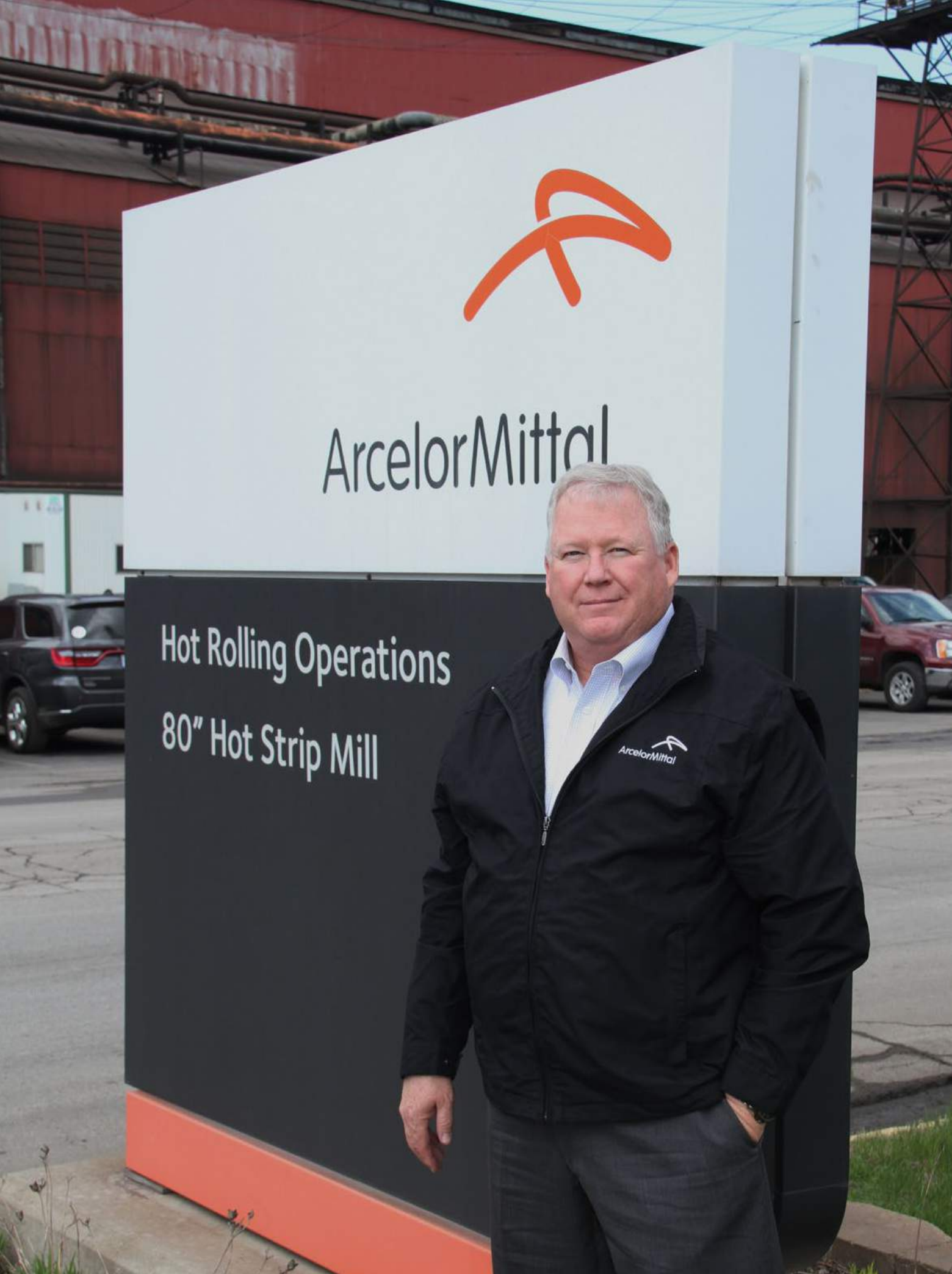

ArcelorMittal
Hot Rolling Operations
80" Hot Strip Mill
ArcelorMittal

By Amanda L. Blyth

An Interview With 2016–2017 AIST President,

Wendell Carter

Wendell L. Carter has served in the iron and steel industry for more than 33 years. He began his career with Inland Steel. He stayed with the company throughout several mergers that resulted in what is today the world's largest steel company, ArcelorMittal. His expertise includes 20 years in ironmaking holding various technical positions and managerial positions, including senior division manager of primary operations. He has also held roles in corporate strategy and quality control. Currently, Carter serves as the general manager for ArcelorMittal's largest mill in the United States, Indiana Harbor. That role also requires management of Minorca Mine and downstream facilities I/N Tek and I/N Kote and Riverdale. Carter is a 1983 graduate of Iowa State University, with a B.S. degree in metallurgical engineering, and he earned an M.B.A. from Indiana University in 1997. He was the 1997 recipient of the J.E. Johnson Jr. Award. *Iron & Steel Technology* spoke with Carter about his career and his term as AIST president.

Tell us about your background. How did you get involved in the steel industry?

I graduated from Iowa State University in 1983 with a degree in metallurgical engineering. I was hired in 1983 during very similar conditions as we're facing now — a depressed economy. It was difficult for engineers; auto and farm equipment had been down. At that time, Inland Steel made an offer, and I was anxious to start my career.

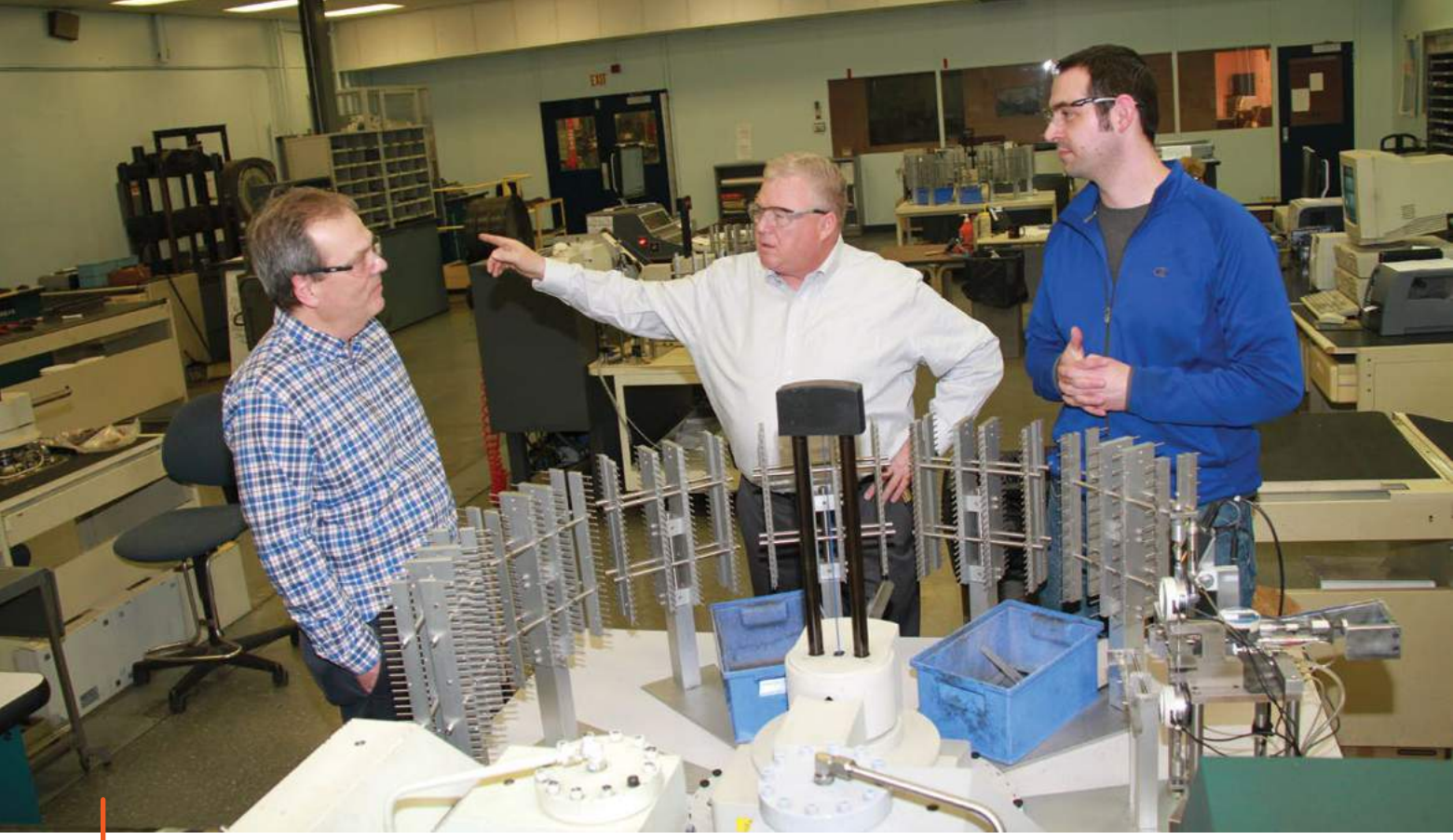
My first job in the mill was a burden engineer with the blast furnaces. And I stayed with the blast furnace for 20 years. I've been here since.

What are your job duties on a day-to-day basis?

I'm responsible for the operation of Indiana Harbor as well as three satellite facilities — I/N Tek and I/N Kote, Riverdale, and Minorca Mine. The majority of my time is spent here in Indiana Harbor, where I focus on the five basics: safety, environmental, quality, cost and production.

How did you first become involved with AIST? How did you get involved in a leadership capacity within AIST?

I had two supporters. John Ricketts, who was my boss, insisted I join the Iron & Steel Society (ISS). Very early on he had me write papers as part of my



Wendell Carter (center) with Scott Schuldt (left), process manager, quality, and Keith Aumend (right), chemist, quality, ArcelorMittal Indiana Harbor.

job requirement, to develop myself as an employee. Madhu Ranade, who I also worked with, was also a very large supporter. Both of them pushed me aggressively to participate in ISS, and for the first 10 years or so I authored or co-authored about 13 papers. Then I moved more toward general management and sort of lost interest in the technical aspects of the association, until Andy Harshaw, our CEO and the AIST past president, asked that I get involved with the AIST Foundation. From there, I was with the Foundation for one term and then had the opportunity to get into the Executive Committee, and I've been there for five years.

Do you think participating in that capacity has helped you on the job?

Most definitely. You make a lot of contacts. As ArcelorMittal has grown, it has become, in some regards, more insular. Because of our size and scope, we have contacts in Europe and contacts elsewhere, and I'd lost my contacts in U.S. My participation in AIST and being a part of its leadership has helped me get reacquainted. It has also given me an opportunity to look at our competitors and have friendships develop out of that, as well as gain a better understanding of their businesses and business models. It's been beneficial. You have an opportunity to see people through a more relaxed atmosphere.

What are you most looking forward to during your tenure as AIST president?

The opportunity to continue to meet people associated with AIST is what's most exciting for me — getting out to hear what the people have to say, attending local Member Chapter meetings, AISTech, etc. I've never participated in any of the AIST Technology Committees, so seeing how they work would be beneficial.

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What do you hope to accomplish as president? What will be your main area(s) of focus?

Attracting people to the industry. We're going through some difficult times right now. Large segments are struggling, and we're facing import pressures. Attracting people to the business can help to ensure we have a continuing foundation of employees that can solve the technical problems we face — employees who can help develop materials and processes to compete with aluminum and plastics. It's going to be a very important aspect for what AIST does. Attracting talent to our industry is going to be a challenge during my term, maybe even a couple of years after that.

Do you think that will always be a problem for steel?

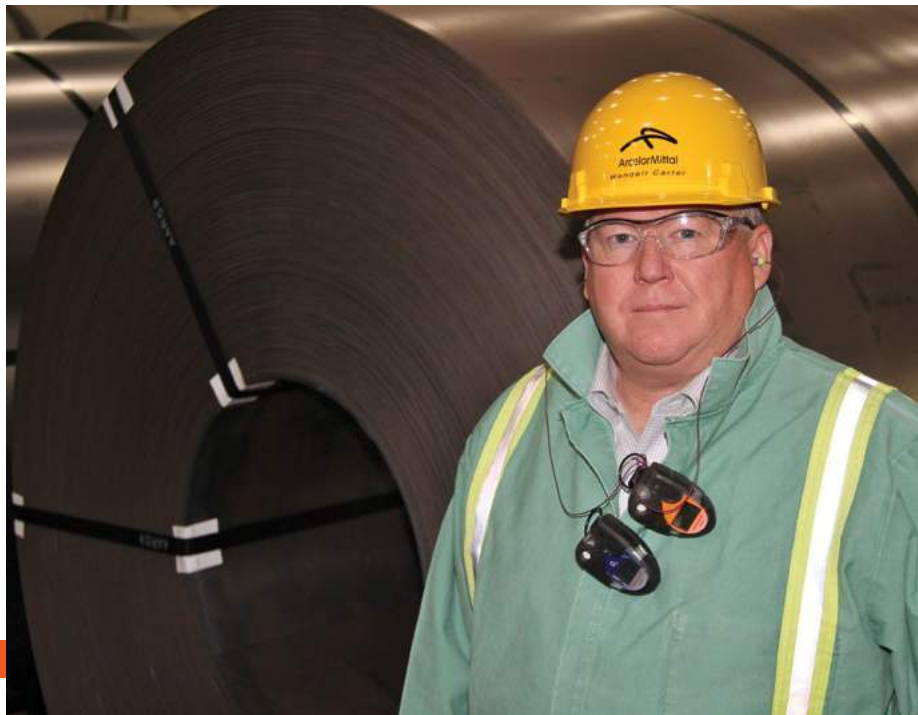
Yes and no. The footprint of steel has changed. Mini-mills have more flexibility in where they can be located, so people can geographically have a better selection than they used to have in the past. There are good assets in many locations throughout the U.S. I believe people have more opportunities now, and geography is still influential for many people in selecting where to work. The challenge is keeping people in the industry and getting people to make lifelong careers out of it. You learn many skills in steel, and I think as steel becomes successful again, people will be looking here for talent.

We don't have the retention vehicles that we used to. When I was hired, it was "work 30 years and get a pension." While that may not be the case nowadays, there are many opportunities that exist relative to compensation — above-average pay and good benefits, and many of the mini-mills share with their employees growth opportunities like stock options. The integrated mills are going to face the pressure of retaining talent more than the mini-mill. The battle for talent is still going to be a big deal, particularly as the economy starts to improve.

In what areas can AIST improve?

I think Ron Ashburn and the AIST staff do a wonderful job. It's an organization that's demonstrated continued growth. They've done a tremendous job of securing a good model. The Foundation has been exceptionally good at attracting people in the industry, but we can always improve. A big emphasis is on the Road Show, to try to attract more people, to make people more aware of — at the plant level and the producer level — what AIST is about.

AISTech has by far and away grown to be the number one supplier-based trade show, so I think a challenge is going to be finding large enough space to satisfy the demand.



Wendell Carter (left) with Chris Fuller (right), operations manager, east finishing, ArcelorMittal Indiana Harbor.

We always get stronger during these times. Not all assets survive; not all companies come out the same way. We'll just have to continue to reshape ourselves, as we've done through much of my career.

Another area is providing the right balance with international growth. There are people who, internationally, are very ambitious, but the majority of our support resides in the U.S. With ArcelorMittal being an international company, I strongly support AIST's international growth.

What challenges do you foresee facing the industry and/or AIST over the next several years?

Generally, the economy has to improve — not only at a local level but on a global level. Our business is stressed because of oil and not having the participation and exploration that carried us for a long time prior to the collapse of oil last year. With that, we're not getting the advantages of agriculture and yellow goods that you would use in construction and mining exploration, so that has also hurt us. Home starts still have not recovered from the financial crisis, nor has commercial construction. Auto is carrying the day for us, and we have to have them, but the other segments of the economy have to improve.

The imports, as long as they're fairly traded, I don't think are a problem. It's when the imports are subsidized and unfairly traded that we end up with the economic disconnects that we have today. Unfairly traded imports are hurting our industry.

We always get stronger during these times. Not all assets survive; not all companies come out the same way. We'll just have to continue to reshape ourselves, as we've done through much of my career.

My first 25 years, all I did was worry about reducing the workforce. My last seven years, all I've worried about is attracting people and retaining them. People are becoming a much more important part of our landscape as we look at generational turnover.

Producer engagement is vital to AIST's success and global reach. What can AIST do to enhance and encourage producer participation?

It's a struggle right now because of the business climate we're in. But I see very strong support from Nucor, I see strong support from Steel Dynamics Inc. (SDI). ArcelorMittal has, with the leadership of Andy Harshaw, tried to re-engage our participation. U. S. Steel has always done well. Nucor employees are always easy to identify at a conference; the leadership of SDI has committed "whole hog" to participation; and hopefully ArcelorMittal, with my tenure, will provide more participation.

Some things, however, aren't always a match. ArcelorMittal, as an example, has training programs that are parallel to what's offered at AIST. U. S. Steel also runs very similar programs.

I think we have, on the technical side, many of the Technology Committee leaders coming from producers. There is that effort again. I give credit to Nucor and SDI. I think they made a tremendous commitment during the lean years to sustain the programs. They have committed financial and human resources to support AIST growth.

Another vital component to AIST's success is the involvement of young professionals. What would you say to young engineers and students to get them involved in AIST?

Statistically, metallurgists have the highest lifetime earnings of any engineering discipline. But you have to find work that satisfies you. We're as much of a people business as we are a technical business. The opportunity in our business comes from managing people, along with the technical aspects. You never leave the technical aspects behind because you're always dealing with a complex process. Typically it's long hours, hot work, dirty work, and if you're not afraid to do that, then you'll have a rewarding career. The only place you'll get to play with toys bigger than in the steel industry is in the military. ✦

Wendell Carter (right) talks with Nucor's Randy Skagen (left) at the AISTech 2015 President's Award Breakfast.