

MICHAEL B. BOWER

39-YEAR LIFE MEMBER



MICHAEL B. BOWER

graduated from Ohio University in June 1973 with a B.B.A. degree in business administration/marketing. In May 1974, he was hired by Union Carbide Corp. in the Carbon Products Division as an inside sales representative in their Chicago sales office. He worked there until April 1982, when he took an outside sales position selling graphite electrodes to the steel mills and foundries in the Midwest. From 1982 to 2004, he rose through the sales ranks to become a national accounts manager in 1992. Also during that period, the company became GrafTech International. In January 2004, Bower retired from GrafTech and went to work for Bognar and Co. Inc. and continued selling electrode and carbon raisers. In October 2006, he went to work for M. Brashem Inc. and continued to sell graphite electrodes and other products.

When did you first hear about AISE/ISS and how?

I first heard about the American Institute of Mining, Metallurgical, and Petroleum Engineers (AIME)/Iron & Steel Society (ISS) in 1974. Union Carbide was a big supporter of the steel industry. They had the Metals Division, Linde Gas Division (Praxair now) and the Carbon Products Division all selling to the steel industry and foundries. My first Electric Furnace Conference was in 1979 in Pittsburgh.

What was your first level of involvement in the organization? How did your involvement progress over the years?

Once I took my sales territory in 1982, I got more active locally in the AIME Chicago Section. The steel business was running strong and many of my customers were involved in the AIME. I served on a couple local committees through

the years and regularly attended the monthly section meetings. During the 1980s, those meetings were essential to my growth in my sales territory. Many of my customers attended those meetings, and it was a chance to get to know them away from the steel mills and foundries. I think this is a real selling point for suppliers still today: You need to go where your customers are.

Really the biggest boost to my career came when I got involved with the Globe-Trotters Chapter in 1993. I was on the board for six years and served out my term as secretary/treasurer in 1999. I can't express how much I learned about the steel industry and my customers by attending those meetings. Back then, there was a large spring meeting and a smaller fall meeting. Attendance was huge during those years. And one of the key things for me was that the

steel companies were sending many of their younger operators to those meetings. That allowed me to meet guys and gals that would later hold supervisory positions, or higher, years down the road. That experience was, personally, fun and rewarding and gave me a tremendous advantage in my subsequent sales career. I know the Globe-Trotters Chapter is starting to come back. Needless to say, I still look forward to going, because my customers are there and current issues and trends are openly discussed.

How has membership benefited you in your career?

As I alluded to, AIST continues to provide me with technical knowledge, market information and steelmakers' perspectives. All of these things I can use on a daily basis to stay current in



▶ AIME Chicago Section President's Dinner Dance: Sandy Bower, AIME president Jim Brown, Lynn Brown and Bower (Olympia Fields, Ill., USA, 1989).



▶ Bower and his wife, Sandy, at a Globe-Trotters event (Colorado Springs, Colo., USA, 1989).



▶ Globe-Trotters event: Don Maycher, Bower, Anita Dowdle and Leroy Cundiff (San Antonio, Texas, USA, 1993).



▶ Bower with his grandchildren, George and Skylar.



▶ Globe-Trotters event: Sandy Bower, Kim Kolts, Bower and Carl Kolts (New Orleans, La., USA, 1994).

my job and to work more effectively in an ever-changing steel industry.

I don't think that will ever change, and I feel an AIST membership is absolutely essential, certainly from a supplier's perspective. And not just being a member, but getting involved. Participate in your local section, attend the conferences and short courses, and network all you can within the industry that you serve. My sales success has been built on relationships. And my AIST involvement has helped me build those relationships with my customers, other suppliers and people in the steel industry that I would have never crossed paths with otherwise.

I want to mention that another benefit of being an AIST member involves my wife, Sandy.

Because of our AIST membership, she was able to attend several Globe-Trotters Conventions, AIME Electric Furnace Conferences and AIME Chicago Section President's Dinner Dances. She met many of my customers'

spouses and spent time with my colleagues' spouses. It was always fun for her to attend the spouses' programs and she made several lasting friends throughout the industry. For several years, she was considered the unofficial candid photographer of the Globe-Trotters. And at each successive Globe-Trotters Convention, she was always mobbed by everyone who wanted to see her pictures from the previous year's convention. Her involvement made my job more enjoyable and she has always been a big part of whatever success I have attained.

How have you seen the industry change over the years?

After 44 years watching this industry, nothing surprises me anymore. The metals business is cyclical and I have lost track of how many cycles I have been through. Somehow we come out of each cycle changed and challenged and ready to take on the next market swings. It is just comforting to know that we are all in the same boat. Both

steelmakers and suppliers are locked in the ongoing struggle of commerce that can benefit us both. I don't see that going away, just changing. I have seen the electric arc furnaces continue to grow worldwide over my career, and it definitely appears that that will continue. So for me personally, I keep looking to retire again, but then I tell myself that I would like to stick around a little longer to see how this most recent cycle turns out. Call me crazy, but I have graphite in my blood, I guess.

If you were to recommend AIST to a new graduate just coming into the industry, what would you tell him/her?

I would recommend to any new hires into the steelmaking side or the supplier side that they join AIST and participate. New blood is always welcome and should be encouraged. New employees will never find a better place to network than in AIST — and it looks good on your resume, too. ♦