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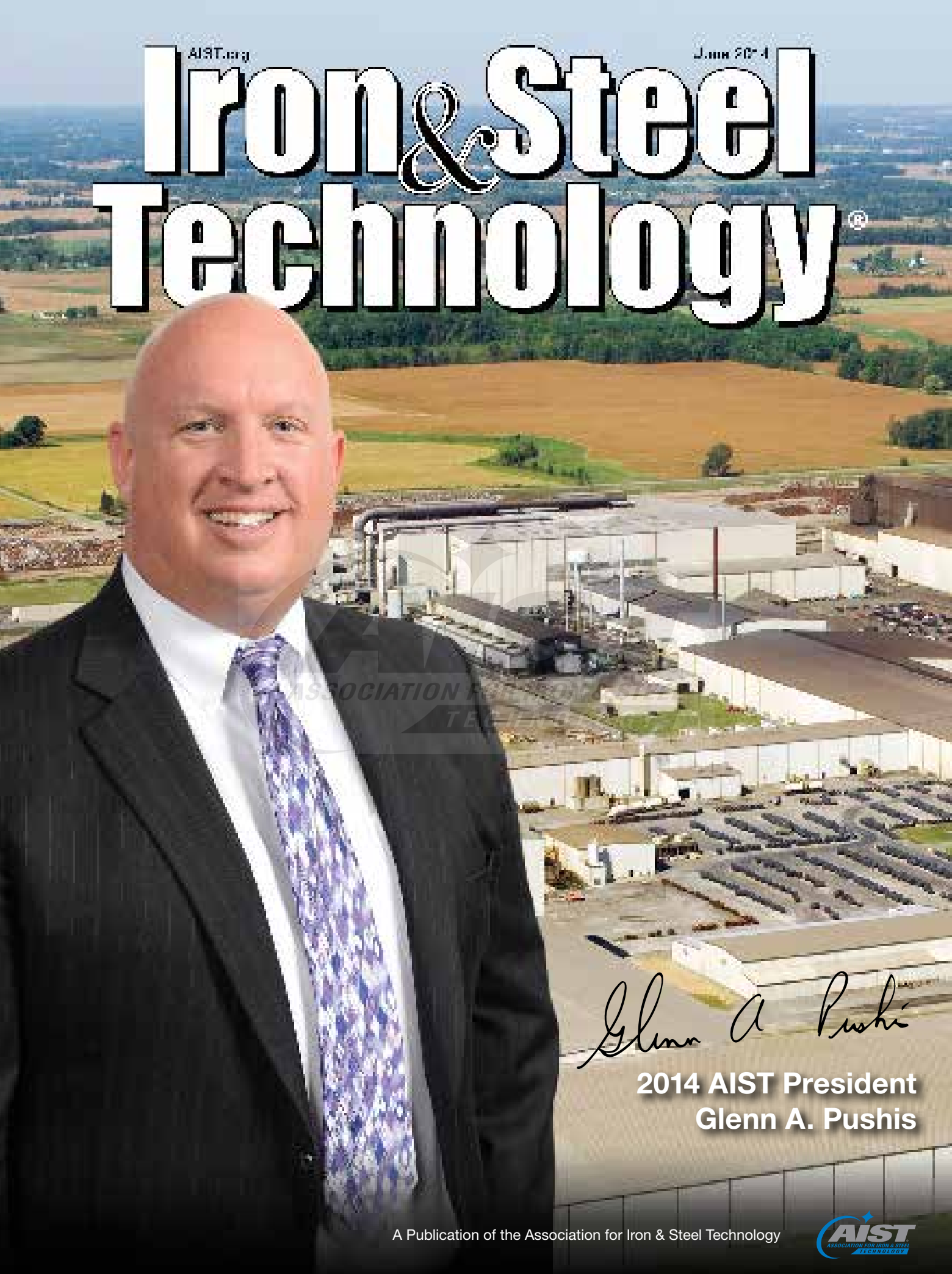

2014 AIST President
Glenn A. Pushis

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An Interview With the
2014–2015

AIST President
Glenn A. Pushis

by Karen D. Hickey

Steel Dynamics, Inc.®

Glenn A. Pushis currently serves as vice president and general manager of Steel Dynamics Inc. (SDI) – Flat Roll Division, Butler, Ind., USA. Since April 2007, Pushis has managed SDI's Flat Roll Division, which includes the company's Butler, Ind., mini-mill and a finishing facility in Jeffersonville, Ind., USA. In this assignment, Pushis has overseen mill modifications to increase the Butler mill's production capacity to 3 million tons per year and completed the start-up of a paint line and other finishing operations at Jeffersonville. From 2003 to 2007, Pushis served as vice president and general manager of the Engineered Bar Products Division, where he oversaw the refurbishing and start-up of the special bar quality (SBQ) mill at Pittsboro, Ind., USA. Prior to that, he held engineering and management positions at the flat roll mill, including manager of the cold finishing mill. Pushis joined SDI in 1994, having previously worked in engineering at Nucor Corp. in Crawfordsville, Ind., USA, and at LTV Steel in East Chicago, Ind., USA. He holds a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering technology from Purdue University, as well as an M.B.A. from Indiana University.

Iron & Steel Technology: Tell us about your background, how you first got involved in the iron and steel industry, and your current responsibilities.

Glenn Pushis: I grew up in small suburb of Chicago. I thought I would get into cars — perhaps design race engines or work on an Indy car team. In college, however, I did practice interviews with steel companies. That's when I saw that I could obtain lucrative employment with the steel industry.

After earning my bachelor's degree from Purdue University in 1987, I was hired as a maintenance turn foreman at LTV in East Chicago, Ind. From 1987 until 1990, I was assigned to the No. 3 sheet mill on various mechanical and structural projects. In 1990, I moved to Nucor's Crawfordsville plant as a mechanical engineer, and stayed there until I became one of the first two employees of Steel Dynamics Inc. in 1994. As project mechanical engineer, I was involved with the purchase, installation and commissioning of the first flat roll facility for SDI in Butler, Ind.

In 1997, I moved into operations, becoming cold rolling and coating manager. In 2003, SDI acquired the former Qualitech Steel facility in Pittsboro for the manufacture of SBQ products, and I was sent there as its general manager. I was responsible for the re-engineering of the brownfield plant, and I put the team together that got the facility up and running. Then in 2007, I was tapped to run the Butler plant, which I had helped to build in 1994.

I was recently elevated to the position of vice president of sheet products, in charge of the Jeffersonville finishing facility, The Techs galvanizing facilities in Pittsburgh, Pa., as well as the Butler flat roll plant. I'm now responsible for close to 1,000 people.

I&ST: How did you first become involved with AIST? What personal benefits you have gained from your membership?

GP: I have been a member since 1998, when I heard about AISE through Dick Teets, one of SDI's co-founders. In college and during my first job at LTV, I didn't hear about it much. Plus I was so busy early in my career, learning the ins and outs of the industry, I didn't think much about the trade associations. However, once SDI was up and running and was a known entity in the industry, I found that I still wanted to be involved in the technology side of the business. That's when I decided to join AISE.

The first half of my career was focused on engineering/construction. It's a fairly tight industry, and people get to know each other well. I now see at AISTech many of the vendors I bought equipment from. This type of networking, along with the chance to sit in on some of the technical presentations, is one of the greatest benefits of being involved with AIST.

I&ST: What do you hope to accomplish as president? What will be your key areas of focus?

GP: AIST has rolled out so many incredible programs in the past two years: the AIST Process Benchmarker® (APB), the Digital Library, the Matching Funds Challenges. Membership is at record-high levels since the recession began in late 2008. My role is to keep these programs going and maintain the momentum. This will also be my year to move forward with the T.C. Graham Fund for Steel Innovation, AIST's newest initiative.

I&ST: What challenges do you foresee facing the steel industry and/or AIST over the next several years?

GP: There is the obvious challenge of alternative materials: aluminum, carbon fiber. Pound for pound, steel is still the strongest and most cost-effective solution to many of these problems. Our industry will need to continue to drive development and technology to advance steel.

Another challenge is people. There will be so much turnover in the next 10 years. The question will be, "How do we mentor these new folks?" We also need to reach down to both the college and high school levels and interact with the trade schools.

I&ST: How can AIST continue to promote the iron and steel industry to young people? Do you have fresh ideas for helping the AIST Foundation foster the next generation of steelworkers?

GP: You can make a great living in the steel industry. These jobs are highly computerized. When I went into the steel industry, I immediately had projects. A boss might say to a new steelworker, "Go stand in front of that furnace and work on our charge mix to save us millions of dollars each month." I knew I could make a difference in this industry.

I still enjoy anything with a motor. Plus, there are so many big toys in a steel mill. You see machines that can pick up 300-ton ladles, and you see tons of steel being melted in just 35 minutes. It's amazing that we can harness that energy and turn it into something good for mankind.

Once you get into the steel business, it's in your blood. It sounds cliché, but it's real. SDI has a great track record of retaining its young engineers. Once they have gotten into our program, they stay for the long run.

I&ST: You mentioned the AIST Process Benchmarker (APB) earlier. What is the value in benchmarking key process indicators (KPIs) to improve sustainability for steel manufacturing?

GP: The APB arms us all with real data to make smart decisions. We are trying to maintain the steel industry as a sustainable, ongoing business. Anytime we can benchmark against others, it is a good thing. SDI is one of the first companies to get on board with the APB. We knew we had to put data into it before we could get data out.

I believe I have learned something from every steel mill I have visited, so there's something to be learned from other producers. It's not necessarily a specific item of data, but it might lead to a question, which in turn can open doors to new ideas.

I&ST: In light of the shift to aluminum in some well-known vehicles, as well as the new T.C. Graham Fund for Innovation in Steel Application, what can the industry do to promote market growth for new steel applications?

GP: I think the most important thing is that we continue to reach down to the high school level, and talk to guidance counselors about our need for skilled trade workers. We need welders, electrical technicians, boilermakers, etc. It's difficult to find these people. Everyone thinks they need the four-year degree or M.B.A. Steel is an old staple, an old material; it's not considered "sexy." But there is so much left to do, so much design left.

We can counteract the move toward aluminum in automotive bodies by developing higher-strength steels. Higher tensile strength materials are still in the design stages. We have to get the word out that steel isn't a dead-end job, not a dead industry. In fact, it's the most recyclable material.

I&ST: How does your company benefit when your employees are active in AIST?

GP: At Steel Dynamics, innovation is driven by the people on the shop floor. We've made it mandatory that our young engineers become AIST members. With AISTech being in Indianapolis this year, we sent our employees on charter buses so they could see they are part of a larger industry. When they have the chance to network with employees at other companies, and to hear about the latest technologies, they come back to the mill with some great ideas. Perhaps they discussed a problem or issue at our mill and found someone who can help. It's a great opportunity to meet with the mill's suppliers as well.

It is an honor for me to lead AIST for the next year. I know I am in the shoes of some great predecessors, and I hope I can fill them. ✦