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How has your career in welding evolved over the years(job title, years employed at each job, job duties)?

My career started before I graduated from YCST at GEA Refrigeration on Co-op. They hired me full time as soon as I graduated in 2008. There I spent 5 years as a pipe/vessel welder expanding my experience in blueprint reading, MIG welding, TIG welding, robotic orbital TIG welding, and pipefitting. I was certified 6G MIG, Stick, and TIG and also robotic orbital TIG. From there I moved into Welding Inspection with Mistras services. They trained me in the knowledge and practice of Non-destructive testing. I quickly gained certifications in Penetrant Testing, Ultrasonic Thickness Testing, Visual Inspection, and Radiographic Testing (X-ray and Gamma). I was able to travel to lots of various job sites across the country and perform inspections on pipelines, railcars, weld joints, steam turbines, power plants, oil refinery systems, and oil/petroleum tanks. After 2 years with Mistras, I decided to go back into welding because it was more rewarding for me to be able to build projects instead of just inspecting and looking at them. For the last 5 years, I've been with Covanta energy as a fabricator. Here I have greatly expanded my skills involved with fabrication including CNC plasma cutting, machining, pipe and plate bending, general assembly, beam processing, and AutoCAD. I still hold certifications in 6G Stick and 6G TIG welding, GMAW-P (Pulsed MIG) and FCAW, plate, all positions. I am also the lead fabricator which means my duties include designating tasks to my co-workers, understanding the production schedule, and answering questions concerning the products being built.

What schooling did you receive?

4 years at YCST's welding program, a few credits from HACC for Mechanical Engineering, but work experience has been the best education.

What certifications did you have/currently have?

Currently- GMAW-P All-Positions steel and Stainless steel, FCAW all-positions steel and Stainless steel, SMAW-6G, TIG 6G Steel

Previous- 6G pipe MIG, Stick, TIG.

Radiography Level II, Penetrant testing Level II, Visual Inspection Level II

Ultrasonic Testing, Limited to Thickness- Level II

Industrial Radiographer Radiation Safety Personnel Certification

How long have you been welding?

Since 2002 by hobby (18 years)

Professionally, 12 years (weld inspection experience included)

Did you or do you currently travel with your job?

Not anymore. When I started with Covanta I did a couple of jobs at different plants, working in the boiler. I traveled a lot with Mistras while I was doing an inspection. There's a lot of money to be made on the road, but you would also put in a lot of time, and potentially be away from home or family for months at a time depending on the business. Welding in the field is also a completely

different animal than welding in a shop. Temporary job sites often have critical time constraints, which means you may need to complete tasks under pressure; do it quickly while making sure that it's also done right. Equipment is also sometimes limited, making for challenging situations.

One piece of advice you could give someone looking to have a career in welding?

Absorb. Take in as much information as you can everywhere you go. Not just about welding either, learn how to build by exploring different methods. Ask questions, test new theories, try new ways, change settings, use different techniques. Most importantly: Apply yourself. Don't just weld or slam things together. Understand what you are building/welding together. Learn what it is, how it works, what its functions are, and how to build it right.

Have the people you worked with or worked for helped you to get where you are, or is it the work itself that has made you successful?

Both the work I've put in, and the craftsmen that I've worked below and besides have helped make me the skilled professional that I am. Everyone has different ways of doing things. Some are easier, some are faster, some are the right way of doing things, and sometimes there is the wrong way to do things. Being open-minded goes a long way. Heed advice or criticism from your counterparts, learn from them, and use their input.

Do you have any regrets in your career so far? Do you wish you would have done this or that differently?

Sometimes I wonder about how my situation would look if I had done things differently by continuing my education, however, I am satisfied with where I am at. I consider myself successful. There are always times where you may feel your career is bringing you down. Consider your options, and don't be afraid to make a change. The decision isn't always easy, but later you may realize you made the right choice. For me, it isn't about the money.

What separates a good welder from a great welder?

A great welder doesn't think he is the best welder around. A great welder may not even lay down the best welds. A great welder is a leader, a good craftsman, a teacher, reliable, competent, and proficient. There's no reason to hide your secrets on how to provide quality product/welds: If others ask you for help or pointers, don't be afraid to give them. Practice your skills and techniques toward perfection, there's always room for improvement. Work hard: Be diligent about what you're working on, stay focused on your work, and keep at it. There will be downtime, and other times you'll need to kick it into high gear to get the job done: Be prepared. Do the best you can: Use your skills, ask for help if you need it, have pride in your work, and try to make it look pretty (with the time provided of course). If you make a mistake in your work, own up to it, learn, and do what needs to be done to correct it.

Welding and being a great welder isn't just about laying down good welds, It's about quality finished products and your application of knowledge and skills to achieve that in an efficient manner.