

William Eggleston, Craftsman/Educator

Lansing Community College's West Campus is located on the west side of Lansing, Michigan, six miles from the main campus in downtown Lansing. Several industrial trades are taught at West Campus, and welding is one of the most successful programs there. A long walk down a well maintained hallway with steel gray lockers along one side leads to the welding lab. When you open the heavy steel and glass door that leads into the lab, you can feel the air pressure change due to the industrial exhaust fans and air filtration system. You hear the large mechanical shear slicing through steel plate, the pieces dropping with an unchoreographed sound of metal hitting metal.



Four weeks into the Fall 2012 semester, students are comfortable with the routine preparing for their welding lab instructions. Lincoln Electric's bright red arc-welding machines dominate the floor at the West Campus lab. It takes a little pressure to flip the large power switch on the machines to the ON position; then within seconds, numbers in the familiar digital format quickly appear. Dials and switches along the front panel can be adjusted as needed for a particular welding process. Today the class in session is an advanced Gas Tungsten Arc Welding (GTAW) course, where students learn the process commonly referred to as tig welding. Bill Eggleston is at work instructing this advanced group of welding students.

Eggleston moves among the students answering questions, giving directions, confident in his role as an instructor. Eggleston retired from Lansing Community College in 2011 after teaching welding for thirty five years, but he has returned to teach as an adjunct instructor. Welding as a profession is often mistakenly looked upon as a dirty, lackluster occupation of minimum skill and low wages. Eggleston's conduct as a welding instructor brings a high level of professionalism to welding, his expertise with multiple welding processes marking him as a skilled craftsman. His students soon recognize a well-educated welder can command high earnings and respect.

Eggleston didn't set out to be a welding instructor. After graduating from high school in 1971, he took a job on the assembly line at a General Motors plant. However, production work didn't appeal to him, and for a year he worked to save enough money to attend Ferris State University and the welding program that had recently started there. In 1975 Eggleston was in the second graduating class for the Associate Degree in Welding Technology from this newly established program. He then continued his studies at Ferris and in 1976 received a Bachelor's Degree in education. Eggleston later completed his formal education in 1983 with a Master's Degree in education from Michigan State University. *"I had a great mentor, a teacher at Ferris. Roger Kennedy was his name. He impressed me in what he knew and how he taught. I thought someday I'd like to be a teacher."* Roger F. Kennedy was a craftsman and educator working on gas pipeline construction projects in the early 1950s. He started the Welding Technology program at Ferris State University in the early 1970s.

While Eggleston credits Kennedy with the idea that someday he would like to teach welding, another type of education began when he first started teaching welding at Lansing Community College in 1977. Norm Strayer, the full time welding instructor there at the time, a pipe welder turned instructor, along with a group of other instructors, provided a type of education not found in a classroom. *“There was always a group of guys down there at the bottom floor of the Gannon Building. They always kinda gathered in the welding lab to talk about students and teaching. Just hearing different conversations help solidify that I enjoyed teaching.”* Workplace stories provided a valuable connection with working knowledge as contrasted with knowledge from a formal education. These conversations can be lively, and some stories become legends within an organization. It is an education that develops practical experience and common sense.



Eggleston is especially proud of being a member of the American Welding Society (AWS). This professional organization is a nonprofit headquartered in Miami, Florida, dedicated to promoting welding and related welding fields. Their code and certification programs are nationally and internationally recognized as industry standards for the welding professional. AWS Certified Welding Inspector (CWI®) is a certification widely recognized in the welding industry, and those who hold the CWI® are required to pass a rigorous examination to test their knowledge of the welding field, interpret welding standards, and use various weld inspection tools. Eggleston has held a CWI® certification for many years and has conducted weld certification tests for local steel fabricators in the Lansing area. Eggleston has been a member of AWS for twenty years and was president of the Central Michigan section for

seven years. AWS local section and district meetings are held throughout the United States, bringing welding craftsmen together to exchange ideas and keeping its members current in advances in the welding field. Recently, AWS introduced a program that gives boy scouts an opportunity to earn a merit badge for welding, and Eggleston, along with other welding instructors, have brought boy scouts through the welding lab at Lansing Community College to introduce them to the craft of welding. This is typical of Eggleston's continued efforts to demonstrate that welding is an industrial skill to appreciate and excel at.

Eggleston's colleagues in the welding department recognize his passion for teaching and his exceptional skill as a welder. Asked if he considers himself a craftsman, Eggleston says without hesitation *“I sure do!”* Those who have worked with him or watched him work on one of his welded metal sculptures have appreciated his attention to detail and his drive from within for excellence. When asked where he acquired his artistic skill, Eggleston's lighthearted response is typical of the industrial craftsman not wanting to intrude into the world of the artist: *“My mom always said I was kind of an artist. I'd write things down, kind of artsy like.”* But with the seriousness of a skilled craftsman who also recognizes welding as something more, he adds: *“I've always thought welding was an art.”*



An important part of the craftsman's work are the craftsman's tools. When asked what his favorite tool is, Eggleston's response is the weld chipping hammer and the wire brush. While some may find these tools mundane, Eggleston views them as essential tools in educating his students on the importance of doing quality work. *“Chipping hammer and wire brush. The reason for that is you should be proud of your work. I've had students and they kinda look at [the finished weld] and don't clean it up or anything. I always say you should really appreciate your work. After chipping the slag off, look at it, inspect and clean it up nice and be proud of it.”*

Professor Catherine Lindquist, full time welding instructor at Lansing Community College and lead faculty for the welding program, has worked with Eggleston for many years and considers him a mentor in her own welding career. Lindquist has recognized the respect Eggleston receives from his colleagues and students, respect that is not demanded but earned. Bill Eggleston looks forward to continue teaching as an adjunct welding instructor at Lansing Community College and to keep instilling in students and others the values of a skilled craftsman.