

Tapered Tubes

The *New Yorker* magazine used to publish a feature periodically entitled "Most Fascinating Story of the Week." Always, it reprinted from some newspaper a story whose content had been cut after a few sentences, which was only enough to pique one's interest.

Such is the story on p. 24 of the November *Modern Steel Construction* ["Class Act," highlighting the Winter Garden at Hyde Park Center, University of Chicago Graduate School of Business]. Taken together with the cover picture, the first question that comes to the mind of this engineer is, "What method was used to produce the tapered tubes?"

The story tells me that the tubes were produced in Germany, pre-assembled with a jig, etc. However, the production technique was not explained, or even mentioned. Could you elaborate in a future issue?

*Frank C. Moffett
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Response from Michael Schmitz, U.S. representative for Josef Gartner, a German curtain wall producer. Schmitz was the company's project manager for the University of Chicago project:

Gartner is based out of Germany, with headquarters and fabrication plant in Gundelfingen (approx. 80 miles west of Munich). In the U.S. we have offices in Chicago and New York. From these offices we consult with our clients and do project management. Most of our design work and fabrication is done in Germany. We fabricated the steel components for the University of Chicago in our shop in Germany.

The tapered rafters had been one of the challenges of this job. As you mentioned, you can't just buy tapered tubes off the shelf. To make the tapered members, we cut trapezoidal plates from sheet metal and bent them into "half pipes." Welding two half pipes together

resulted in a tapered pipe. It seems like a very elaborate process—and it was indeed!

Editor's Note: Visit Gartner's web site at www.josef-gartner.de for more information. Send your letters and other comments to Scott Melnick, Editor, at melnick@modernsteel.com. Letters may be edited for length.