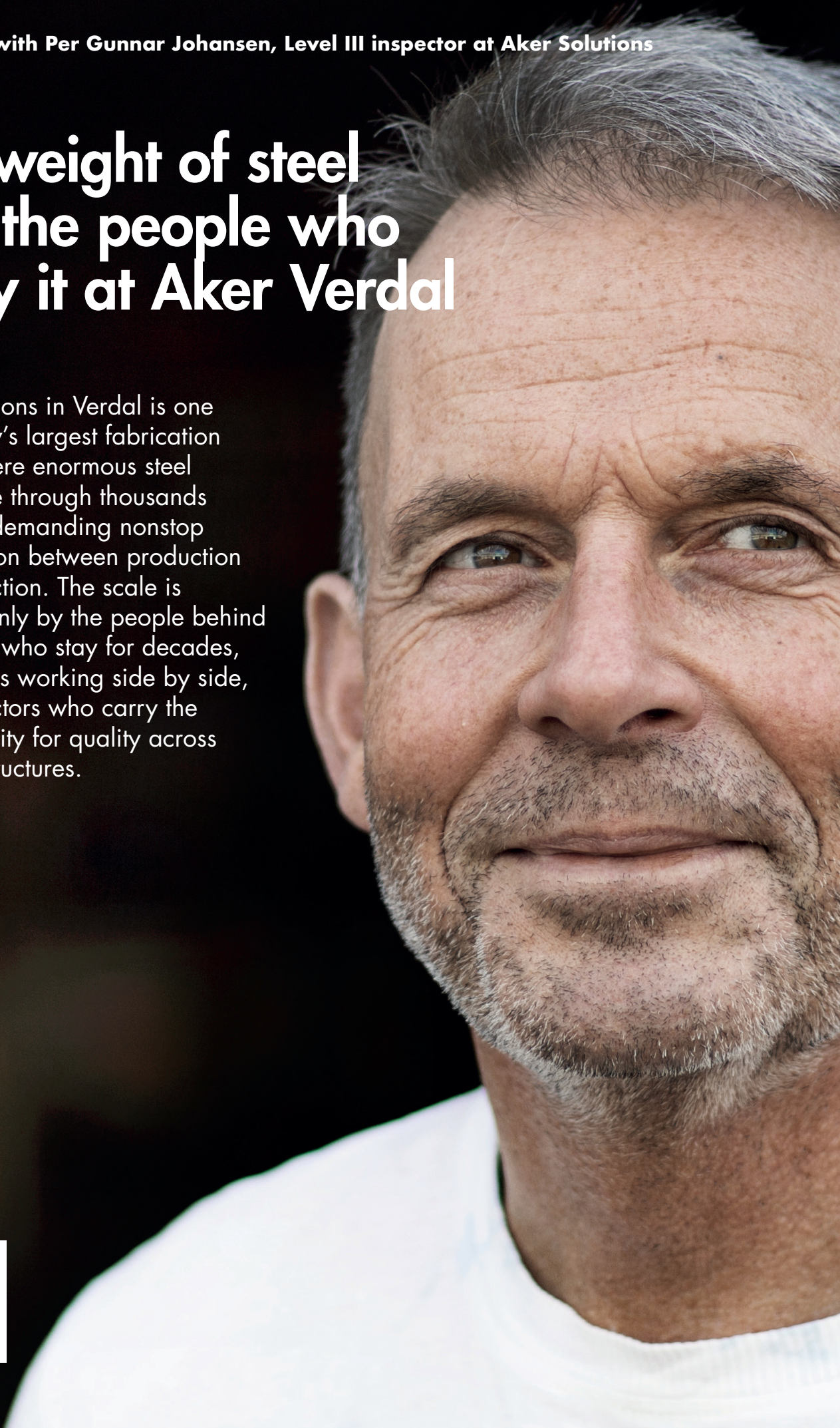


Interview with Per Gunnar Johansen, Level III inspector at Aker Solutions

The weight of steel and the people who carry it at Aker Verdal

Aker Solutions in Verdal is one of Norway's largest fabrication yards, where enormous steel jackets rise through thousands of welds, demanding nonstop coordination between production and inspection. The scale is matched only by the people behind it, families who stay for decades, generations working side by side, and inspectors who carry the responsibility for quality across massive structures.

NDT
TOUGH



THE SCALE OF STEEL AND THE RESPONSIBILITY BEHIND IT

How large is the production at Aker Verdal, and what determines how much NDT is needed?

"The scale is enormous. Everything we do involves welding – thousands of welds – and each must be inspected according to the correct category. The amount of NDT depends on the weld's location. The inspection levels follow the categories set by the standards. The customer can also request additional control. Jackets are massive structures, so the inspection workload becomes very high."

How many jackets can Aker build at once, and how large can they be?

"Jackets are the 'feet' of offshore platforms – the big steel legs the platform stands on. At Verdal, we can build four jackets simultaneously in the rail area. The time it takes depends on the size, but from the first prefabrication stages in A1 or A2 until the finished jacket, it is usually around one year. The sizes vary a lot. Some jackets are around 2,900 tons, others 4,800 tons, and some of the biggest can reach 14,000 to 22,000 tons. One of the largest we ever built here, many years ago, was around 24,000 tons. The heights can also vary – some are more than 140 meters tall. So the capacity depends on the size of the jackets, but in general, we can produce four at the same time."

QUALITY BUILT THROUGH SYSTEMS – AND THE PEOPLE WHO UPHOLD THEM

How is quality followed up, especially when flaws repeat?

"All repairs are reported to the welding technical department. They look for patterns: if something happens once, it's usually fine – a 20 mm repair today and nothing for a week is no problem. But if the same type of flaw appears day after day, then they act. Sometimes they stop the work and talk to the welder to understand what is happening. Other times, the VT inspector or someone working under NS 477 will go out to observe the welder. They might see, for example, that the

angle of the welding torch is slightly off or that the travel speed is wrong. A small correction can make a big difference. It's a perfect system for following up and improving quality. The challenge is simply the scale – there is so much production that you cannot always stand behind every welder. That is why the reporting system is essential; it allows them to catch issues early and correct them before they grow."

A WORKPLACE CARRIED ACROSS GENERATIONS

Per, tell me a bit about yourself and your time at Aker.

"I'm 59 years old, and I've been with Aker for 41 years now. I started here in 1984, and honestly, I've been here ever since. I've never tried any other company, not because I couldn't, but because it has always been a very good place to work. I've travelled with Aker and visited many other companies, and every time I felt that Aker was where I wanted to stay. The environment, the people, the work – it all fit me. So I stayed, year after year, and suddenly it's been more than four decades."

FACTS

- Each jacket contains thousands of welds.
- Critical welds require 100% UT, others 50% UT, others only VT.
- Steel structure categories: A, B, C, D.
- Piping categories: 1, 2, 3.
- Customer requirements can add additional inspection layers.
- Jacket sizes range from 2.900 tons to over 22.000 tons. Some historically reached 24.000 tons.
- Heights exceed 140 meters.

Your family has a long history with the company. How did that start?

"It began with my father. He started here in 1969. I came in 15 years later, in 1984. Now my own son works here too. He first joined Aker at 18 as a pipe fitter and welder, and later moved into NDT. Today, he's NDT responsible and on Level III.

One of my daughters also works in logistics at Aker. So, we have been with the same company for three generations. For us, it working in the same company just happened naturally; we grew up around the company, and the workplace has always been a stable part of our lives."

Can you walk me through your career path and what your current role looks like as a Level III?

"I began my career here in 1984 at the age of 18, starting in production as a plate fitter before moving into the NDT department in 1991, where I worked until 1999.

When Aker reduced its workforce by approximately 400 people at the end of 1999, I left NDT and worked as a sheet metal foreman in the "jacket area" from 2000 to 2008.

After eight years as a foreman, I moved back into NDT under Vitec AS. Following Aker's acquisition of Vitec AS two and a half years ago, the companies are once again part of the same organization.

Today, I serve as a Level III, holding an RT certification. Over the years, I have been responsible for all X-ray activities and still support that area when needed, while my main focus in the Level III role is handling standards, interpretations, and technical decisions, drawing on everything I've learned throughout my career."

Pipe assembly hall at Aker Solutions at Verdal, Norway



How is the NDT department organized today, and how does the inspection flow work across the yard?

"We have a large NDT department with a range of methods depending on the need, and because the activity level is high, the team has grown over the years. Each area has its own responsibilities and coordinators, and inspectors work according to the requirements for MT, UT, RT, or VT, as defined by the system or standard.

Across the yard, everything is coordinated: production completes a weld, inspection takes over, and the relevant method is carried out. Each area has people responsible for distributing the work and ensuring everything is signed off correctly. It's a clear workflow, and everyone knows their part.

At Aker, massive structures rise through thousands of welds, checked and rechecked in a cycle that never really pauses. The inspection continues through long days and shifting seasons, guided by systems built to catch what the eye might miss and supported by people who know the work cannot fail.

But behind the scale lies something more enduring. The yard holds together because its people do, those who return year after year, who pass on their knowledge, who treat the place as part of their own history. Over time, Aker becomes more than a fabrication site. It becomes a community shaped by steel, discipline, and the quiet pride of doing things the right way.

That is what it means to be NDT Tough at Aker Verdal, to carry your part of the responsibility, to stand inside something larger than the welds themselves, and to help keep a tradition alive in every inspection you sign off.

"There is so much production that you cannot stand behind every welder at all times. That is why the reporting system is essential"

Per Gunnar Johansen, Level III Inspector at Aker Solutions