

FIRE AND SPARKS CAUGHT HIS EYE

By Neil Mansfield

It was the welding torch that really got Harrison’s attention when he arrived at Assabet Valley Regional Technical High School’s Metal Fabrication/Welding Program. Like many other freshmen students from across the country, Harry was exploring one shop program after another, not finding what really sparked his interest, until he reached the welding shop. That first glance of an upper classman using a welder’s torch, with fire, sparks, and the ability to create something out of iron caught his eye. This was just what Harry was looking for! Harrison’s search was over. He found his home-away-from-home. For the next four years, he spent as much time as he could in the metal shop... welding, bending, and forging... just plain having fun from day-to-day.

Harrison is one of those kids that have a great sense of humor. He is always smiling, always reaching out to shake your hand and ask about your day. He is an excellent problem-solver, an outstanding welder, a fine athlete, and a role model for younger teenagers. He has already realized the importance of being a life-long learner in his chosen trade of welding.

It’s the science in metals that really creates interest in Harry’s mind. There isn’t a day that goes by in the shop that Harry isn’t asking questions about welding science, metallurgy, and experimenting with metals and their reaction to bending, welding, and forming. Harry is well-grounded in the science of welding. With his knowledge, he will be able to think his way through and solve many problems that a welder encounters in their career.

Harry has taken additional metallurgy classes from Mr. Fay Butler in a metal shaping, welding, and blade-making seminar at the New England School of Metalwork and he always has his head buried in a metalworking book, related internet web sites, and conducting hands-on experiments with his teachers.

However, since Harrison was not scheduled into our shop this year, he maintained excellent academic grades which made him eligible for co-op. At Assabet, that is a school-to-work program. Every other week, Harrison works 40 hours in a welding shop while the other week he spends in his academic classes. Harrison landed a well-paying job in a local welding and fabricating business that makes testing equipment for pressure cylinders. It is no surprise that his employer is pleased with Harrison’s work ethic, as well as his problem-solving and welding skills and his friendly personality.

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Harrison Bouchard and Neil Mansfield with their creative projects.

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When it comes to helping others in need, Harrison knows the meaning of community service, the meaning of giving up his weekends and sometimes evenings to serve meals for the veterans, teach Boy Scouts to earn their metalworking badge, assist in our after-school program, and participate in the AWS Student's Night program. At the end of the day, Harrison is a well-balanced student who enjoys welding, understands how to work hard, and knows how to achieve his goals in life by setting one goal at a time.

At home, Harrison's parents are excellent role models for their two boys, Harrison and Samuel, both who are enrolled in the Assabet Valley welding program. John and Sandy Bouchard are extremely kind, compassionate, thoughtful, and above all are warm, caring folks that always are willing to help out us on weekend field trips. These parents know the true value of welding and how it has shaped and continues to develop their two sons. Harry is deciding to pursue welding engineering or metallurgy at a local university.

It has been an excellent voyage with you, Harry, while having the winds in our sails with full speed ahead in our welding careers.



Harry discusses project with Rachal, another Assabet student.

Neil Mansfield is a graduate of Hobart Institute and lead metal fabrication teacher at Assabet Valley Regional Technical High School. He is a retired U.S. Navy Seabee Chief, steel worker, structural iron worker, sheet metal worker, and blacksmith. He holds an AWS CWI/CWE certificate and describes himself as a "continuous Hobart learner." You can see some of his work at www.mansfieldmetalart.com

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