

From 48,000 To 200,000 Tons Of Steel In 20 Years



by Cathy Reynolds

As Border Steel celebrates its 20th anniversary, it is interesting to look back at the colorful history which surrounded the beginnings of this now thriving industrial company.

Border Steel actually began operations 20 years ago in March of 1962, following a rash of politicking and controversy over land.

Originally, said Milton Feinberg, its initial founder, Border Steel came about as a result of depressed conditions in the scrap business between 1958 and '59. He was at that time working with his family business, Feinberg Enterprises, now known as Dorsar Industries. The family purchased El Paso Iron & Metal, then located on Cotton and San Antonio Streets, in 1911.

"The scrap business was limited in its early days," Feinberg said. "And the historical development followed from there. Steel mills, especially in the electric furnace industry, used 100% scrap, so it seemed the only way to go."

A founder group was formed, headed by Feinberg. Members of that early group were his cousin, A. Milton Feinberg; William K. (Bill) Ramsey, Jr., and G. W. Ramsey of Ramsey Steel; Joe Rector, III, of Border Machinery; J. Francis Morgan of J.E. Morgan & Sons, General Contractors; and Bates Belk, attorney.

The initial site for the plant was chosen in Northeast El Paso. But before the sale was finalized, a city land dispute made it impossible to obtain a clear title to the land. As

history has it, the founding group then sought to build out of the city limits, as far away from city politics as it could get. Newman, New Mexico, was targeted as a nice, uncontroversial location.

However, before the close of the Newman sale, another site was chosen in Vinton, Texas, south of Anthony. "Since our original idea was to bring new industry to our home community, this final site met with the approval of all concerned," Feinberg said.

Construction began on the plant, at that time estimated at \$4.3 million, in January of 1961. The original plant had 105 employees, and produced 4,000 tons of ingot steel a month, or 48,000 tons a year.

Border Steel, as it stands now, has about 500 employees on its payroll, and produces about 200,000 tons of carbon and alloy steel per year.

The largest growth in the company came with the arrival of its current President and Chief Executive Officer, A.W. Lupia. He joined Border Steel in 1971 after visiting the plant through a New York based engineering company, Concast, Inc.

At the time Lupia joined the company, it was primarily a rebar producer. "When I first came to Border Steel, I saw a company that primarily made one product," Lupia said. "In my eyes, the only way it could continue to exist was to increase our production, increase our efficiency to compete with more

modern, better geographically situated companies, and search for new products that would give us a value-added dimension."

According to Lupia, what makes Border Steel unique to the industry is the fact that it is a mini-integrated steel company, from its own scrap operation all the way through its four divisions—Mill, Fabricating, Forging and Cold Finishing—and its three subsidiaries.

The company currently ships in the Southwest, from the West to the Gulf Coasts, primarily via its own truck fleet. A number of the trucks are designed with special handling trailers for delivering grinding balls, and all are scheduled for a two-way haul—upon delivery they bring raw materials back to the plant.

By staying abreast of technology, Border Steel is now recognized as a leader in a number of ways. "We are strong and well-manned. We have extremely modern testing equipment. And we have a quality control department that insures our product is the best on the market," said Lupia.

A look at the company in 1982 shows that it is equipped to produce carbon and alloy rounds, square and flats (merchant bar and special bar quality), rebar, MAX/COP® forged alloy steel grinding balls for the mining and cement industries, and MAX/TRAX® railroad spikes. The company also does custom cutting, straightening, turning and polishing, and rebar estimating, detailing, cutting and bending.

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Tons Of Steel

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It has acquired a number of subsidiaries, including Milton Trading Corporation and Metal Processing, Inc., with its divisions El Paso Iron and Metal, and Rail Construction & Maintenance.

The newest expansion is EnerSteel Products Company, a plant that is being designed to produce approximately 25 million feet of oil well sucker rods per year. Construction of this plant, located in Santa Teresa, N.M., involves an 11 million dollar, two-phase program. It is expected to begin production during the first quarter of 1982.

Sales for Border Steel and its subsidiaries are expected to be in excess of \$70 million during this fiscal year. That figure is hoped to more than double during the 80s, with an ultimate goal set at 300,000 tons of production.

"Although we're small in the world of many mills today, we're big because of our value-added product base," Lupia said. "Since we can go from scrap to a finished in-

dustrial product, we're getting the maximum dollar for each pound of steel we produce."

Lupia's immediate plans for the company are to expand its product lines even further in the oil field, mining, railroad, energy, agriculture and automotive industries.

Border Steel's 20-year growth is reflected on by Feinberg, currently serving as chairman of the Executive Committee. "Border Steel has really kept up with the times under the direction of Art Lupia. We have expanded our capabilities and added any and all innovations available to us. And we will continue to do so, which keeps us competitive," he said.

He added, "Recent innovations and installations have enabled us to produce high quality alloy steel and we are always looking for new products that lend themselves to our capability. As the Southwest grows, so will Border Steel."

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