

A giant appears in Ottertail

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The 100-plus-foot-high structure towering over the village of Ottertail might not have all its tin siding on yet, and the office isn't quite finished inside. Even so, Bud Wallenberg's grain elevator is drying corn for the first time this week.

Wallenberg, whose cornfields are east and south of town, said he's been toying with the idea of putting up an elevator for "a couple years." On July 23, the first of the wood cribbing went up, and the work hasn't stopped since.

The completed main elevator and two storage bins will have total capacity of 148 thousand bushels. That's enough for Wallenberg's crop—and then some.

"I hope to get a license," Wallenberg explained, "to do custom drying and storage." Storage space for commodities in the federal grain reserve program is lacking in the northern area of East Otter Tail County, he pointed out.

The main elevator, built of 2 by 6 and 2 by 8 Douglas fir lumber stacked parallel to the ground, is located within the city limits of Ottertail. The giant is close enough to the Soo Line railroad tracks to make talking difficult when a train passes. But the rail, Wallenberg pointed out, is "one

reason I didn't build it on the farm."

Between Wallenberg, his sons David and Jim, and the construction crew of about 10 local men, only one had previous experience in building elevators. Chuck Frederichs, who worked one summer on an elevator, has been foreman of the building project. The pipes, including the 80-foot lengths of steel between the main elevator and the two steel storage bins, were installed by a Perham firm. A Richville crew erected the bins, each with a storage capacity of 44 thousand bushels.

The dryer, Wallenberg said, can process 10 to 12 thousand bushels per day. Inside the elevator is a scale that will handle up to 120 thousand pounds coming in on a semi-truck of up to 70 feet in length.

Wallenberg and his wife, Arvilla, were once dairy farming in the Bertha area. In 1968 they bought a lake home near Ottertail, and in 1974 they left the dairy business to set up permanent residence there.

The land Wallenberg now uses for corn crops was "non-productive" when he bought it four years ago. Now he irrigates all his fields, once the acreage of four different farms.

"I keep trying to retire," said Wallenberg with a smile, "but it doesn't seem to work."

