



2001 PRESIDENT

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Edward M. O'Donnell is a senior research consultant for the U. S. Steel Group. He earned his bachelor's degree in commerce and engineering science from Drexel University, Philadelphia, Pa., in 1970 and a master's degree in business administration from Baldwin-Wallace College, Berea, Ohio in 1985.

O'Donnell began his career at the U. S. Steel Duquesne Works, Pa. in 1968 and progressed through positions in blast furnace operations management to general foreman. He was also a process engineer in the Technical Implementation Program.

In 1982, O'Donnell moved to U. S. Steel's Lorain, Ohio plant where he held positions as assistant superintendent of blast furnaces; area manager, steel producing; project manager, engineering; and area manager of blast furnaces.

In 1987, O'Donnell became area manager, operating practices, at U. S. Steel's Gary (Ind.) Works. Following that, he worked as area manager, South blast furnaces; division manager, Iron Producing Division; and plant manager, Gary Coke Operations.

The 2001 Iron & Steel Society President is a past chairman of the Ironmaking Division and has served on the program and executive committees. He was a director-at-large for the Society from 1996 to 1998 and director from

1993 to 1995. He is also past president of the Western States Blast Furnace and Coke Plant Association and the immediate past chairman of the AWI Technical Committee on Ironmaking.

I&SM: How did you first become interested in the iron and steel industry?

O'DONNELL: I grew up in Johnstown, Pa., and typical of that entire area, it was an iron and steel town. At its peak, Bethlehem Steel employed 14,000 people. U. S. Steel also had a facility there. It was easy to become interested in iron and steel because that's all there was. Relatives, friends and neighbors worked in the mill – actually, almost everyone in town did. In addition, there was a trickle down effect of companies that supplied and serviced parts and products for the industry. If you didn't go to college, you went on to work in the mill. And if you went to college, you came back and worked in the mill, at least during the summers.

I attended Drexel University, which was a cooperative education school. I started working at U. S. Steel's Duquesne Works, and as my assignment, worked in and became interested in the blast furnaces.

I&SM: You have been a member of the ISS for 20 years since 1981. How did you first learn about the Society and become a member?

O'DONNELL: I first learned of the Society in 1979 when I was promoted to general foreman at Duquesne Works in Pittsburgh, where they had just broken ground for the iron desulfurization facility. That same month, ISS' Iron & Steelmaking conference was in Detroit and they had a session on desulfurization and it was suggested that I attend. That was my first exposure. In 1981, I authored a paper and reasoned that if I was going to be an author, I should be a member. I joined ISS that same year.

I&SM: Why have you stayed a member of the Society for 20 years?

O'DONNELL: There are many reasons.

Once I became involved as an author and eventually serving on the ironmaking program committee, it became apparent that staying a member was the right thing to do. Each year, my involvement grew and eventually, I became a chairman of a committee. Being a member of the Society was not only beneficial for my job, but for professional development as well.

I&SM: What are some of the benefits that you have gained personally as a member of the ISS?

O'DONNELL: One major benefit has been the contacts I've made in the iron and steel industry. These are people I may have not met otherwise because they specialize in one field. Many of those contacts have gone on to become personal friends.

Those contacts become very beneficial and important, especially during difficult times. Such contacts are people you know and trust and can call on for help, input, assistance or an opinion. In 1995, we had some major facility problems at the plant and before I had a chance to call anyone, people were calling me offering assistance, parts, whatever – from one ironmaker to another despite the fact that we worked for competing companies. There is almost a fraternity relationship in the Society with ironmakers, steelmakers and members from a variety of backgrounds who are as close as an e-mail or phone call away.

Certainly another benefit is the knowledge I pass on from attending ISS conferences and symposia. That was not only a benefit to me, but to my employer as well. The conference short courses offer a tremendous benefit for anyone in the industry. Companies in the iron and steel industry gain by having employees who are ISS members and attend these events. Essentially, any company is as good as its people, and knowledgeable, well-trained employees should be prized by their companies.



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I&SM: If you were speaking to a potential ISS member, what reasons would you give for joining the Society?

O'DONNELL: Again, I would reinforce the benefits of networking and making contacts. We also offer a variety of learning opportunities in many formats, from the one-day short course to the three- or four-day conferences.

ISS members also receive a subscription to *Iron & Steelmaker*, our monthly publication. Technological breakthroughs and trends in operating practices in the industry are addressed, as well as student, member and supplier news. The magazine is a resource and networking tool for members featuring peer-written articles, statistical reviews and international reports.

I&SM: How has the Society changed in 20 years?

O'DONNELL: Certainly, ISS has grown since 1981. We have more international members now, which is one of our great strengths. The quality of service the Society provides has always been excellent, and the ISS has kept pace with industry technology. We have advanced in terms of how information is presented. We have kept abreast with computer technology and electronic information exchange. Everything is quick and fast – we can reach experts in the industry whether they are across town or across the globe.

The industry is changing as well. The older, more experienced workforce is rapidly disappearing – too rapidly because we did not prepare to extract their knowledge from them before they retired.

What we do see are young people entering the industry who are bright and enthusiastic. The ISS Young Leaders are an example of this. Attracting young talent has not been a problem until recently – not so much with recruiting, but retaining those people. Today's younger generation is much more mobile.

I&SM: What do you hope to accomplish as ISS president?

O'DONNELL: The ISS president needs to stand back and take a longer strategic view of where we are going and how we will get there. My job is not to work out the day-to-day details, but to keep the Society pointed in the direction we need to be facing.

I hope to lead other officers in providing a means to put into action the wishes and needs of the membership – that's why we're here. It is important to understand and know what our members want. We have our various constituencies, our five divisions, conference attendees, students, suppliers, distributors, international members, local divisions, standing committees and others. Each represents a different facet of the organization with their own needs and we become a mechanism of helping some of those come about. We are a member-driven organization. The officers, board and staff are here to service members' needs and try to provide as much value as possible in an appropriate format.

I also plan to focus on keeping the ISS a financially sound organization. In the last few years, that's been done very well. Recently, there has been far more input from the divisions being a part of the budgeting process. The Society as a whole is very strong financially. Our challenge is on the operating level – living within our means. We are solidly funded, but there are actions that we have to take to keep us that way. Bringing the divisions into discussions and the decision-making process has helped us operate the Society as a business. We need to run efficiently through good times and bad just like any other business.

I&SM: What opportunities do you see on the horizon for the ISS?

O'DONNELL: There are many opportunities. We know we have the opportunity for growth. Domestically, that may be challenging but there certainly is an opportunity for growth internationally. We have the ability to expand our membership and our presence in various parts of the world, and we have

the means to be a resource. We need more interaction and communication between our local sections. Participation is important, and I extend an invitation to all local sections to contact us and let ISS headquarters know how we can be supportive.

At ISS headquarters, our new building provides opportunity. We now have a state-of-the-art meeting facility of our own which is both a financial and communications benefit. There are now more task forces and committees that we didn't have five years ago, and it is much easier to conduct meetings with a facility where the staff and information is readily available.

We also have the opportunity to change. Changes in industry will give the Society opportunities to change. As the society is forced to look at its expenses and revenues, without reducing the value of membership, it enhances the opportunity to make change to meet members' needs. For example, our online membership directory saves thousands of dollars each year. This would not have been possible three years ago, because most of our members weren't online. Thanks to the initiatives we put into electronics, not only do we eliminate production expense, but now our members have access to the latest information on every member and see changes and additions within 24 hours of ISS staff being informed.

We now have the incentive and opportunity to review the ISS and its structure with the purpose to give the members everything they need within our capabilities whether it be electronic information, data, statistics or networking. That is why we're here.

I&SM: How important is the ISS Foundation and its programs?

O'DONNELL: Tough times in the industry have the same effects on the Foundation. The ISS executive officers fully support the Foundation. We have new leadership, new bylaws and a new structure that will help govern both

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programming and fundraising in the future. That is significantly different than in the past.

We still need individuals to take an interest in the Foundation and its programs, and we need individual gifts to fund projects which can't be funded on the endowment alone. Giving needs to continue during the downturn. We depend on that and need even more.

The ISS Foundation is truly philanthropic and charitable as it funds projects that will foster and enhance the image of the steel industry for students and young professionals.

I&SM: Where do you see the steel industry five years from now?

O'DONNELL: The integrated side will be very challenged for a variety of reasons. There will be radical consolidation, voluntarily or involuntarily. The ISS represents the industry and we have to be aware of what's happening. There are tough times ahead with mergers and joint ventures. In a few years, there won't be as many companies as there are now. The bottom line is that you only need so much steel, it doesn't matter how many places you make it in.

In the global marketplace, it will no longer be one state competing against another or one North American company against another. Now we are competing worldwide.

I&SM: Is there any other message you'd like to communicate to our members?

O'DONNELL: Be open to change. If you're not comfortable with change, it is going to be a difficult year ahead. *I&SM*