipment,” Dueck explains. “Within a few weeks of that, we started doing some welding. It kept growing from there. One of our parts suppliers knew someone who needed cattle equipment manufactured and we landed the job. That was the first

project we took on outside of our community. That got us in the door to manufacturing and it started to grow from there as word-of-mouth spread.”

Dueck heard of the closure of a welding shop near Landmark, MB and bought some of their equipment to aid in expanding the business.

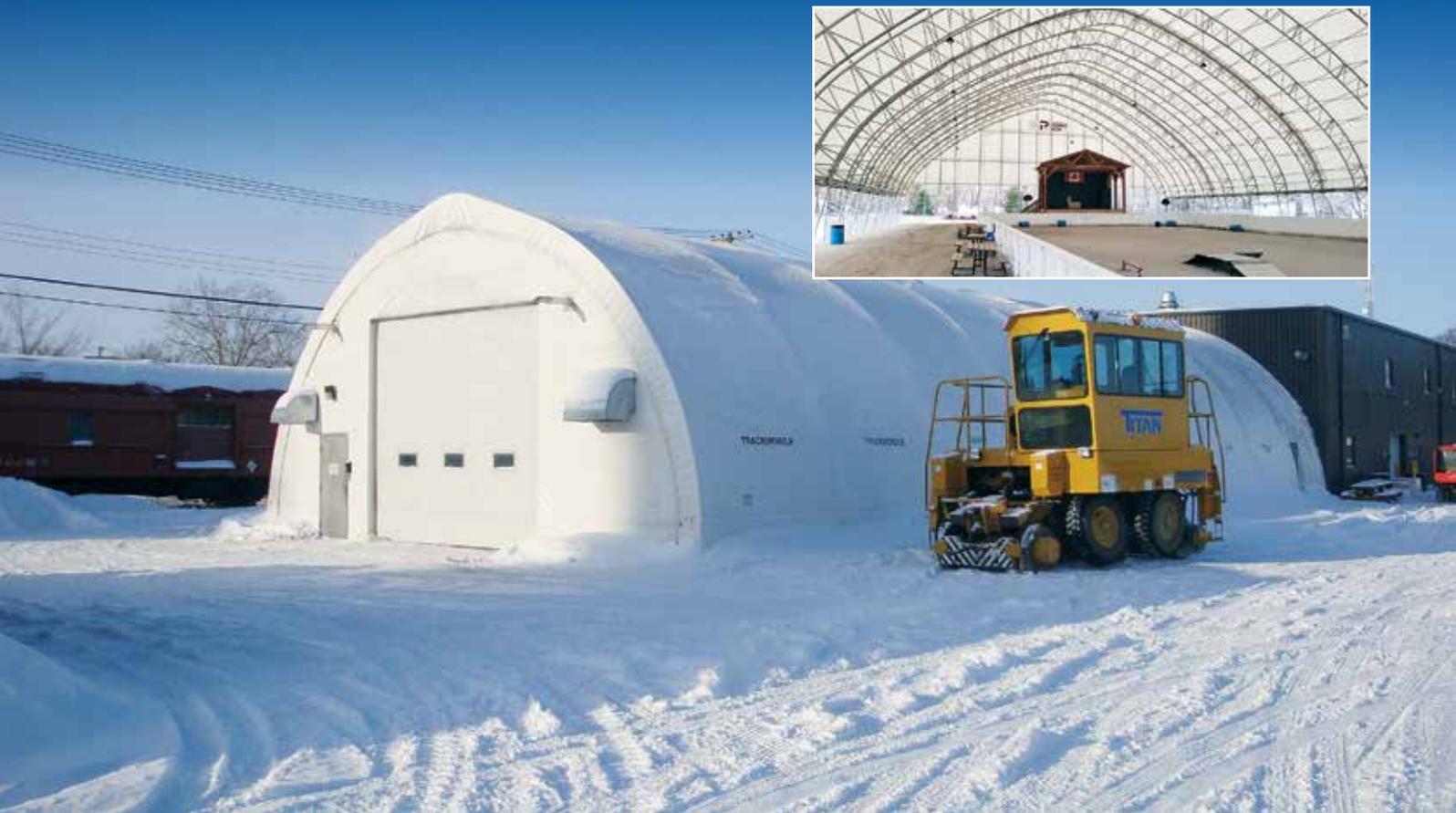
“Aside from word-of-mouth business coming in, we did some door knocking too. We got some good long-term customers from that.” Says Dueck.

“We continued to get more work and it grew from there. Growing up on a family farm, you are a jack of all trades. My dad did all his own welding and repairs and I learned from him – that expe-

Continued on page 8

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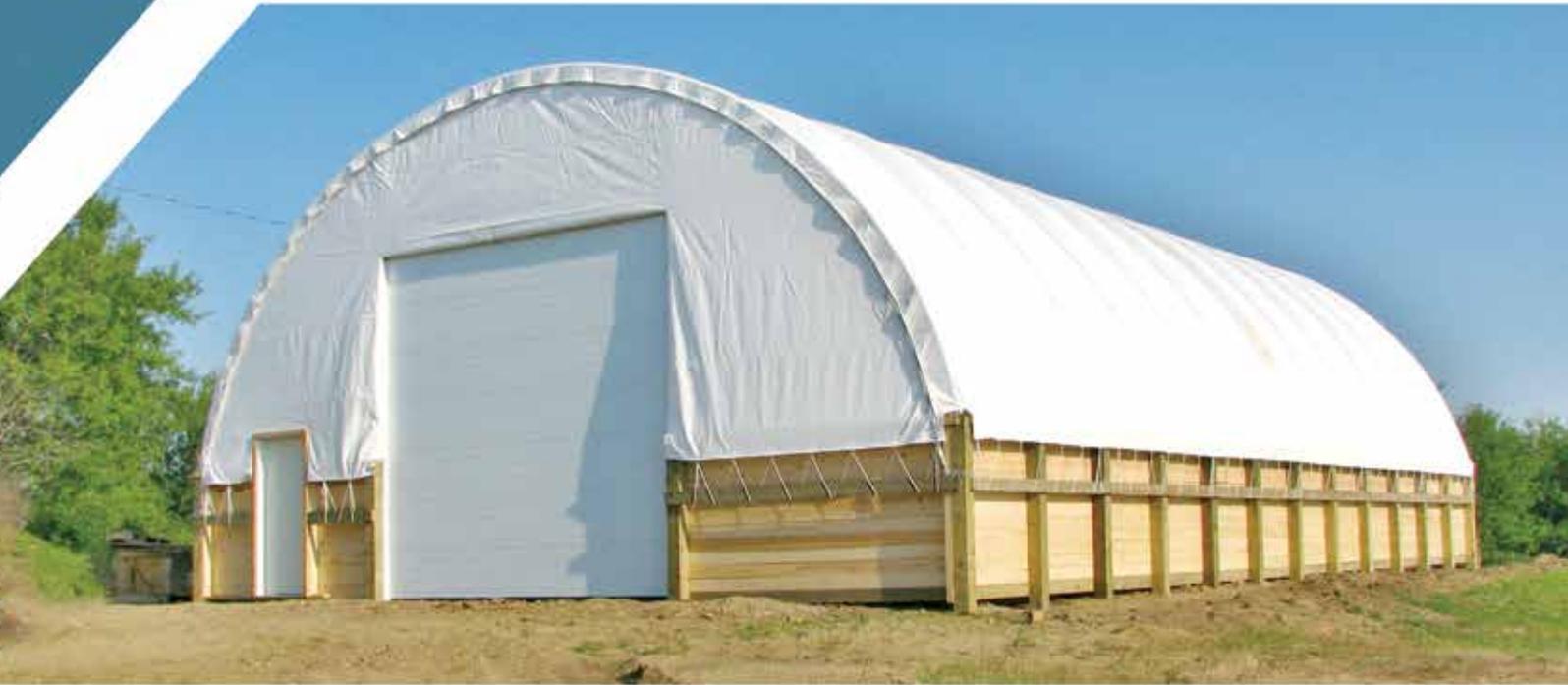
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1. 112' span pedestrian bridge on the Trans-Canada Hiking Trail near Inverness Falls, MB.
2. The covers being installed on a custom 62' diameter dome shelter.
3. Open web truss joists for roof system on a precast concrete building.
4. Dueck's Mechanical / Diamond Shelters Production Facility
5. Custom logo end tarp on a 38' Free-standing Single Hoop Diamond Shelter
6. A truck load of Diamond Shelters loaded and ready to go.

Diamond Shelters

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perience enabled me to take on a variety of jobs. The farm is seven miles from where the shop is now."

By the time Dueck's Mechanical had been in business for 3 years, they had grown to three fulltime staff.

Dueck says, "We built our first shelter within the first year in business. Then the next year we built thirty and so on from there. These shelters were becoming a rage and we figured we might as well capitalize on it. We were about the third company in Canada to manufacture them. It seemed like everyone wanted one. We had a feed company approach us and asked if we could build a shelter for one of their customers – they wanted to raise market hogs in it. We gave them a competitive price and got the contract."

CHALLENGES

While things have run smoothly and Dueck's Mechanical has experienced continued growth, Dueck can still identify a couple of challenges.

He explains, "Our biggest issue was when the offshore products started showing up about fifteen years ago, but they turned out to be low quality and lasted only 18 – 24 months. With ours we have tarps that last into the 20-year range. With Diamond Shelters you pay once and get the longevity. We have had some slower years because of that but overall, it has stayed steady."

"Another challenge is finding decent quality help. It has become a real issue over the past 4 to 5 years. We have dealt with it through more automation. We bought our first welding robot in 2021. We have now got the functionality mostly figured out and we are looking at buying a bigger one to weld larger parts."

FABRIC COVERED STRUCTURE MARKETS

Dueck's Mechanical/Diamond Shelters has numerous dealers in Canada, Dueck says their largest Canadian dealer over the years has been in Alberta, servicing many industrial, oil fields, and farming markets.



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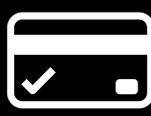


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Dueck's Mechanical/Diamond Shelters had already broken into the US market after just 3 years in business. Dueck says, "lining up a good broker was key to making it a successful venture. We have never had any problems. About 10 years ago we had a border protection services audit – 2 officers from the United States Customs and Border Protection Services came here to Whitemouth and took down a wealth of information. There were no issues at all. They walked away smiling. We invited our broker representative to attend the meeting as well. They walked through the plant and looked things over and could see everything was legit."

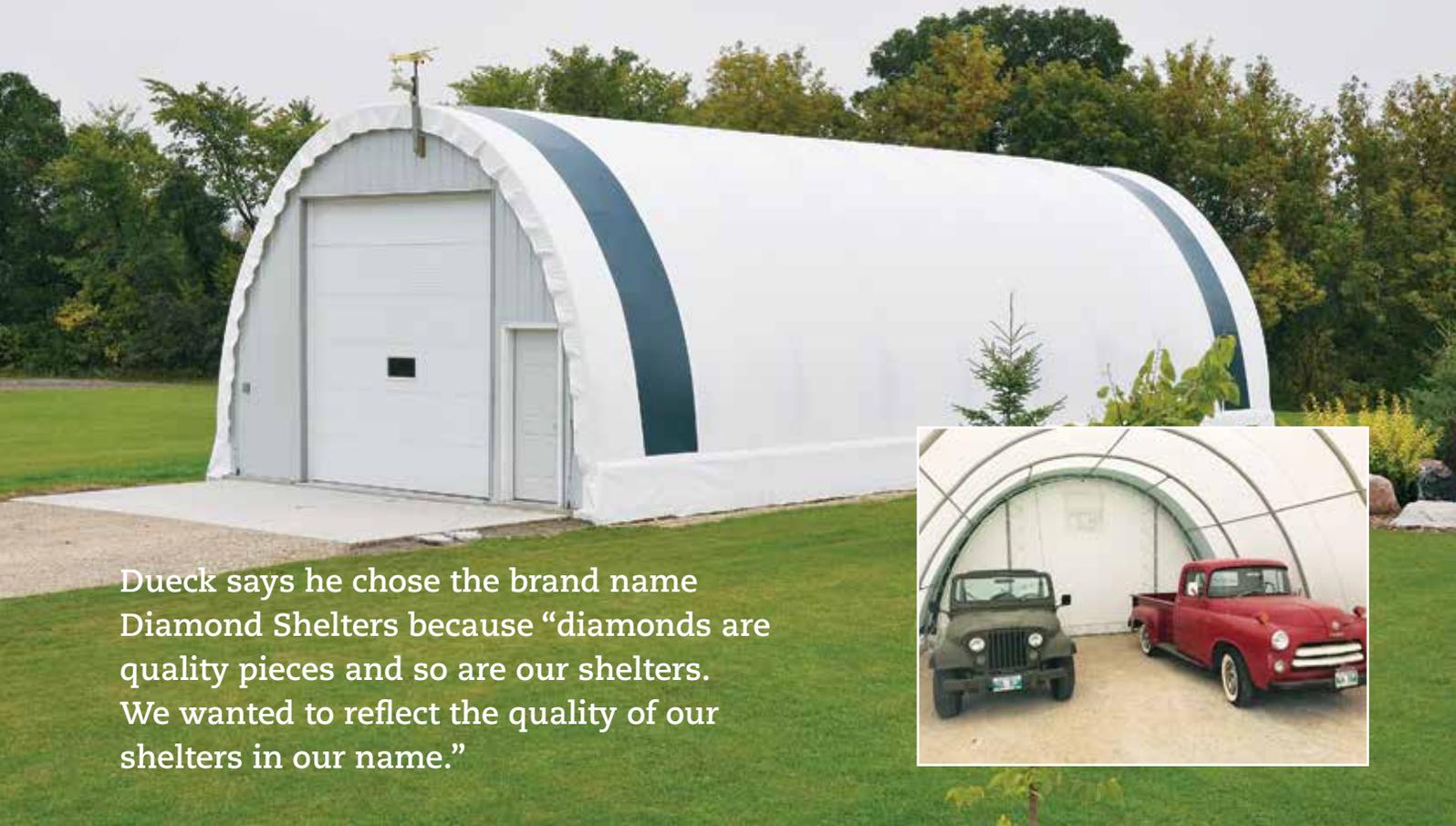
Diamond Shelter's primary US market is in the Mid-Western USA. They have several dealers who have collaborated closely with them for nearly 30 years and have a growing network of dealers' right across North America. Diamond Shelters is looking to grow their export sales to the US market.

PRODUCTS, SERVICES, AND STRUCTURES

Dueck says he chose the brand name Diamond Shelters because "diamonds are quality pieces and so are our shelters. We wanted to reflect the quality of our shelters in our name. We are not the cheapest in the market, but we manufacture quality products that are built to last."

The tarp on their 13,200 square foot warehouse lasted almost 22 years.

Dueck says, "They hold up well in almost any weather. We have shipped our buildings to every Canadian province and territory as well as many US states including Alaska and Hawaii. We also have product overseas in Europe, Africa, United Arab Emirates,



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Australia, and New Zealand to name a few.”

While the shelters started out mainly appealing to farms for things like housing livestock, hay, machinery, and grain storage, their uses have grown to things such as commercial warehousing, bulk highway sand salt storage, workshops and horse-riding arenas and more. They also have smaller buildings suited to a variety of residential storage applications such as lawn and garden, RV’s, boats, ATV’s and even your classic car.

Their standard cover warranty is a 10-year prorated warranty with an optional 5-year extension. Their steel frame warranty is a 5-year prorated warranty.

Dueck says, “We source our polyethylene fabric from Eastern Canada, where it is woven and coated. We have our own tarp production facility where we manufacture all our own building covers as well as replacement covers for most brands. Having our

own tarp production facility gives us complete quality control. Our steel comes from several suppliers.”

Diamond Shelters come in sizes from 15’ wide to 160’ wide and the length that best suits the customers’ needs, they have also manufactured custom profiles, including domes. They currently have over fifty building profiles.

Dueck’s Mechanical also offers retail steel sales, welding repair, welding gas and supplies, and custom manufacturing including pedestrian bridges, structural steel and more. They also manufacture replacement truck tarps, boat covers and other custom tarps.



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We wish you all the success for many more years to come, and look forward to continued business with you.



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EMPLOYEES AND CERTIFICATIONS

The Canadian Welding Bureau has certified Dueck's Mechanical to CSA Standard W47.1, Division 2. This allows them to weld engineered structural components.

Dueck's Mechanical is also certified to CAN/CSA-A660, a requirement for manufacturers of steel building systems under the National Building Code of Canada. Dueck's Mechanical is one of six companies in Manitoba to currently hold this certification.

Dueck's Mechanical presently employs about nineteen people. Dueck says they do all staff training onsite as well as training all their own welders to meet the Canadian Welding Bureau requirements. Their welders are certified for structural welding and must be recertified every 2 years. Dueck and one of his employees are certified welding supervisors, allowing them to do mandatory weld quality inspections and maintain their certifications.

Dueck says, "You do not just get your red seal then your good forever, it is a continuous process. For welder testing, a representative from the Canadian Welding



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Bureau is present to conduct the testing. They are extremely strict on the pass and failures. It is all part of quality workmanship. We aim to get it right the first time. Canada has some of the strictest welding standards in the world.”

CORE BUSINESS PRINCIPLES AND FUTURE VISION

Dueck says his business principles boil down to three things. Honesty, quality and getting things done in a timely fashion.

As for the near future, he says, “We are managing fine; we have been at this level for a few years. Five and a half years ago we started our tarp plant to manufacture all our own fabric covers for the buildings and that added a few staff. We are running about four people in there right now. We rented a building for the first 4 years and moved into our own building in the summer of 2022. That is working well, and we have reduced supply chain issues. We met with our engineer recently and we are exploring adding onto our steel shop in 2024/2025 because we are out of space. Using automation helps a lot. Getting a larger welding robot to weld more of our larger parts will help us get more product out the door in a shorter time frame. There are more pieces of automation we are looking at investing in to speed up our production and further improve our process of making quality parts. We are dreaming about doing our own powder coating to have more quality control, but that is a ways off in the future.”

“I am not ready for retirement yet, but I have my three boys all learning the business. I also have a daughter Mikayla, who is a schoolteacher, and my wife Marilee helps in the office with payroll and data entry. It's just a great accomplishment to be at the 35-year mark and we're planning on doing some celebrating of that soon.”



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