AWS Member Profile

**Elsa Hernandez**

When faced with choosing between auto repair, culinary arts, nursing, and welding for her junior high school electives, Elsa Hernandez was advised by her father to select nursing like "all other girls." Not satisfied with that answer, she sought the counsel of her grandfather, a retired welder, who pushed her to pursue welding.

"My late grandfather was a great role model for me, and he encouraged me to be different. He wanted his tomboy granddaughter to compete with the boys," recounted Hernandez. Propelled by her grandfather’s passion for the craft, Hernandez discovered she was innately deft at welding.

"I fed off of his enthusiasm, and that year, I struck my first arc," she said. "All of the welding processes came naturally to me, which led me to enroll in another welding class my senior year for college credit."

While working toward her associate’s degree in welding technology and applied sciences, Hernandez got her start in the industry through a drafting internship at Steele Solutions Inc., Franklin, Wis., where she honed her skills in reading plans, creating installation details, and finalizing plan sets.

After completing her degree, she secured a job at Eaton Cooper Power Systems as a contracted leak tester, where she inspected compartmental transformer banks, used gas tungsten arc welding to repair leaks, and performed stud welding.

Today, Hernandez is a production coordinator for Universal Metric Inc., Menomonee Falls, Wis. She’s responsible for organizing and tracking product and process flows, which includes leading the fabrication and weld shop, managing time sheets and parts, creating and administering weld tests to prospective hires, as well as setting up, programing, and maintaining an IGM welding robot. She lists the shop and management experience she has gained, as well as the knowledge on machining and forming, as the most rewarding aspects of her job.

On her free time, Hernandez dedicates herself to the AWS Milwaukee Section, where she serves as treasurer, and will soon serve as chair-elect.

"I am motivated by the networking AWS provides. Surrounding oneself with like-minded industry professionals presents new opportunities regularly. It’s just as rewarding to present new adventures on behalf of the organization to others in the network," she said. "I have AWS to thank for my success in the industry."

Hernandez is currently an AWS Certified Associate Welding Inspector; later this year, she’ll be eligible to test to become a Certified Welding Inspector.

AWS Member Profile

**Aldo Duron**

Before entering the Iron Workers Local 58 three-year apprenticeship program as a 23-year old, Aldo Duron wanted to be a riverboat pilot, but life set him on a different course.

"I couldn’t resist the opportunities that Iron Workers provided for me and my family," he explained. "In the program, we learned how to build buildings and bridges. I liked the fabrication part of it and that I could build something the whole world could see."

After graduating, he became an instructor for the program, and was promoted to teach welding to apprentices.

"I enjoyed it; it put me in touch with younger groups coming into the welding industry," he said.

In 1999, Duron became an AWS Certified Welding Inspector, and in 2003, he was appointed as the training director for the Iron Workers Local 58 apprenticeship program. Today, he is the organization’s regional director for the Louisiana and Jackson, Miss., apprenticeship programs. With 25 years of experience with the organization, he lists teaching as the most rewarding aspect of the positions he has held.

"Teaching is the best part of my job. Giving someone the knowledge I have acquired throughout the years, and watching them become better welders than me, is very rewarding," he said.

Duron has also served the AWS Section for years and in multiple roles, including chair. He assists with the monthly meetings and the yearly Student Weld-Off Competition, which focuses on young people in the industry.

"We have young adults looking for a mentor, someone they can look up to in the welding industry, and being a part of the AWS Section allows me and other board members to become their mentors," he said.

For Duron, welding is also a family affair. He welds with his son, Aldo Jr., an ironworker who Duron claims is a better welder than he is.

"We would get together and do father and son projects, and we still do it today," he said. "It’s rare to see a father and child work together and bond. I think our relationship is unique, and I know welding is a major factor there."

The father and son duo enjoy coupling their welding skills with their love of barbecue. Their team, Rougarou BBQ, competes in competitions with a pit they built themselves.

"It has two pits and a canopy for shade. We welded everything except the trailer," he said. "At competitions, people are impressed, and they ask, ‘Where did you buy this pit?’ And we tell them we made it."

SEPTEMBER 2018 / WELDING JOURNAL 59