

# AISC NAMES NEW PRESIDENT

H. Louis Gurthet, P.E., brings with him 33 years of industry experience in engineering and fabrication

**H**. LOUIS GURTHET, FORMER PRESIDENT OF ZALK JOSEPHS FABRICATORS, INC. IN STOUGHTON, WI, was appointed president of the American Institute of Steel Construction, Inc., as of June 1. He is the first person to hold that position with experience in both the fabrication industry and in structural engineering—and is the first to be a registered professional engineer.

He succeeds Neil W. Zundel, who retired after 11 years as president. “Lou brings a tremendous amount of experience and involvement in the fabrication industry to the job,” explains Robert E. Owen, Chairman of the AISC Board of Directors and president of Paxton & Vierling Steel Co. in Omaha. “Over the years, he has demonstrated a successful management technique at Zalk Josephs and as a former member of AISC’s Board of Directors he has an intimate knowledge of the issues facing both the Institute and the steel industry.”

Gurthet’s familiarity with the steel industry dates back to 1963, when, after graduating from Purdue University and fresh out of military service with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, he joined Haven-Busch Co. in Grandville, MI, a fabrication shop known for its industrial work for the automotive industry. He started in the estimating department, advanced to sales manager, then to vice president of sales and finally to vice president of production, with responsibility for the entire 175-person production department.

He left Haven-Busch in 1980 to take over the presidency of Zalk-Josephs, a fabricator known both for its architecturally significant work (such as the Shedd Aquarium addition and the spire on top of Two Prudential Plaza) as well as complex industrial projects. During his time at Zalk-Josephs, Gurthet was involved in both a number of regional fabricator groups and with AISC. He served on the AISC Board of Directors since 1990, most recently as First Vice Chairman. And he was a member of both the Society of Iron & Steel Fabricators of Wisconsin and the AISC Northern Illinois/Chicago Advisory Committee, as well as a former president of the Central Fabricators Association.

## EMPHASIS ON EDUCATION

With AISC, Gurthet is best known for his work as Chairman of the Committee on Education. Together with the committee and staff, he promoted the value of the Student Steel Bridge-Building Competition and helped it to become the leading intercollegiate student structural contest in the country. With the full acceptance of ASCE, its student chapters design and fabricate steel bridges, which they enter in regional competitions, and which culminate in an acclaimed national event.

Gurthet has worked to create greater interaction between regional fabricator groups and universities. “Fabricators have helped a lot with the Student Steel Bridge-Building Competition and we’re working to get more of them to donate connec-

tion sculptures for university campuses,” Gurthet says. “Our goal is to have 50 sculptures in place.” The connection sculptures are used as teaching aids and are helping students see actual steel members with a variety of connections.

For the past two years, Gurthet has been an integral part of Partners In Education, a committee composed of educators, practicing professional engineers, fabricators, construction managers and owner representatives. Gurthet explains: “There’s a growing recognition within the steel industry that a lot of experienced steel educators have retired and it’s important to develop new programs to attract younger professors to teaching about steel.” The Partners In Education mission is to promote the long-term strength and vitality of structural steel education in universities and colleges. Partners In Education’s eight objectives, each with associated programs, will promote a civil engineering curriculum that will have sufficient structural engineering content to ensure that future engineers understand the requirements necessary to design safe and economical structures; that all undergraduate C.E. curriculums include a steel design course; that the faculty teaching structural engineering is familiar with the structural steel industry, including materials, metallurgy, design and construction; and that architectural and construction management curriculums work in steel.



*H. Louis Gurthet, P.E., AISC's new president*

#### **FUTURE PLANS**

Among the key issues that Gurthet sees in his role as AISC's new president is a needed push towards globalization. "We need to look to the development of a North American steel specification," he emphasizes. "We need to have Canada, Mexico and the U.S. come together, and ultimately we should be looking towards reaching a single standard worldwide. Of course, this means we need to resolve the metric issue. AISC has already taken steps to working with the metric system and we will continue to issue new metric specs and books."

Gurthet also stresses that the AISC of today is different from when he first started working in the steel industry. Back then, the institute was dominated by large fabricators. Today, smaller fabricators are playing a greater and larger role. "It's important that all segments of the steel construction industry work together. Not just fabricators, but steel mills, erectors, suppliers, designers, detailers and educators." AISC is working to strengthen its Professional Member program and Gurthet says he hopes that additional

positions on committees will become available and that these committees play an increased role in shaping AISC and the steel industry. "I'd also like to see AISC attract more young members, both designers and educators. It's important that we determine what their needs are and then work to satisfy them." As befits his background, he also emphasizes the need to work with and strengthen the regional fabricator groups. "There's a

lot of common ground, which AISC and the regional fabricators should be working on together."

Another key issue for Gurthet is the growing importance of computers—not just in structural design but also in the transfer of information and in education and marketing.

My association with the regional fabricator groups and AISC has led me to the conclusion that promoting structural steel fabrication requires a belief in our industry," Gurthet states. "A belief that steel is the superior building product, provided by competent, dedicated fabricators throughout the United States. Fabrication companies that have developed a high degree of experience, which they have willingly shared to create an active, dynamic national trade association, AISC. For AISC to increase the steel industry share of the market place, and to promote worldwide competition by U.S. firms, requires an all inclusive and unified industry focused on a common goal.

"Being a president of a structural steel fabrication company," Gurthet explains, "I understand what it's like in the trenches, where even in the good years

survival is always on one's mind. I appreciate the difficulty in providing both the financial and manpower resources to support AISC, but I also understand and appreciate how important a strong national trade association is to our industry."