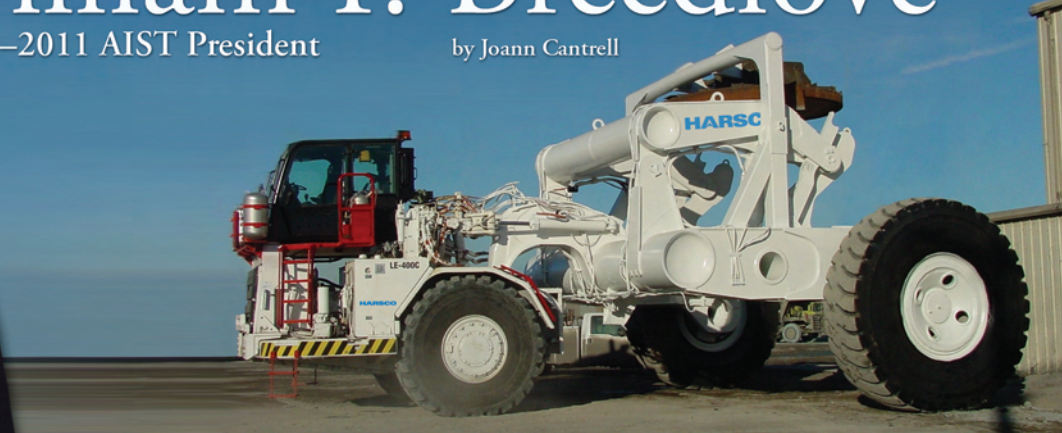


# An Interview With William P. Breedlove

2010–2011 AIST President

by Joann Cantrell



*William P. Breedlove received his bachelor's degree in business administration from the Pennsylvania State University. Upon graduation and over a seven-year period, Mr. Breedlove held several commercial and management positions within the steel service center industry. In 1989 Mr. Breedlove joined National Recovery Systems (NRS) as a market development manager. During his 18-year tenure with NRS, Mr. Breedlove held various positions of increasing responsibility within the company, including sales manager, operations manager, general manager — operations, and vice president — operations. In December 2005, Mr. Breedlove was named executive vice president and general manager of NRS. NRS was acquired by Harsco Corporation in December 2005 and is now part of the Harsco Metals division of Harsco Corporation. From January 2006 through March 2009, Mr. Breedlove served as vice president — operations, U.S. East for Harsco Metals North America, responsible for operations, growth and diversity for 20 operating sites within the company. On April 1, 2009, Mr. Breedlove was named vice president — business development and engineering for Harsco Metals North America, responsible for business growth in Canada, the United States, Mexico and Guatemala.*

*Mr. Breedlove has held a seat on the Executive Committee of the AIST Board of Directors, as well as serving as a Trustee and Past President of the AIST Foundation. He is a past chair of the Midwest Section of the Iron & Steel Society, an AIST predecessor organization.*

**Iron & Steel Technology:** Tell us about yourself and your current position with Harsco Metals.

**Breedlove:** I am currently vice president of business development and engineering for the Harsco Metals North America division of Harsco Corporation. Harsco provides critical industrial services and engineered products to major long-term global industries that are fundamental to world economic growth and progress, including infrastructure, metals, railways and energy. Harsco operates in more than 50 countries, employs close to 20,000 people, and generated sales in 2009 of approximately \$3 billion. Harsco is recognized as one of the Fortune 1000 leading companies in America and was named five times by *Forbes* magazine to its Platinum 400 list of the best big companies.

Harsco Metals is the leading provider of environmental and logistics solutions to the global metals industry, operating under long term contracts at more than 160 sites in over 30 countries, with annual sales of \$1.1 billion.

**Iron & Steel Technology:** How did you first become interested in the iron and steel industry?

**Breedlove:** My father joined the steel industry in 1973 and moved our family to Pittsburgh. At that time, Pittsburgh was the center of steelmaking in

North America, so the steel community quickly became a part of my family's life. My father was instrumental in helping me develop a network of interviews within the industry upon my graduation from Penn State. I was offered a sales trainee position with a leading service center specializing in pipe and tubing sales, and I sold pipe and tubing for approximately seven years, which helped me to gain valuable industry knowledge.

**Iron & Steel Technology:** How long have you been a member of AIST, including years with either predecessor organization?

**Breedlove:** I joined the Iron & Steel Society (ISS) in 1989 and have been an active member ever since.

**Iron & Steel Technology:** Can you provide some history on how you became involved in the organization?

**Breedlove:** In 1989, I joined National Recovery Systems (NRS), a manufacturer of metallurgical additives, and NRS was very active in the ISS. Jim Kelly was vice president of NRS at that time, and he strongly encouraged me to get involved in the ISS. Back then, it was common for senior managers from both steel producing companies and supplier companies to require that their direct reports be active in industry associations. The value proposition today is the same,



if not greater, and I encourage all companies to engage their key employees in AIST activities for the greater good of our industry.

**Iron & Steel Technology:** What do you feel are some of the personal benefits you've gained as a member of AIST?

**Breedlove:** In the early years of my membership, I attended several short courses offered by the association, including BOF steelmaking, EAF steelmaking, RH degassing, ladle metallurgy and continuous casting. As a person with a non-technical degree, I saw the benefit from these courses in carrying out the everyday tasks required in my job.

The most significant benefits from participation in AIST and its predecessor organizations are in the people I have met and worked with in the association. I have developed long-term friendships through my involvement in AIST. Additionally, the networking opportunities are limitless. My involvement in the Midwest Chapter kept me close to the relevant activities in the local steelmaking community, as well as to those who were making these things happen.

Once I became active on a national level as a Trustee for the AIST Foundation, I was able to see firsthand the positive impact that the association

has on students and on academia in general. As you know, the Foundation offers and awards in excess of \$400,000 in scholarships and grants each year in an effort to attract the best and brightest students to our industry. Meeting and interacting with these students and professors has been a great experience for me personally.

**Iron & Steel Technology:** How do you view your role as AIST president?

**Breedlove:** The AIST president is the ambassador for the association, with the primary focus to communicate the benefits of AIST membership. Additionally, my role will be to support the overall mission of the organization and facilitate its growth. The heavy lifting of the daily managing and running of the organization is in the capable hands of Ron Ashburn and his highly qualified staff of experts.

**Iron & Steel Technology:** While you are president, is there a strategy in place to grow membership, especially with the current economy?

**Breedlove:** Yes. I believe strongly in a two-pronged approach to grow membership. First, we will need to reach out to the top two tiers of managers from the steel producing companies and communicate the





benefits of AIST membership. We will ask that they encourage their employees to participate in association activities and explain the resulting benefits that their organization will receive from their participation.

Second, we will continue to grow our organization on an international level. The AIST global footprint grew under Tony Bridge's leadership, and I intend to continue the good work that he and Mr. Ashburn have initiated.

*Iron & Steel Technology:* Why is AIST looking to grow internationally as an organization?

**Breedlove:** While the majority of AIST's current membership, programming and other offerings are focused on North America, many steel producers have global operations. For AIST to grow and remain relevant to the steel industry, it must adopt and implement an international perspective.

So we intend for AIST to expand its membership and programming internationally through organic growth and by partnering with steel-related companies and associations. Our growth initiative is

intended to transport the AIST brand, which is well known in North America, to global markets where fundamental steel technology training and networking opportunities are in short supply.

*Iron & Steel Technology:* What are the benefits to global expansion?

**Breedlove:** To continue to fulfill our mission of service, AIST needs to implement programs for our non-NAFTA members to nurture the sustainability of the global iron and steel industry. We see the primary benefits as providing a stronger, more comprehensive and better connected technical organization for our members with universal and global industry appeal and a sustainable plan for growth.

*Iron & Steel Technology:* How do you think AIST can expand on a global level?

**Breedlove:** In addition to many active Member Chapters in the U.S., Canada and Mexico, we are increasing programming for our developing chapters in Australia, Brazil and India. We are also working with member leaders in Italy to establish regular programming in Southern Europe, with possible expansion to Eastern Europe. In addition, we are developing curriculum for the AIST International Steel Academy, representing an intensive fundamental steel education training course. We are also evaluating a revised dues structure to accommodate





middle- and low-income countries to overcome the barriers to entry for many prospective members.

We also need to leverage the many global companies that already champion AIST programs. In addition to the larger producer companies, many of the steel industry supplier companies, like Harsco, also have a significant global footprint, and we will seek to leverage involvement from the vendor community in this effort as well.

**Iron & Steel Technology:** What are some ways AIST can improve academic awareness for young engineers thinking about the steel industry?

**Breedlove:** We need to step up our communication effort in this regard. We are a highly technical industry with exciting technological developments and advancements on the near horizon. This message needs to be communicated relentlessly to universities with technical academic programs, and we need to find ways to reach out to students prior to the college level as well. Communicating the benefits of a career in steel should begin at the high school level.

**Iron & Steel Technology:** What do you feel is the greatest challenge facing the steel industry or AIST in 2010–2011?

**Breedlove:** There are several challenges facing the steel industry in the near term. First is the remaining uncertainty regarding the global economic outlook. We saw steel production growth in the first quarter; the question remains if this is sustainable through 2010. Second is the need to level the playing field with international trading practices. Specifically, the issue of currency manipulation needs to be dealt with in a serious way by our government. Third, as an industry we need to do a better job of positioning ourselves as the single largest “green” industry in the world. Steel is

the most recycled material in the world. Additionally, the industry is increasing its ability to consume its waste streams internally as well as externally through beneficiation processes. Increasingly, steel mill sludge, dust and slag are being recovered and “up-cycled” into valuable raw materials that are consumed in the steelmaking process, and many also are used as raw materials outside of the steel industry. This message needs to be shouted from the mountaintops.

The greatest challenge facing AIST is time. We are a member-driven volunteer organization. We are only as strong as the willingness and ability of our members to participate in association-sponsored activities. We live in the information age, which has exponentially increased our ability to process information. This also means that we all have higher demands being placed on us in our jobs, which limits the time available for volunteer work. Recognizing the value derived from participation in AIST, and having the discipline to set aside time for its activities, is critically important for the future of the association.

**Iron & Steel Technology:** What insight can you share regarding the steel industry in the future?

**Breedlove:** I don't have a crystal ball that will accurately predict our future. However, I am pretty confident in a few things occurring in the industry's future. Further consolidation within the industry is needed and will occur. Advancements in steelmaking technology will evolve, resulting in higher production efficiencies, higher-quality steel and improved ability to compete with other materials. The steel industry will continue to attract and employ the brightest and most talented people in the world, and valuable organizations like AIST will evolve to represent and advance a global steel industry. ♦

AIST staff with 2010 President Bill Breedlove:

Front row, left to right: Joann Cantrell, Niccole Reichel, Lori Wharrey, Karen Hickey, Natalie Thomas, Carolyn Trobaugh, Penny English.  
Back row, left to right: Pat Philbin, Stacy Varnecky, Bill Albaugh, Shannon Kiley, Ken Landau, Marge Baker, Gerry Kane, Gale Crawford, Gina Kosak, Brian Bliss, Bill Breedlove, Nicole Mattern, Ron Ashburn, Janet McConnell, Lynne Sample, Mark Didiano, Rebecca Smith, Jeff Campbell, Bill Patterson, Lisa Oldham, Chris Brown, Jamie Blick and Kurt Edwards.

