

The LETH IRON Update

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Successors Are In Place for Both Retiring Managers

After over eighty years of combined service, two LIW managers are saying farewell to the foundry. December 20th saw the retirement of production manager Elmer Degenstein, a 42 year LIW veteran, and February 14th will be the final day for 39 year veteran sales manager Mel Collier. Both men began their careers hand molding sand, and worked their way up to being two of the most vital and knowledgeable employees the foundry has. Leth Iron wishes both men the utmost health and happiness in their (much deserved) retirements.

Stepping into their roles are two recent recruits, each bringing valuable skills to the LIW team. Lindsay Labelle is the new production manager, and brings with him over a decade of experience in Ontario steel mills. Labelle is a strong leader and has obvious skills in identifying and eliminating waste. He took quickly to the role and has already implemented a number of new programs and policies designed to keep the foundry running as smoothly and efficiently as possible.

Taking over Collier's responsibilities is new recruit Dylan Bruins, who's background in various sales positions has prepared him to take on the extensive book of business that Leth Iron has established. He is young and driven, and looks forward to learning the intricacies of the foundry industry while developing personal relationships with LIW's diverse customer body.

Both men are excited to be joining a team with a reputation for exceeding expectations dating back to 1898. Leth Iron is excited to welcome them to the team.



Fuelling the fire: A transfer ladle hot-charges Leth Iron's 40,000lb capacity Ajax furnace

An Eye on The Future

In the past 115 years, Lethbridge Iron Works has seen countless businesses enter and exit the North American manufacturing industry. In a time when primary business is becoming lesser and lesser, even 'Made in China' seems to be losing out to a new wave of 'Made in Korea' or 'Made in Bangladesh'. The economy is a constant debate between the optimists who believe we've entered recovery, the pessimists that think the worst is yet to come, and the generally uninterested that have grown tired of speculating. The past few years have been tumultuous, but lessons can be learned from those whom stayed afloat (or even flourished) while so many failed.

The ability to adapt to an ever-changing market, reinvestment of capital, and a constant effort to streamline internal processes are three base fundamentals for any manufacturing firm. As long as they are kept in the forefront, these three factors have kept businesses above water through rough economic times, including Leth Iron. Diversifying an almost entirely agricultural book of business to include automotive, railway, oilfield, and everything in between has provided a safety net should any particular industry hit a rough patch. Continued reinvestment into the foundry included installation of the SPOMATIC line in 2010, providing the unique ability to pour production-rate castings up to 500lbs in size – a rarity in the domestic foundry industry. Finally, top-rate engineering and maintenance departments never took their eye off of the future, striving to always be up and running as efficiently and effectively as possible. The foundry industry is crude and dirty in reputation, but Leth Iron has proven that a cutting edge foundry is a successful foundry. Sure, not every business with diversification and an eye on the future made it through the rough spell, but maybe they weren't quite strong enough to weather the storm.

With another strong year behind us, the Leth Iron team is ready for whatever the future has in store. Our customers are our lifeblood, and by providing what they need to be successful, we can succeed and grow together well into the future.

Upcoming Events

June 4-6, 2014

Preparations are underway for the Ductile Iron Society's annual meeting, to be hosted for the first time by Lethbridge Iron Works. Delegates from around the world will be spending three days in Lethbridge enjoying the beautiful scenery and friendly locals while holding meetings and touring through the facility that Leth Iron is so proud of. For more information on the Ductile Iron Society, please visit: WWW.DUCTILE.ORG

Quarterly Casting Design Tip

Have you considered where the parting line will be? Green sand foundries like Leth Iron use a 2-piece horizontally parted sand mold. When designing a casting, it's vital to consider the location of the part line. Any surface or feature that needs to be flat (without machining requirements) is most cost effective located parallel to the parting line. Vertical plane surfaces require a minimum two degree draft angle to allow for the pattern's release from the mold. Alternatively, a sand core may be utilized to create a feature without draft. The core is set into an isolated cavity in the mold (a coreprint), which creates the desired feature. This requires additional tooling (a corebox) and may impact the casting price nominally, although overall cost savings would be noticed as machining operations may be eliminated.