

# Dennis Radford

41-YEAR AIST LIFE MEMBER



“After graduation, marriage and honeymoon, I started work on 1 July 1968 at the National Steel Great Lakes Division in Ecorse, Mich., as a young management associate (trainee). I am forever grateful to the people (Andy Seivewright, Ed Romanek, Gene Kelly, Ted Kramer, Ken Brady and others) who helped guide me and answer my questions. My first assignment was in the machine and blacksmith shops, where I got the opportunity to see most of the plant’s process equipment in various stages of restoration. I was so proud that I was making more money (US\$775 per month) than my dad. When I took my dad past the plant a few months later, we could see the red smoke from the remaining open hearth furnaces as the clouds drifted toward the main office complex. My dad’s comment was, “This is where you chose to work?” One could hardly see the plant from the road due to uncontrolled emissions. How things have changed environmentally in the manufacturing processes today!

“My first knowledge of AISE was when I started my career at National Steel. I attended the Detroit Chapter meetings, as it was a method of meeting steel plant personnel from many different organizations. My first involvement at the committee level was on the Oxygen Steelmaking Committee as the representative for the Great Lakes Division of National Steel. I took a very active part starting around 1990, and I eventually served as committee chair.



“*Become an AIST member and learn from those around you who are willing to share their knowledge.*”



In the 1990s, I presented four technical papers pertaining to BOF facilities. As part of the committee, I was able to travel to England in 1997 to see various plants and projects. My visit to the Keihin and Fukuyama facilities in Japan in 1997 was not only a reward for my achievements, but was also a great cultural learning experience that forged friendships that last to this day. I learned many skills from my Japanese co-workers on how to gather and present complicated data in a simple form for top management review. I learned from them how to put all of the necessary data on one side of one piece of paper. Projects that cost millions of dollars were approved using this process versus the traditional American volumetric approach. We had a very talented group of individuals, and together we worked to get *Technical Report No. 32, Design and Maintenance of Basic Oxygen Furnaces* published. This achievement led to my term on the AISE Board of Directors in 2000.

“The main value of my AIST membership is the connection to many skilled professionals in the steel industry, coupled with the ability and opportunity to travel and visit several

world-class facilities in the U.S., Germany, Netherlands, Canada and the U.K. I still have a great passion for the steel industry, the processes, procedures, the people and the opportunity to learn and share experiences.

“The steel industry has made many changes during my careers in the integrated and mini-mills. The major changes are on the process side due to technological opportunities. The mini-mills have probably taken the most aggressive approach to change and opportunity by allowing their key employees to stake a major claim of ownership in their selected processes.

“If I had one thing to say to a new graduate just entering the industry, I would tell them to become an AIST member and learn from those around you who are willing to share their knowledge. There is no such thing as a dumb question. All questions need to be answered for an inquisitive individual. Just have them promise that they will reciprocate when they are mentors for the next generation!”

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*Dennis Radford graduated in June 1968 from the University of Michigan and started working for National Steel Great Lakes Division as a management associate. His first assignment was in the machine and blacksmith shops. He spent 30 years and 30 days at National Steel Great Lakes Division and worked various functions, progressing through management roles from trainee, turn supervisor, general foreman, superintendent, director, to general superintendent of maintenance and services for the entire facility. Radford spent the last four years of his career at National Steel in the steelmaking department as the area manager of maintenance and projects.*

*He retired from National Steel on a Friday and started work for AK Steel the following Monday at the Ashland Works as the manager of maintenance technology and services. After AK Steel, Radford consulted for a few years and then worked for CDI Engineering in South Charleston, W.Va., as a senior mechanical engineer. After several projects in the chemical, pharmaceutical and manufacturing industries, he got the itch to return to the steel industry. In May 2003, Radford started work for Republic Engineered Products in Lackawanna, N.Y., as its maintenance and engineering manager. In June 2007, he relocated to Bayou Steel in La Place, La., as its director of engineering.*

*When the economy turned sour in late 2008, many changes were made that affected Radford personally. Those changes resulted in Radford starting a leather, vinyl and plastic repair business that he is still very active in to this day.*

*Are you an AIST Life Member? Iron & Steel Technology wants to hear your story! Contact Amanda Blyth (ablyth@aist.org or +1.724.814.3080) for more details.*