

Man of Steel, stainless steel that is

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Garrett Gronlund is the Man of Steel. Stainless steel, to be exact.

At his 1,500 square-foot metal fabrication shop off Parkway Drive in Crescent City, Gronlund is equipped to weld or braze stainless steel and other exotic metals, including titanium, copper, brass, aluminum, cast iron, inconel and tool steel, whether in the form of sheets, tubes, angle material, bars; and whether thick or thin, or most any other shape or configuration.

Stainless steel is his toast and butter, having recently completing work on the plumbing connections on a large brewery tank system.

“Stainless steel is very expensive, so I retain as much scrap from one job that might work on another smaller job,” Gronlund said. “I like to save my customers money whenever I can. It is sometimes more cost-effective to buy something pre-made, like a tank, then modify it for a specific purpose and installation.”

Gronlund is seeking to “fulfill a mission of providing same-day or same-week service at an affordable rate,” he said. “I buy in bulk and store electrodes in a way to maximize shelf life.” He also invests in technology that “speeds me up daily.” He keeps supplies on-hand for a variety of needs.

Gronlund’s favorite work is welding and fabrication for the local community. “I’m happy to be a custom jobs shop where people bring me ideas or projects that they need a hand on,” he said. “I would love to gain new clients and contracts for steady fulfillment as well.”

When a reporter described a piece of yard art that he had dreamed about making for the past 10 years, but had never started the project, Gronlund thought a moment, with his eyes circling around the imaginary creation, and said, “It can be done.”

In fact, Gronlund has worked with real metal artists.

He was contacted by renown artist Michael Stutz to fabricate the “Boom Boom Bench,” an “art in public places” project commissioned by the City of Laguna Beach to be placed along a seaside walkway. The bench looks like a cresting wave fabricated strips of laser cut stainless steel that have been shaped, smoothed and welded to form a comfortable and functional art piece.

Gronlund has an extensive welding background that began as a young teenager making roll bars and tube bumpers. While serving in the Marine Corps, Gronlund took advantage of a “Veterans in Piping” program that allowed him to transition into a union apprenticeship. He completed a two-year apprenticeship in “just a few months.”

From there, Gronlund attended Palomar College in San Marcos and earned an associate’s degree in welding technology. His instructors were so impressed with his knowledge that Gronlund was invited by Palomar College to teach welding to other students.

Thereafter, Gronlund became a Certified Welding Inspector, and took on aerospace inspection assignments. He is certified to AWS D1.1, a Certified Welding Inspector (CWI) passing API 1104 with D1.1 endorsement, and is OSHA 30 certified.

Gronlund admits that “it’s not feasible to have every certification, as they cost some bucks to keep a current codebook around. But they can be achieved and maintained if they open doors to new contracts.”

“I study every night after work and will continue to take courses from the American Welding Society to learn the most effective solutions to today’s welding problems,” he said. “As you learn more, you open doors to new questions and realize that welding encompasses so many disciplines. The learning never stops.”

When evaluating a prospective job, Gronlund studies the reference manuals and codes to determine what welding standard must be met.

He often proposes an alternative approach that can maintain the quality, yet reduce the cost of the final product.

Of course, Gronlund has the skills, equipment and certification to take on the kinds of welding projects that are frequently found on ranches, in workshops, warehouses, construction sites and food grade applications.

And he knows how to keep project costs down.

“I plan out my days in advance and spend as much time welding as organizing and improving workflow,” Gronlund said. “I am the person to call to solve your problem. I intend to leave my customers feeling fairly priced and treated great along the way.”

Now comes the good part for us wannabe welders: Gronlund teaches welding to students and adults at his North Coast Metal Works LLC shop in Crescent City. He can be reached at 707-218-6500.

Wow! Maybe that 10-year quest to build a yard art masterpiece will actually happen.