

CONTACT: Frank Griscom  
(704) 815-3285  
[director@hbia.org](mailto:director@hbia.org)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**SMAILER AND WHIPP NAMED  
HBI ASSOCIATION SPECIAL MEMBERS**

**CHARLOTTE, NC (January 16, 2008)** – Two leading contributors to the growth of the hot briquetted iron (HBI) industry have been recognized as the first Special Members of the HBI Association Ltd. (HBIA). Ralph Smailer, Director and Owner of Metserv Metallurgical Consulting, and Roy Whipp, President of Whipp Technology, Inc., were recently informed of the honor by Alberto Hassan, HBIA President.

“Ralph and Roy are true pioneers when it comes to the HBI Industry,” Hassan said. “They were instrumental in the first commercial HBI plant (FIOR de Venezuela) almost 30 years ago and have contributed greatly to the body of engineering and operational expertise that is the basis for today’s HBI Industry.”

Smailer is a Pennsylvania State University graduate in metallurgy and held production positions at J&L Steel/LTV Steel and Lukens Steel Company, predecessors of Mittal Steel USA, and management and executive positions at Davy McKee/Davy Dravo/Davy International, predecessor of Aker Kvaerner Pittsburgh. He received the McFarland Award for achievement in metallurgy by the Penn State Chapter of ASM International and was designated a Centennial Fellow of the Penn State College of Earth and Mineral Sciences.

Smailer served as the first executive director of HBIA from 2001-2007. Currently, he provides metallurgical consulting services and engineering studies to the steel industry through his company, Metserv ([www.metservconsulting.com](http://www.metservconsulting.com)), in Pittsburgh, PA.

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Whipp holds a chemical engineering degree with high honors from West Virginia University. His background includes extensive operational and management experience in the engineering, construction, and start-up of plants for the direct reduction of iron ore and the use of direct reduction products in steelmaking. Whipp began his career with Exxon Chemicals, where he was intimately involved in the process design and start-up of the FIOR de Venezuela hot briquetted iron (HBI) plant. He joined FIOR as technical manager and later became plant manager and technical advisor to the general manager. In 1986, Whipp became a private consultant providing technical and management advisory services to direct reduction process suppliers and production plants. He was instrumental in the construction, start-up, and optimization of HBI plants owned by SIVENSA (Venezuela) – VENPRECAR and Orinoco Iron.

Whipp has been awarded a number of direct reduction-related patents in the US and 20 other countries. He is the developer of five copyrighted computer programs for direct reduction process simulations and scrap optimization (Scrap OptiMiser<sup>®</sup>). He has published more than 50 technical articles on direct reduction, steelmaking, and computer modeling and is president of Whipp Technology, Inc. in Yalaha, FL.

HBI Association, Ltd. (HBIA) is a not-for-profit, international trade organization whose purpose is to promote HBI as a preferred source of high quality, merchant iron units and to assist the global steel industry in the effective handling, shipping, and use of HBI. HBIA members include all major producers and exporters of HBI, suppliers of process technology, equipment, materials, and services including transportation to the HBI Industry, and traders and brokers involved in buying and selling HBI worldwide.

For more information about HBI or HBIA, visit [www.hbia.org](http://www.hbia.org) or contact Frank Griscom, Executive Director at: phone: (704) 815-3285, fax: (704) 841-4251, or e-mail: [director@hbia.org](mailto:director@hbia.org).