



Progress & Perspectives

WOMEN IN STEEL

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Where did your education and career start?

My passion for learning and problem-solving came long before my official education started. In 1999, my grandfather was retiring after 40-plus years of working in a tool and die shop at General Motors. Before he retired, my grandfather gave me a tour of the facility. It was that tour that piqued the curiosity of what the future might hold for that 11-year-old girl. That day I was able to see the production lines, the tools he used that had been crafted out of steel and the different machines he worked on.

Many years later, my love of problem-solving brought me to Michigan Technological University (MTU) to study mechanical engineering. Afterwards, I started my career with a company that was involved in the commercial construction industry. This position gave me an appreciation for cost-effective design, quality products and customer service. Those skills gave me the experience that led to an opportunity five years ago. I took a leap of faith by entering a new industry; I moved to Wisconsin to work for the Elwood Corp., a long-time valve supplier to the steel industry. I have developed a passion for hydraulics and hydraulic systems and learning how the technology works today and will be applied in the future. Today I spend my time as an applications engineer and quality manager servicing our customers in the primary metals industry.

Why did you choose the steel industry?

I really didn't choose the steel industry; the steel industry chose me. I chose to stay with the industry because of the opportunities it presented, the people I have met along the way and the challenges it presents. I knew little about the industry before joining Elwood, but upon

entering a mill for the first time, I was enamored with the complexity, the technology and the history of the industry. There is something to be said when you are below the mill looking at the controls of the system or working alongside someone who has dedicated their life to a certain system. The passion of the people in the steel industry is infectious. Many individuals are highly invested in their systems and know every nuance. Not long after my first visit to a mill, I decided to become a part of AIST in order to grow my knowledge of the industry. This truly has allowed me to foster new relationships, meet mentors and has allowed me to stay engaged in new technology.

What are you most proud of in your career?

I have just started my career in the steel industry, but one of the things I am most proud of is the opportunity to create solutions for a number of various hydraulic problems. We are proud of our innovative solutions and engineering-heavy team. Entering the steel industry with little knowledge of what I was getting into, I have had the opportunity to learn from some of the best. I started off working on our inside technical team and moved to traveling across the country supporting mills with boots on the ground. Every day I learn something new and often meet someone willing to share their knowledge. I have been fortunate enough to spend many days alongside maintenance and engineering teams finding the next hydraulics solution to make their lives easier. Seeing new products installed and new solutions come to life is something that keeps me excited to see the next challenge.



What has been the best thing about being a woman in this industry?

The best thing about being a woman in the industry has been changing the perspectives of how women are perceived in this field. People are surprised to hear how often I am helping turn wrenches and solve problems in the field. Today this still uncommon, but with many women who have already blazed these trails, it is easier to have a seat at the table. Today we have the opportunity to create a new path for the next generation of women and create conversation about how to make sure women in STEM programs also want to join and stay in the industry. I think something important is that I have been given the opportunity over the past few years to meet and chat with some of the women who have been blazing trails in this industry long before me — others I strive to be like, never having the opportunity to meet. I think of women like the late Carol Ann Yates, a woman whose passion for maintenance and reliability and empathy for the people around her was incomparable.

I also think of the women I have asked for advice and counsel from, and the admiration I have for career paths they have taken in the industry. I appreciate Shannon Clark (ArcelorMittal Dofasco) and Edi Felton (ArcelorMittal Burns Harbor), whose doors have always been open to chat or to share a piece of advice. For me, these women and women like them have truly laid the foundation for those of us in the next generation who continue to break the barriers of women in and serving our steel mill counterparts.

What advice do you have for young women who are interested in pursuing a career in a field that is typically male-dominated?

For young women entering this field, I would say be confident in who you are, be confident in your technical knowledge, find a mentor or a friend in the field, and don't be afraid of being a voice for others. I remember in college sitting in a meeting that was supposed to prepare women for entering male-dominated fields — they told us we had to dress a certain way, act a certain way, do our makeup a certain way and talk a certain way in order to get a job. I remember leaving feeling very disheartened. I was frustrated that I may have to change my whole personality in order to find a job. I am very thankful that was not the case; there is a spot for all types of personalities in many male-dominated fields. I am not saying you don't have to be professional, but you won't find me in a set of heels on the mill floor! There is no reason to put yourself in the box of what you need to be like in order to succeed.

Why do you feel diversity and inclusivity are important in the workplace, and the steel industry as a whole?

Workplace diversity is something that binds a company together and pushes an industry for growth. Learning to grow from our different perspectives gives us the opportunity to better our companies. These fresh perspectives on old problems can rock the boat, but sometimes that can be a good thing and I think the change in workplace diversity can help make the industry better overall. ♦