



Progress & Perspectives

WOMEN IN STEEL

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Where did your education and career start?

I received my bachelor's degree in economics from Wilson College, a women's college, in Chambersburg, Pa., USA. I was the third woman to be hired in central operation sales at Jones & Laughlin Steel (J & L Steel), which was headquartered in Pittsburgh, Pa.

Why did you choose the steel industry?

My father worked in sales at United States Steel Corporation. When I found out that J & L Steel was coming to our campus to recruit women for the industry, I signed up for an interview. After additional interviews in Pittsburgh, I was offered a position. It just felt right.

How has your career advanced?

I had worked for J & L Steel less than three years when I was recruited as a product specialist for Raritan River Steel, a new steel mill that was under construction in Perth Amboy, N.J., USA. Raritan was owned by Co-Steel International, headquartered in Whitby, Ont., Canada. They also owned LASCO Steel in Whitby, Ont., and Chaparral Steel in Texas. Raritan was part of Co-Steel's continuing expansion into the U.S. steel industry and later became Co-Steel Raritan. At the time, Raritan had the highest-powered electric furnace in the world, and a state-of-the-art wire rod mill.

At Raritan, my first responsibility was to design an order entry system that interfaced with every department throughout the mill, including shipping and invoicing. I frequently conducted mill tours, regularly met with our board of directors, and worked with the Secret Service to prepare for the mill's official opening with President

Jimmy Carter. I was responsible for developing new business and then promoted to central regional sales manager, managing annual sales of more than US\$140 million. I traveled internationally to visit customers and suppliers, and at the request of legal counsel, testified before the International Trade Commission in two trade cases.

I received three Certificates of Outstanding Service from the American Iron and Steel Institute for my participation in the Steel Fellows Program. The program was designed to help attract college students, and in my case, young women, into the steel industry.

Co-Steel Raritan became Gerdau Ameristeel through a merger between Co-Steel International in Canada and Gerdau S.A. in 2002.

Talk about the support you've received to advance your career.

My training program included no mentors until I was assigned to train in the Pittsburgh sales office. The sales manager, Sandy Hoon, made sure I attended important customer events. Our vice president of sales at Raritan River Steel was a big promoter of women. In fact, we had the only all-female inside sales office in the industry at the time.

Why do you feel diversity and inclusivity are important in the workplace, and the steel industry as a whole?

The National Association of Manufacturers' estimates that 2.7 million Baby Boomers will retire from manufacturing positions by 2025. These numbers will continue to escalate after 2025. Deloitte and The Manufacturing

Institute claim that the industry will need to fill about 4.6 million manufacturing jobs over the next decade and more than half of those job openings could go unfilled unless we attract, educate and retain workers to fill them.

How can industry and manufacturing bridge this gap?

The industry can fill this gap by increasing diversity and inclusivity within the workplace. Carolyn Lee, writing for *Industry Week*, feels we have to “reshape the way people think about manufacturing and career opportunities in manufacturing. The manufacturing industry is in a state of reinvention, and educating and empowering women will be critical to the future of the industry. Women represent one of the largest pools of untapped talent for manufacturers. Closing manufacturing’s gender gap is key to closing the skills gap that has limited businesses’ ability to evolve and expand.” Education and training are essential if manufacturing is going to thrive.

What advice do you have for women who are interested in pursuing a career in a field that is typically male-dominated?

Be prepared to be challenged and tested. Have the fortitude to persevere. Stand your ground. I had a reputation that I was “tough, fair and I didn’t put up with any crap.” I liked that reputation. I also did not care if people liked me or not. Remember, not all battles need to be won, but choose your battles carefully and win them. Before you accept a position, find out how many women comprise the middle management and executive management of the company. Many companies believe they are diverse and inclusive, but if you look around and see that everyone in the company, including management, looks like the male president of the company, there could be issues.

You need to have mentors that continuously expose you to high-profile projects and decision-makers in the company. Support and develop working relationships with other women in the company and in the industry. Joining women’s groups in your industry and related industries will widen your network. Allocate 10% of your income to expanding your own personal skills through reading, attending seminars, courses, communicating with speakers and thought leaders. Remember you need a work/life balance, but it must be purposeful and planned. Do personal assessments annually by assigning goals and identifying important personal and professional skills and jobs that you are interested in pursuing and succeeding in.

There is something unique and intensely gratifying about having the opportunity to work for a company that has money, equipment, buildings, time and talent invested in making a product like steel. I was intrigued with the steelmaking process the first time our training team visited the meltshop and watched a heat of steel being tapped. Then, when our team was visiting our galvanizing mill in Hennepin, Ill, USA, I realized

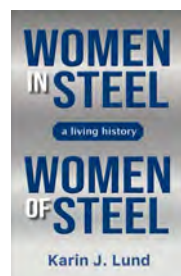
how much money and time was lost when there was a cobble that shot up 200 feet in the air and folded over itself like ribbon candy. While developing new products for the company, I have been privy to many discussions between metallurgists who heatedly debated why something should work when technology says it shouldn’t and vice versa. I also admire that some individuals have a creative mindset to design processes, build products and find solutions when there don’t seem to be any obvious answers.

As we approach 2025 and the Baby Boomer population retires, I would like to see the steel industry decide to consciously change the stigma of being a male-dominated industry, as it has for all of its history. Instead, I would like to see this strong and honorable industry be known as inclusive and diverse for all of the positive reasons that this shift would bring.

Tell us about your project, *Women in Steel, Women of Steel — A Living History*.

During AISTech 2019, AIST hosted a Women in Steel Roundtable discussion that included more than 40 men and women. As everyone introduced themselves, and shared their experiences in the industry, I was impressed with the positions that the women in the room held at their respective companies. After some discussion at my table, I discovered along with the two women sitting on either side of me that the three of us had 113 years of collective experience in the steel industry.

After the roundtable discussion, I began to envision an opportunity to capture women’s experiences in the steel industry over a 50-year period and approached AIST with the idea. My non-fiction book, titled *Women in Steel, Women of Steel — A Living History*, will focus on women who are employed in all areas of the steel industry from CEOs and C-level executives to women working in developing technology, production, metallurgy, sales, administration, finance and human resources. The project will include discussions with hourly workers, men, academia, as well as women involved in key supplier roles to the steel industry. This will be a global enterprise with far-reaching implications not only for the steel industry but manufacturing and other non-traditional industries. ♦



If you or someone you know would be interested in contributing a story to *Women in Steel, Women of Steel — A Living History*, please contact Karin Lund at kjlund@g-powerglobal.com.