

GEKA IRONWORKER GIVES WALINGA FLEXIBILITY



When we talk of specialization in truck body manufacturing, Walinga set the standard in quality back in 1954 when they began designing and building specialized truck bodies in wood.

At the time, automated manufacturing machinery and CAD systems were not even part of someone's vision for the future. Engineering and craftsmanship differentiated a basic coachbuilder from a specialist and Walinga was known as the builder of choice for truck bodies.

Today, Walinga is still a family-run business, owned by two partners, John Medemblik and Robert Lodder. Now operating out of four locations with more than 200 employees, the company is a far piece from its start as a manufacturer for specialized, independent truckers. Walinga now designs and builds engineered aluminum feed bodies and trailers, pneumatic conveying systems, recycling and rendering units, for both small independents and large fleet owners.

To make these products more affordable, Walinga has amassed an enormous database of standard engineered products, so that each new client can start with a proven design and have it modified to their needs. This saves a considerable amount of time engineering the product from scratch, and, as a result, also makes the finished product more affordable.

According to operations/engineering manager Butch Medemblik, when orders are placed into the system, individual components are immediately sorted into groupings of like components. "This enables us to manufacture them in groups," he said, "to maintain tighter controls on costs and quality of the parts."

All areas of the plant have been equipped with current, state-of-the-art equipment, but in the materials processing department, where the raw materials are cut to length and prepared for finished processing and assembly, automation can be a challenge at the best of times.

"We are cutting everything from flat bar to custom extrusions," said Medemblik.

Hole drilling and punching are also done at this location for creating holes in material that are either too heavy, or require a greater hole accuracy than the plasma machine can produce. Part quantities



Kurt Neiman (left) and Butch Medemblik at Walinga's Guelph, Ont., facility.



vary, with maximum quantities reaching batch sizes of five, 10 or even up to 50 parts.

With a significant increase in custom product designs, Walinga needed a machine that could offer cut to length capabilities and several other operations rolled into one. They recently purchased an 80-ton GEKA Semi Paxy ironworker with a CNC controlled positioning table.

"This is the ideal machine for replacing their old bandsaw and offering several other fabricating operations," said Kurt Neiman of Neiman Machinery Sales. "The enormous benefit of the GEKA ironworker is, as a standalone machine it offers the fab shop a multi-dimensional workhorse with five work stations that can do punching, notching and shearing of flats and sections without tool changing."

What makes this machine particularly beneficial for Walinga is its automated positioning table, so not only can some standard lengths and features be saved in the ironworker's CNC control, the positioning table can help automate a processing routine for similar or identical parts.

In Walinga's case, many of the new truck body designs are variations of a previously manufactured one, so the operator can simply modify features for the new order. The ironworker will facilitate the improvement in part quality and aesthetics of visible components.

Walinga currently has several products under development for clients wanting to develop unique new products. "We help engineer the part or assembly, build prototypes and modify the design for final production," said Medemblik.

For more information visit www.walinga.com or www.neimanmachinery.com.