



1993 PRESIDENT

GRANT P. SCHNEIDER • IRON & STEEL SOCIETY



As Grant P. Schneider assumes the office of president of the Iron & Steel Society this month, he does so at an important moment in ISS history. Lawrence G. Kuhn, executive director of the ISS since its inception in 1974, has retired and been replaced by Charles E. Slater. As Mr. Schneider's one-year term coincides with this change, he will be responsible for ensuring continuity in all Society operations.

Mr. Schneider, manager of traffic, transportation at Rouge Steel Company, received his bachelor's degree in ceramic engineering from Georgia Tech in 1960 and MBA degree from the University of Detroit in 1966. He also completed postgraduate work in management and metallurgy at the University of Michigan in 1985. Additionally, Mr. Schneider is a graduate of Ford Motor Company's Senior Executive Program.

As a college graduate trainee, Mr. Schneider joined the Steel Division of Ford Motor Company which was spun off by Ford and renamed Rouge Steel during the 1980s. During his career he had held various managerial positions in maintenance, engineering and hot and cold mill operations. He has held his current position since 1988.

A member of AIME since 1964 and the Iron and Steel Society since 1974, Mr. Schneider served as chairman of

the Society's Steelmaking Division in 1989, and was a member of the board of directors in 1989 and 1990. He has been an officer of the Society since 1991. Mr. Schneider serves on numerous standing committees.

Grant and Tina Schneider reside in Bloomfield Hills, MI. Anne, their only child, is a resident physician in obstetrics and gynecology in Grosse Pointe, MI.

I&SM visited Grant at his office near Rouge's River Rouge dock on a frozen and wind-swept January day. We wanted to discuss his plans for the Society.

I&SM: What do you think your year as president will bring to the Society?

SCHNEIDER: Well, what I don't want to be is a caretaker. I just can't wind up the clock and let it run. I gotta do things. And even if I make mistakes, I will feel better for doing something.

I never, ever want to be associated with any organization that doesn't strive to the best in the world. My philosophy is, if you try for good, you make fair if you're lucky. If you want to be just fair, you're going to be horrible. What you really have to strive for, if you want to be superb, is for perfection.

Let's say 20 years from now we look back at where the Iron and Steel Society is today and what it is about. I'd like people to say and feel that we planted some of the seeds that made it better. By we, I mean everyone is involved with the ISS right now. That we set out to create the mechanism to make the Iron and Steel Society the premier technical society.

And when we look back 20 years from now, and see that all the seeds that we planted came to fruition and bore fruit, we'll be part of a Society that everybody recognizes. That's the type of contribution I'd like to make.

I&SM: How will you go about doing this?

SCHNEIDER: I think that we need to have a vision of what the Society is going to do and, maybe most of all, what the Society is not going to do. We have to set

up priorities and stepping stones. Where will we get the most results for our effort? I think we need to decide our short-term and long-term goals.

You've got to have plans. We have to have milestones. To have a vision is great. The big difference is that everybody has visions, it's bringing them to fruition that counts. We need an action plan on what we're going to do. Who's going to do it? What resources do you have to do it, and that includes people, money and time.

I&SM: Do you have any other projects scheduled for the year?

SCHNEIDER: One major one: continuity. As Larry Kuhn leaves and Chuck Slater comes on as the new executive director, continuity becomes important. This is a big job and will occupy a lot of my time and the board's time. I don't believe there's anyone on the staff who is not concerned over this transition. We want to make it as smooth as possible.

I&SM: Let's talk about the industry. Do you feel there's any great discrepancy qualitywise between Japanese steel and domestic steel?

SCHNEIDER: Great discrepancy? No. The quality differential between American and Japanese steel is probably the same relationship that American automobiles have to Japanese automobiles. Ten years ago there was a wide disparity. Not anymore. It's really more a difference of degree rather than of kind.

I think the Japanese probably have an advantage over an American mill in that their hit rate is higher, not much higher, but higher. So their first run capability is better than American mills.

I&SM: Would you care to elaborate?

SCHNEIDER: What gets out the door from a Japanese mill and an American mill to the customer is very, very similar. It's just the internal rejects are higher in American steel mills than in Japanese mills. And that's money. That's the cost of



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quality.

Ten years go, or maybe a little longer, 4 percent of our steel would be rejected by the customer. Now, that amount is fractional. We all have come a long way so far.

I&SM: But you haven't been able to convince the customer to pay more!

SCHNEIDER: There is still more steel out there than there is demand, and we're not making any more steel now than we did 10 years ago. Eventually, water will seek its own level. There will be just enough steel to go around, and at that time I think we'll get a more reasonable price for our steel.

I&SM: Is it also a question of finding the best home for your capacity?

SCHNEIDER: Like the Machines, "Looking for a few good men," we're looking for a few good customers, people who will be with you. We want to be part of their family. That's the way I've always treated our suppliers. We're family. We're family to customers like Ford and Worthington. I think that's the way all integrated mills should look at it.

I&SM: Getting back to the Society, what would you say is the Society's greatest weakness at this time?

SCHNEIDER: Its greatest weakness is something, I think, that has been talked about before. And that's getting the new members to participate and be active in the Society. You know, it was pointed out to me that most other organizations, and they don't necessarily have to be professional societies – they could be a church, sisterhood, brotherhood – when they get a new member they give him or her something meaningful to do. I don't know that we do that.

When you become a member in ISS and pay your dues you get a magazine, and maybe you go to an international conference and maybe you don't.

In that time you could be invited to give a paper or become a member of a committee. This is something that needs

to be addressed. Maybe it should be an onus on the local sections. Maybe that's where the push should be, rather than getting involved on the national scene. There should be activity on the local section level. For example, there are scholarship committees, program committees, entertainment committees and so on at the local level.

I&SM: Well, conversely, what do you see as the greatest strength of our Society?

SCHNEIDER: The dedication. We may not be the largest society, but we are the most dedicated. The staff, the industry executives who are the society leaders, are extremely loyal. They all have the same vision, they want the Society to grow and prosper and to be the greatest thing under the sun, the greatest professional society in the world. No one may have said it or put it in these terms, but there's an incredible loyalty and comradeship in the Society. Across all divisions, all of the people I have known. They're so fiercely dedicated. We have long-term members who have kept up their membership year in and year out.

I remember 1982 and what it was like. That had to be a difficult year for the ISS. All through the industry shakeup with all the mills going down, the Society remained strong. Our members stayed on and continued their membership. We have more members now than we had 10 years ago, and the industry's population is only one-third of what it was in 1982. We have to continue to work hard to maintain our growth.

I&SM: How will you go about increasing membership?

SCHNEIDER: We are going to approach the CEOs and managers of the various companies and mills to ask them to actively participate in the Society. We want their help, and we're willing to meet them halfway. Say they've got some young people. We've got a pilot plan that's going to subsidize the cost of getting younger people to our

conferences. We want to help to train them. We want to make them great. It can do nothing but help your company, we'll tell the CEOs. But, we'll also tell them it's got to start with you. It's like quality: Quality starts at the top. If the guy at the top is just giving lip service to quality, you think the guys on the line will worry about quality?

If the CEO says, 'I really like the Iron and Steel Society, I can see where my company is going to benefit. I can see where my young people are going to benefit. I want to take an active role. I like what you guys are talking about,' that goes a long way. It all starts at the top and filters down.

I&SM: What will you tell individuals thinking about joining the ISS?

SCHNEIDER: When we talk about why someone should join the ISS, the answer is simple: Someone joins the Iron & Steel Society because it's the fast track to advancing your career, to learning, improving and just doing better.

We are the Iron & Steel Society. Do you make iron? Do you make steel? Then this is the place for you. The Society is in the iron and steel business. Does that mean if you make stainless we're not interested in you? No. Steel, it doesn't have to be qualified. We're not saying it's gotta be low-carbon steel.

I&SM: How has the Society enhanced your career?

SCHNEIDER: The friendships you make, the people you meet, the contacts are of great help. I can tell you I was the guy my company always approached to find out where and how we could get a spare part from another mill. I remember we had a breakdown, it wasn't even in my area of responsibility, and they asked me to help. I called a melter buddy of mine at Sparrows Point and he gave me the name of the person responsible for that part at Burns Harbor. We got it the next day. That happened more than once.

Recently, I read a quote, "Experience is a wonderful teacher, but the tuition



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is too high." We benefited by looking at those films and papers given by Inland Steel when they had that terrible disaster when they launched their caster and the hydraulic lines ruptured. It burned and went all over the place. The way to profit is from the mistakes of others, not from your own.

I&SM: In closing, this is your one and only chance to address the entire membership of the Society. Is there anything you would care to ask of the members?

SCHNEIDER: I very much want to solicit their input on the Society. What is the Society about? It's about members. What do the members want us to do? I'd really like to hear their opinions on the future direction of the ISS. *I&SM*