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PM #41536047

Building George Brown
With David Clark

Georg Nissen, World Traveller

Name: Georg Nissen
Company: Parsons Plumbing and Heating
Job Title: Project Foreman
Age: 38
Lives in: Niverville, Man.
Joined the mechanical industry in: 1995
Daily Mileage: Up to 150 km
Service Area: Winnipeg



Photos: John Woods

Georg Nissen may not have seen everything, but he sure has seen a lot.

Born in Russia, he moved to a suburb of Cologne, Germany, when he was 12, before eventually finding his way to Canada. But through these life transitions, there remained one constant: a passion for plumbing.

“Right after high school, at the age of 18, I went straight into it,” Nissen recalls. “I got my journeyman’s licence at a trade school in Germany.” An outdoorsman at heart, he found the urban life in Germany somewhat stifling.

“Having grown up in big, bright prairies, I didn’t find the same comfort in Germany. It was too crowded with too many things going on. There were lots of things to do, but not much to do outdoors. I wanted to see what was out there.”

So, without speaking a word of English, he moved to Canada at the age of 27 and eventually found a home in a suburb of Winnipeg.

Is most of your work done on new builds or retrofits?

Ninety per cent of the business is retrofits.

Where do you like to get dispatched to?

Broadway is always a great street to work on or travel through.

What are you working on right now?

I'm working on an 11-storey apartment block where we're changing out all the mechanicals—the air-makeup unit, the domestic hot water boilers and tanks, and the heating boilers. I'm also overseeing a project where we're renovating the concession area at a movie theatre.

Favourite tool in your toolbox?

My Knipex pliers.

Favourite outdoor activity?

Snowmobiling or quadding, depending on the season.

Favourite radio station?

I have CBC News on all the time.

Favourite musician?

I like to listen to a wide variety of music.

What is the strangest thing you've seen on the job?

One day a whole job got shut down. We were changing a boiler and planned to run our venting into the existing chimney chase and go through the roof. Some environmentalists lived nearby, and they knew that chimney swifts lived in the chimney. They called the city, and they came and shut us down. We couldn't proceed with our work because there were birds in the chimney and we had to relocate our venting.

What do you like to read?

Technical manuals

Favourite movie?

Mission Impossible

If I were prime minister for a day, I would:

I'd call the city of Winnipeg and tell them to get the roads fixed properly.

Favourite cartoon when you were a kid?

Käpt'n Balu und seine Tollkühne Crew (a German cartoon)

Favourite food?

If it's healthy and it's fresh, it's my favourite.

Favourite lunch spot? Subway**Favourite TV show?**

Hell on Wheels

Favourite beverage?

Coffee

Favourite place in the city?

Assiniboine Park

Where are some of the places you've travelled?

I've been to the Dominican Republic twice. I've also been to Turkey, Greece, Spain, France—all over the Mediterranean area.

What's the most impressive place you've ever been to?

New York City

If you could meet anyone, dead or alive, who would it be?

Albert Einstein

My rule of thumb is:

Gut ist nicht gut genug. ("Good is not good enough.")

**What's the most challenging thing you've ever done?**

Moving to Canada. I came here with a wife and child and started working without being able to speak a word of English.



Favourite car manufacturer: Audi

The Spice of Life

If there's one thing Nissen loves about his job, it's the variety.

"It's not like you wake up every morning and know exactly where you're going and what you'll be doing, year after year," he says. "I hate jobs that are longer than two or three months. I want to see different faces, talk to different people, do different things. It's still plumbing, but every job, every location, has a different physical history behind it."