

RTC ENVIRO FAB EXPANDS NATIONWIDE

By: Lisa Donovan



Inset 1: An original invoice shows a date from 1945 to repair a gas tank.

Inset 2: A furnace shell for Gerdau is ready for shipment.

From Hawaii to Michigan, RTC Enviro Fab Inc. has built an impressive reputation as a custom metal fabricator. Their high-quality fuel tanks, air scrubbers, smokestacks, and more can be found in facilities across the country.

“Anything you can design and engineer, we can build it. Between my dad, my brother Randy, and I, we have over 100 years of experience in this industry,” said Ron Bulp, Enviro Fab’s general manager. “We’ve even built things off of napkin sketches. We’ll be having a beer with someone, and the next thing you know, we’re designing a new project.”

That’s leaps ahead of where the Munith-based business started in the 1940s. Back then, it was known as Ross Tank Company and specialized in building underground fuel oil tanks for farms. A receipt from one of those 1940s jobs still hangs on the office walls today. After World War II, they branched out into building bomb shelters for a while.

By the 1980s, Ross Tank Company had merged with Enviro Fab to become RTC Enviro Fab. Rod Bulp had also become an integral part of the company. With his expertise as a sheet metal fabricator and boilermaker, he guided the business until he purchased it in 1994. Creating a legacy for his sons, Randy and Ron, may have been on his mind right from the beginning.

“We grew up at age 8 and 10 working with our father,” said Randy Bulp, Enviro Fab’s CFO. “There’s not a factory or big business in the area that we haven’t been in and done something.”

Through the years, Enviro Fab’s commitment to quality has helped them build a loyal following. Some companies, like the Detroit-based

Kolene Corporation, have been steady customers for over 40 years. Kolene specializes in designing and engineering industrial cleaning and heat-treating equipment. Enviro Fab is finishing up a state-of-the-art system for them for a steel mill in Pennsylvania.

“They’re one of our favored suppliers. Their quality of work is off the charts,” said Dennis McCadle, Kolene’s executive vice president. “Today’s customers want the



Chris Bulp grinds part of a fuel tank for a customer.



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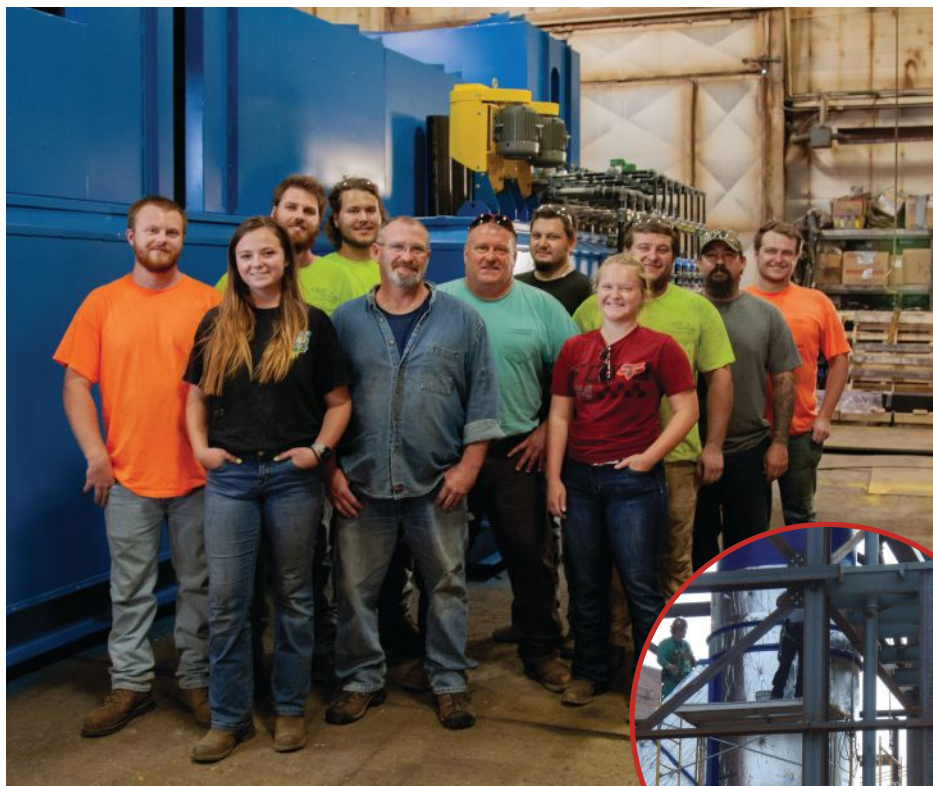


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The team of RTC Enviro Fab does fabricating work from Munith while doing field work that covers the country. Inset: Morton Salt smoke stack being installed in Michigan.

INSET IMAGE PROVIDED BY RTC ENVIRO FAB



“They are a company you can trust for projects that are very large physically and by magnitude,” said John Cole, Parker’s president. “You give them a job and you don’t sit and worry about it. It gets done and done properly.”

Five years ago, Rod decided the time had come for him to retire. He was confident in that decision, knowing that his sons, who had spent years helping the company grow, would be at the helm. It’s now up to Randy and Ron to keep the enterprise moving in a positive direction.

Their primary growth strategy has been diversification in all areas of the company. They have focused not only on new products and services, but on new industries and geographic areas as well.

Diversification is key on two fronts. On a personal level, it allows them to tap into their creativity. “Who wants to build the same tank over and over? It’s much more exciting to build custom projects,” said Ron, who spends a lot of time in the field, tailoring projects to customers’ needs.

On a business level, diversification enables them to broaden their customer base. They now provide a variety of services that complement their custom fabrication work. Industrial maintenance, moving heavy machinery, and installing new duct work are just some of the services they’ve added to their catalog.

“Now we cater to a lot of mechanical work in the field as well as custom fabrication,” said Ron. “It doesn’t matter if you’re building a fuel tank, scrubber, or smokestack — the principles are the same.”

complete package — fabrication and installation — and RTC is pivotal for us on that.”

Enviro Fab’s craftsmanship translated into a new client when a Kolene employee moved to a new company, Parker Ionics. Parker, based in Westland, manufactures paint-finishing lines and powder-coating equipment. They rely on Enviro Fab for a great deal of field installation work and some fabrication.

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Locally, Gerdau — the largest producer of long steel in Latin America — is a key client. Enviro Fab is instrumental in keeping their large industrial furnaces running at peak performance, installing new furnaces, and working on I-beams. The Enviro Fab crew has also put their expertise to work at Morton Salt, building custom smokestacks.

In recent years, Enviro Fab has ratcheted up their service several notches by becoming the general contractor on several construction projects. They've earned contracts to build complex manufacturing plants from the ground up. The plants — with elevators, conveyors, and more — are in the Michigan cities of Mendon, Constantine, and Deerfield. Of the three plants, the M&W Seeds plant in Deerfield truly stands out when the Bubbs look over their body of work to date.

"That was one of the most interesting — and largest — projects we've ever worked on," said Randy. "We're really proud of that plant."

Projects like this one have caught the attention of companies across the country. Through word of mouth, referrals, and sometimes just being in the right place at the right time, Enviro Fab has landed jobs in Nevada, Kentucky, North and South Carolina, Texas, Missouri — well, it would probably be easier to list the states where they haven't worked.

"Fieldwork is interesting because you get to meet new people and do new things," said Ron.

The business's reputation recently helped them land a contract with Caterpillar, a worldwide company best known for manufacturing construction and mining equipment. A satisfied customer recommended Enviro Fab's services to Caterpillar, and before long they were building a stripping system for the Fortune 100 corporation.

To reach the company's farthest client, Ron jetted across thousands of miles of land and ocean before disembarking in Hawaii. He made the trip to build a seed corn dryer at a test facility for Monsanto, the American agrochemical and agricultural biotechnology giant.



Above: A furnace is partially fabricated.

Inset: Brothers and Co-Owners, Randy and Ron Bubbs started working for their father at 8 and 10 years old.

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Since 2020, like companies around the world, Enviro Fab has faced the challenges presented by COVID-19. The greatest problem they've had to deal with so far happened at the beginning of the pandemic. Ron and his team were working on a project at Red River Army Depot in New Boston, Texas. As news of the health crisis filled the airwaves, Ron and Randy consulted on the best course of action for the team. They all decided to stay put until the project was finished, which took about three months.


Since returning home, it has pretty much been business as usual. "Supply shortages haven't affected us," said Ron. "We have the same group of people, and we keep trucking along."

As the Bubbs look toward the future of their company, creating environmentally responsible products is at the top of their list. They're well aware of the devastating effect that the emission of greenhouse gases is having on climate change, from wildfires to heatwaves and more. They're looking into producing a variety of air-cleaning devices for manufacturing facilities.

Scrubbers and thermal oxidizers are just some of the tools designed to reduce toxic emissions before they are released into the environment

"There's a lot of money in environmental projects," said Ron. "We're in that field now, but we'd like to get more involved."

The future of Enviro Fab also includes the next generation of the Bubp family. Just as Randy and Ron worked alongside their father from a young age, so are their

college-age children. Each has two sons and a daughter who have been studying the company and developing skills that fit their interests. The sons have already become certified welders and are familiar with many of the processes used to create Enviro Fab's signature metal products. The daughters specialize in activities such as fire watch and confined space watch. With the Bubp family's continuing investment in the business, it looks as if Rod's legacy will prosper for many years to come. 



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