

Technical Career Spotlight

Jean Edwards

***Journeyman Pipefitter Welder
Three Rivers Corporation***



When you choose a career “*You have to have a ‘want to do it attitude.’ Don’t get discouraged.*” says Jean Edwards, Journeyman Pipefitter Welder at [Three Rivers Corporation](#).

Jean had not given much thought to a career, even as a senior. But she was enjoying playing her saxophone in the Bullock Creek band. “I took three units of band my senior year.” BUT when her dad received a home welder and set it up in the shed, a new world opened up to her. She and her father, a long-time employee of Three Rivers Corporation, enjoyed “messing around with the fire and metal.”

Upon her father’s recommendation, Jean was accepted into the Three Rivers welding program for employees even though she was a second-semester senior. In the class she learned basic welding principles and techniques used in the art of welding...generally by welding brackets.

Jean graduated from [Bullock Creek High School](#) in 2000. After graduation Jean was hired as an apprentice at Three Rivers. Her new employer then sponsored her at the [Associated Builders & Contractors Construction Academy](#).

These classes taught her the fundamentals of commercial industrial welding required in the MidMichigan Region ... mostly pipe welding. Jean became more committed as she saw how her interests in the arts melded with her new found welding craft.

“My love of the arts combined with welding functionality works really well for me. Every welder has their own tack and signature. A welding inspector can look at a weld and tell you who did it

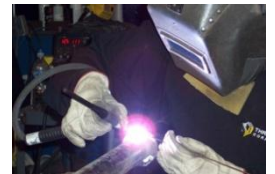
without looking at the welders stamp on the connection.”

During the next four years at ABC Construction Academy Jean learned how to read isometrics (blueprints for piping networks), connecting the pieces and installing these pipe configurations on site. Jean graduated in 2004 from ABC Construction Academy.

Of the 9 ½ years employed at Three Rivers, Jean has spent about 60% to 70% of her time installing pipe units in the field. The rest of the time has been spent in the shop fabricating piping systems from blueprints. She finds both very fulfilling. While she’s fabricating she is able to visualize the installation process and while installing she can visualize the fabrication process, should an adjustment to the pipe be necessary.

Brett Keidel, Supervisor says Jean “is very detail oriented. She’ll double check measurements and math; and from time to time catch mistakes. This avoids extra costs in man hours to fix a bad weld which leads to a savings of time toward project completion.

When asked what she feels is most valuable in her chosen career, Jean says, “Welding is a dying art. Some welds can be done by machines, but machines can’t do high line installations. What we do is hand fabrication. We can climb like monkeys and do gymnastics if necessary to get the job done in the field.”



The most challenging aspect of her career is during this time of year. The cold weather can affect finger dexterity and concentration. The key to overcoming these special situations is to just “keep welding.” It

keeps you warm! Wind can affect welds but this can be overcome by erecting tents around the welder and welding area to block air movement.

While Jean enjoys “climbing like a monkey” she does admit the hardest thing for her to learn was position welds. No two welds are the same nor are installations the same. With each new installation comes a new set of challenges that need a unique solution – that’s means thinking very creatively in some cases.

Jean’s quickly offers that she wouldn’t change a thing in her road map toward her chosen career as a pipefitter welder. She really enjoys what she does and appreciates Three Rivers for their support throughout her career. This is proven through her commitment to the career and her company - she

has brought other to this career through the Three Rivers welding classes, just as her father did for her.

This career with Three Rivers has provided her with a good living and excellent benefits. But what really makes her smile is when her father, who still works for Three Rivers, requests her to assist him on a job site. Seeing her father’s confidence, pride in what his daughter can do and has accomplished is a payoff like no other.

**State of Michigan
Median Annual Salary 2008**

Pipefitter Welder: Average \$48,131

Source: State of Michigan Bureau of Labor Statistics

Jean’s Advice to Others!

“This is a great career. But to get there may be a painful process, including a burn every now and then. But don’t get discouraged. It takes time and practice. Bad welds happen, fix it and move on. Just remain safe!”