

JOHN A. RICKETTS

37-YEAR LIFE MEMBER



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was born and raised on the southeast side of Chicago in the shadows of the blast furnaces. He received a B.S. degree in metallurgical engineering from Illinois Institute of Technology in 1978. He started at Inland Steel in the summer engineer program and continued to work in iron production for 39 years. Ricketts has held numerous positions in both operations and process technology. Since 2005, he has been part of a process specialist team at ArcelorMittal Global Research & Development. He has authored technical and historical iron production papers for different technical societies. He has had his papers published in *Iron and Steelmaker* and *Iron & Steel Technology*. He has also authored or co-authored five books on ironmaking. He is a regular lecturer at the McMaster University Ironmaking Short Course, has taught at continuing education short courses and currently teaches at ArcelorMittal University. He was the recipient of the 1986 AIST J.E. Johnson Jr. Award and the 2014 AIST T.L. Joseph Award. He served as chair of the AISI Manufacturing Committee on Ironmaking in 2006–2007 and the ISS Ironmaking Committee in the 1990s. One of Ricketts' hobbies is exploring old blast furnace sites, and he has a large collection of old blast furnace and mining artifacts, books, models, photographs and other memorabilia. Ironmaking is truly his profession and hobby. He enjoys traveling for business and tries to share as much of his experience, knowledge and documentation as possible with the younger blast furnace engineers at all ArcelorMittal plants he visits, since they will be the next generation of ironmakers.

When did you first hear about AISE/ISS and how?

I started working at Inland Steel as a summer engineer in 1976 and first heard about the ISS conference and was given technical papers to read by my boss in the blast furnace process engineer team. I joined the ISS in 1979, when I was encouraged by Ironmaking management.

What was your first level of involvement in the organization? How did your involvement progress over the years?

At Inland Steel, the rule was if you wrote a technical paper for the annual conference, then you could attend the

conference. I co-authored my first technical paper in 1983. Overall, I have authored or co-authored more than 20 papers in the last 37 years, and recently co-authored a paper in 2015. I served on the Ironmaking Committee for two years back in the 1990s. I also participated as a member of and then chair of the J.E. Johnson Jr. Award committee.

How has membership benefited you in your career?

Technical knowledge from conferences and the magazine and networking with other ironmakers, academics, and suppliers from around the world. The development of a network of people in

our industry was most important, and relationships developed during local chapter meetings and annual conferences have lasted my whole career. It is nice to pick up the phone and call a colleague to discuss specific technical issues and share experiences.

How have you seen the industry change over the years?

Ironmaking has evolved from an “art” into a “science” during the past 40 years. The equipment, instrumentation, and technical knowledge have improved tremendously and will continue to become “high tech.” The steel



► Ricketts at ArcelorMittal Tubarão, 2008.



► During the IH6 blowdown.



► Ricketts with one of his books and models.



► Ricketts in the No. 3 blast furnace hearth at ArcelorMittal Tubarão.

industry in North America has shrunk through company closures or consolidation, and only the companies with good technical people will survive.

If you were to recommend AIST to a new graduate just coming into the industry, what would you tell him/her?

I love my job and working with people around the world. Please join the AIST and start by going to the local chapter meetings, which do not involve

travel and are low-cost. Start your network with local members. When you have participated in a special project or plant trial, write a technical paper for the annual conference so that you can attend the conference to learn and increase your network with global contacts. ♦